



Organization of
American States



**FORTY-FIRST REGULAR SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE
ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES**

**SUMMARY OF THE INFORMAL CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE OAS SECRETARY GENERAL AND
REPRESENTATIVES OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS**

“CITIZEN SECURITY IN THE AMERICAS”

San Salvador, El Salvador – June 4, 2011

The Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS), José Miguel Insulza, and around 250 representatives of civil society and workers' organizations from the Americas held an informal conversation on June 4, 2011, in the framework of the forty-first regular session of the OAS General Assembly held in San Salvador. This event offered an opportunity to discuss and share points of view on the challenges facing the region, the core theme of the General Assembly, and the various issues on the inter-American agenda. The event was moderated by Ms. Irene Klinger, Director of the OAS Department of International Affairs (DIA).

Ms. Klinger called the meeting to order and recognized the commitment of the Secretary General to involving civil society in OAS activities. She noted that since the last year's General Assembly in Lima, the DIA had facilitated the participation of civil society organizations (CSOs) at 16 ministerial meetings as well as at meetings of the Permanent Council and other OAS political organs. She also referred to the holding of the VIII Civil Society Hemispheric Forum in preparation for the General Assembly. Ms. Klinger informed the participants that 41 new civil society organizations had been enrolled in the OAS Civil Society Registry, which now contains 361 listed organizations.

The Secretary General welcomed the civil society representatives and thanked them for attending, noting that the purpose of the meeting was to address the various issues that concerned them and to allow them to put forward their opinions. He then offered the floor to the civil society representatives to outline their concerns, formulate their questions, and offer their opinions.

Carlos Ponce from *Asociación Civil Consorcio Justicia* told the Secretary General of the need for more mechanisms for protection of civil society and inquired if he would play a proactive role in promoting the resolution on freedom of association.

Ismael Moreno from *Radio Progreso* voiced his concern about the internal reality of Honduras in light of the highly precarious state of its democracy and security there. He called on the OAS to show effective leadership in order to encourage progress with internal agreements and so restore democracy in that country.

Eduardo Kohn from *B'nai B'rith International* mentioned the creation of new regional organizations in the Hemisphere, such as the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), whose membership comprised the whole of the Americas except the United States and Canada, and asked the Secretary General if the creation of such an organization encouraged the American integration; if it was

detrimental to the OAS or strengthened it. He also expressed concern that a number of Member States did not permit visits by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR); he asked the Secretary General his opinion in that respect and what instruments the OAS had to remedy that situation.

Sergio Widder of the **Simon Wiesenthal Center** said that anti-semitism and islamophobia were two threats that ought to be included in the Declaration of San Salvador to be adopted at the General Assembly, so as to enable OAS Member States to introduce elements and guidelines to tackle those threats on a social, political, and legal level.

Ismael Moreno from **Confederación de Trabajadores de Honduras** thanked the OAS for its work in Honduras and requested that the Organization monitor compliance with the agreement recently signed in Cartagena.

Guillermo López from **Asociación de Jueces por la Democracia en Honduras** underscored the importance for his country of the central theme of this General Assembly: Citizen Security in the Americas. He said that human rights violations continued to be committed in Honduras, including the murder of 12 journalists and more than 20 peasant farmers in the Aguán region in recent months, as well as a number of cases of judges who had been dismissed and subjected to intimidation since the coup d'état. He suggested the need for supplemental initiatives to the Cartagena agreement that included civil society participation. Mr. López asked the Secretary General what the OAS could do in that regard.

The **Secretary General** said that the OAS had always striven for the possibility of an accord among Hondurans and that the Cartagena Agreement did not address every aspect of Honduran democracy. Furthermore, he said that it was better for the problems of states to be resolved within the OAS, rather than outside it. He noted that the IACHR now had greater freedom to visit Honduras and that the OAS could offer its good offices in the event of any conflict between different sectors of society. In that regard, he held that the signing of the Cartagena Agreement was a positive thing, as was the readmission of Honduras to the OAS, and that it was to be expected that following the circulation of the report of the Truth Commission the spotlight would again be on human rights issues which would have to be addressed.

On the question of freedom of information and of association, the Secretary General mentioned that the text of the resolution to be considered by the General Assembly was still open to discussion by the Member States. Nevertheless, he underscored the importance of the existence of a clear resolution on freedom of association.

As to the emergence of subregional forums and regional entities, such as CELAC, the Secretary General noted that these organizations could contribute to peace in the region. He added that it was a fact that the huge disparities among OAS Member States hampered the forging of common policies and opinions. The OAS is where international standards and the institutions of the inter-American system reside. He cited the example of the Group of Rio, which was crucial in settling the problem between Ecuador and Colombia, where the agreement reached for formalizing the solution had to be brought before the OAS as it was founded on the principles of the OAS Charter.

Regarding the work of the IACHR, and Mr. Insulza said that he was a supporter of it having a standing invitation to visit countries. With respect to the situation of the judges dismissed in Honduras in the wake of the coup d'état, he mentioned that the OAS with continue working and in defense of human

rights and for the preparation of the injustices committed as part of the reconciliation processes in Honduras.

Germán Rincón from *Asociación Líderes en Acción* asked the Secretary General how the LGBTTTI group might be included in the draft Inter-American Convention against Racism and All Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance, and referred to the need to strengthen the secular state in the region.

Facundo Chávez Penillas from *Red Interamericana de Organizaciones con Personas con Discapacidad y sus Familiares (RIADIS)* and *Instituto Interamericano para la Discapacidad y el Desarrollo Inclusivo*, referred to the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Inter-American Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities and the Decade of the Americas for the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities and expressed his concern at the lack of substantive progress in that area as well as the need for the OAS to support the efforts of Member States to raise awareness about the situation of persons with disabilities in their respective countries.

Rosalba Castillo Viveros from *Afroamérica XXI* stressed the need for on-site visits by the OAS to draw attention to the plight of the displaced community in Colombia and the seizure of the Afro-American community lands by paramilitary groups and guerrillas in rural areas. She said that the OAS should also state its opinion on urban violence spawned by organized crime, in which children were both victims and perpetrators. She also said that the OAS should promote economic development using a differential approach as well as performing the necessary follow-up on precautionary measures granted to human rights defenders.

Victoriano Zacarías from *Movimiento Sindical de Guatemala* expressed his concern to the Secretary General regarding violence, impunity, corruption, and repression of the labor union movement in his country. He also drew attention to the work of the International Committee against Impunity in Guatemala and the need for its efforts to be supported.

On the subject of citizen security, **Salvador Ortega, Business Ombudsman of Mexico**, consulted the Secretary General about the efforts of the OAS to support the fight against organized crime in Mexico.

On the issue of racism and discrimination, the **Secretary General** mentioned that the Convention had not progressed because some countries were not prepared to reform their laws in order to include or exclude certain practices considered discriminatory. For example, he said that in some OAS Member States homosexuality was a crime, and therefore those countries were prepared to negotiate an antidiscrimination convention but lacked the will to include references to sexual aspects in the definition of discrimination. The fact that not all states agreed with how other states define discrimination precluded such a definition in a convention against all forms of discrimination. The Secretary General added that there were two alternatives available: one was to return to a separate convention that envisaged such forms of discrimination as racial discrimination and anti-Semitism; the other was to work subsequently on a convention that recognized other forms of discrimination.

The OAS Secretary General said that what was currently proposed was a resolution that maintained the convention against all forms of discrimination in every respect, but included additional protocols.

With regard to gender equality problems, Secretary General Insulza held that these were more for reasons of oversight than with exclusion. As an example, he mentioned that the reason why the final article of the Inter-American Democratic Charter included this issue was because it had been overlooked, not that anyone had been opposed. He added that the same was true with regard to indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants because no one was opposed to fighting discrimination;

however, the same could not be said where issues of sexual orientation were concerned, and he reiterated that in some countries homosexuality was a crime.

As regards the secular states, he reiterated his support but said that there were still religious states in the region that to some extent had an official religion or considered that having a religion was virtually *sine qua non*. He acknowledged that there were no initiatives in that regard and that he would make a note of it.

With respect to the issue of disabled persons, the Secretary General noted that 18 countries had signed the Inter-American Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities, but that in many instances the ratified provisions had not been implemented in domestic laws and that there were elements of the Convention that had not been recognized in domestic legislation. He added that the follow-up mechanisms were inadequate due to a lack of resources. He recalled that the Technical Secretariat for the Implementation of the Program of Action for the Decade of the Americas for the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities (2006-2016) (SEDISCAP) was created as a result of the initiative of disabled persons organizations and continued to operate thanks to the generosity of the Government of Panama.

The Secretary General reiterated the need to convince Member States to contribute more funds in this area in order to strengthen mechanisms for follow-up on the Convention. He recalled that the Convention was the only comprehensive instrument of its kind; he said that the Convention of Belem do Para, for example, only envisaged violence against women and did not include equity, their political participation, or economic independence, among other aspects.

Secretary General Insulza said that the OAS Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP/OAS) had completed its task of verifying the demobilization of paramilitary groups, and therefore, at present, the Mission was interested in addressing the issues of displacement, reintegration, and rehabilitation.

As for repression and violence against the trade union movement, the Secretary General said that the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala was unique since nowhere else in the world was there a UN-sponsored commission that addressed the internal justice problems of a country. He also noted that in Guatemala there was insufficient coverage of the impunity problem. He said that impunity was one of the issues that would be addressed at the Assembly and that it should be included in the plan of action for combating crime. In some countries, where the level of impunity is as high as 90%, Secretary General Insulza noted that a vicious circle is created in which citizens take justice into their own hands, thereby increasing impunity. He also mentioned the need to strengthen the above Commission and that it was difficult to get countries to give way on sovereignty over judicial matters, and that, therefore, it was necessary to support a reform of countries' judicial entities to ensure that they fulfilled their functions.

On the subject of tackling organized crime in Mexico, the OAS Secretary General pointed out that the theme of the Assembly is precisely citizen security. He added that the Declaration and Plan of Action of San Salvador to be adopted should have been clearer and given greater emphasis to certain issues, such as the inclusion of greater uniformity as regards crime and the definition thereof. He referred to the new hemispheric anti-drug strategy of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) recently adopted by the Member States which has a greater focus on the root causes of organized crime. Approximately 500 tons of cocaine, representing half the total output, and were confiscated in 2010. He also noted that one third of the 3.5 million people in prison in the region were incarcerated for drug related charges, which raised the question, how many tons was it necessary to confiscate and how

many people had to be jailed for this? Secretary Insulza stressed that it is important to control supply and demand, curb money laundering, and develop prevention and protection mechanisms for victims, rather than punish them. He remarked that this new strategy showed that it was possible to plan holistically and it suggested the possibility of developing regional strategies for other issues, such as organized crime.

Teresa Lanza Monje of *Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir* shared her concern that the resurgence of political and religious conservatism in recent times had prompted an increase in hate crime and penal persecution of women, adolescents, and LGBTTTI communities. She also said that her organization, which has a presence in 10 countries, is driving a campaign for the signing of an inter-American convention on sexual and reproductive rights in order to stimulate the development of public policies in this area in Member States.

Elisa Schuster from **Foro de Mujeres del Mercosur** referred to the fact that women represent 52% of the population in the Americas. She said that Member States should foster their participation in government and reform electoral rules in order to promote that participation. She also called for the OAS to enhance women's participation.

Adriana Camila Zabala Peroni of **AIREANA, Grupo por los Derechos de las Lesbianas** said that it was necessary to understand security as the protection of human beings and that, though it was necessary to combat such threats to drug trafficking and terrorism, citizen security also had to take account of LGBTTTI communities, which suffered discrimination in various countries and some even criminalized homosexuality. She mentioned that these communities suffered repeated abuse, very often from their own families.

Sandra Estévez from *Afroalianza Dominicana* and *Círculos de Juventud Afrodescendiente de las Américas* expressed her concern at the critical situation in which the Afro-descendant population live in the Dominican Republic, where a vicious circle of marginalization, poverty, and exclusion was being created. She also referred to police brutality toward Afro-descendant youth in the region.

Franklin Santander of **World Vision** mentioned the need to reduce child mortality and for it to be addressed as a public health issue. He drew attention to the campaign *Salud Infantil Primero* [Child Health First] which aims to reduce maternal and child mortality. Mr. Santander also asked the Secretary General what the OAS was doing in the area of access to health and what importance was being given to that issue.

Ana Fisher of the **Totus Tuus Foundation** congratulated the OAS on its work to date through SEDISCAP and noted the need to promote the rights of persons with disabilities, as well as for civil society in each country to encourage their governments to increase their contribution and support for SEDISCAP.

The **Secretary General** observed that several of the questions from the civil society representatives had to do with the issue of intolerance, which, along with promotion of freedom of association and of expression, was still the subject of discussions within the Organization. He mentioned his confidence in the capacity of civil society organizations to take part in those discussions. He added that democracy existed because there was diversity and that levels of intolerance and lack of comprehension were still too high, citing as an example the fact that in certain countries persons with disabilities could not be elected to public office.

As regards the issue of gender, the Secretary General said that in our societies equal participation for women had gained ground as part of a gradual cultural shift and that it was essential that there be rules

to ensure women's participation in place. He recognized that significant strides had been made in this regard in the public and private sectors alike.

The Secretary General acknowledged that there had been insufficient linkage between the issue of violence and immigration. Organized crime had used murder and mayhem to take over the illegal immigration market and that discrimination against migrants was an indisputable fact. Secretary General Insulza said that this was a hemispheric issue difficult to tackle within the OAS because immigration did not have the same impact on all Member States. He cited the draft resolution concerning the wall on the US-Mexico border, which was ultimately not approved by the Member States. He stressed that the OAS had taken a constructive approach and sought consensus, as an example of which he mentioned the report on the condition of migrants at border detention centers, the promotion of human rights of migrants, and the intention of the OAS to organize an experience sharing process among those countries with more-open migration laws.

The Secretary General mentioned his concern over the issue of immigration between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, which put pressure on public services, healthcare, and employment in the Dominican Republic as the latter was the country that received the greatest number of migrants of the same nationality. He said that the OAS was doing everything it could to provide solutions.

On the subject of child mortality, the Secretary General remarked that this was something that the Pan American Health Organization addressed and he promised to bring the information on child mortality in Bolivia mentioned by the representative of World Vision to that organization's attention.

Victória Lavínia Grabois Olimpio of *Tortura Nunca Mais* made reference to the statements of the Secretary General on the precautionary measures granted by the IACHR in the Belo Monte case. She expressed her concern that building the Belo Monte hydroelectric dam would destroy 11 municipalities in the north of Brazil along with the indigenous community in the zone. She also mentioned her concern at the murder of five leading environmental conservationists and death threats received by various activists and indigenous leaders. She also mentioned that the Government of Brazil had not yet taken steps to put into effect the judgment of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in the Araguaia Guerrilla case. In concluding, Ms. Grabois Olimpio reiterated that precautionary measures were the most important and necessary mechanisms that the inter-American system had at its disposal for promotion and protection of human rights.

Fernando Lapiduz from the **Latin American Jewish Congress** thanked the OAS for the space that it had provided to civil society at the forty-first regular session of the General Assembly and asked the Secretary General what the position of the OAS was on the visit to Bolivia by the Iranian defense minister who was accused by the Argentine justice system of masterminding the attack on the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA) and expelled from Bolivia but not turned over to Interpol despite requests to that end. He also mentioned the intention of his organization to promote a special legal framework for crimes committed for reasons of discrimination and to push for stiffer penalties for such offenses.

Kenarik Boujikian Felipe of *Associação Juizes para a Democracia* reaffirmed the need to resolve the situation of insecurity in the Americas so as not to continue generating a culture of violence. She added that the situation of the judiciary in Honduras was mirrored in several other countries and that its independence guaranteed promotion and protection of human rights. She also expressed to the Secretary General her concern at the critical situation of prisons in the region.

Marla González from **World Vision, El Salvador** asked the Secretary General what steps the OAS was taking to prevent violence against children and adolescents, and to ensure that their opinions were heard.

Guillermo Ponce Morales of **Organización de Desarrollo Étnico Comunitario (ODECO)** invited the Secretary General, civil society, and the OAS as a whole to the First World Summit on Persons of African Descent, to be held in La Ceiba, Honduras, from August 18 to 21, 2011. He also shared his concern about the situation of Afro-descendant communities and human rights, both in Spain and in the European Union as a whole, and suggested the possibility of an OAS-EU meeting to coordinate action policies. Mr. Ponce Morales ended by asking the Secretary General if he envisaged the return of Cuba to the OAS in the short term.

Andrés Ignacio Rivera Duarte from **Organización de Transexuales por la Dignidad de la Diversidad (OTD)** said that the “trans” population was one of the worst affected by violence and that they were not asking for new rights but demanding observance of the ones they already had. He consulted the Secretary General on the likelihood of his meeting with civil society organizations in the course of visits to Member States in order to draw attention to the reality of the LGBTTTI community.

The **Secretary General** referred to the Belo Monte case and the statements he had made in that regard. He reaffirmed the importance of the division of powers and independence of the judiciary in the region, and pointed out that autonomy did not imply a right to make the law. Returning to the Belo Monte case, Secretary General Insulza said that if a country signed and ratified the Convention then it was bound by the judgments of the Court. He stressed that the precautionary measure granted by the IACHR in that case was not recognized in either the Convention, the Charter of the OAS, or any other OAS-approved instrument, but in a decision of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. In that connection he said that a legally binding decision was one that had been issued by the Court. He added, in relation to the case, that the Commission ought to have created an opportunity for broader dialogue with the Government of Brazil. Regarding the judgment of the Court in the Araguaia Guerrilla case, he said that he would seek more information on the subject.

The Secretary General said that the greatest human rights violation in Latin America were prison conditions and the way in which prisons were run, which, moreover, did not include rehabilitation among its goals. The Secretary General said that he hoped that this issue would be addressed in the framework of this OAS General Assembly as part of the discussions on citizen security.

As for the visit of the Iranian defense minister, he said that there was little that the OAS could do in that regard. He expressed his complete solidarity with the work that the Argentine justice system has done on this matter and said that he would not venture an opinion on bilateral relations between Argentina and Bolivia.

As regards Cuba, the Secretary General recalled that the sanctions were lifted at the fortieth regular session of the OAS General Assembly and that Cuba would be required to sign the Inter-American Democratic Charter and the American Convention on Human Rights.

Secretary General Insulza noted that the follow-up mechanisms established within the OAS on issues such as violence against women, corruption, and drug trafficking included the full participation of civil society organizations. He added that he had even suggested that the OAS have follow-up mechanisms on all issues, including independence of the judiciary and freedom of expression.

Sara Roque Ocampo of *Fundación Humanistas por la Paz* referred to Ecuador's vote against the return of Honduras to the OAS and said that it did not reflect the sentiments of all Ecuadorians. She also stressed the significance of Honduras' readmission to the OAS, in the sense that dialogue is the appropriate way for resolving the region's problems. She added that problems such as security and violence affected all countries equally and that it was her desire to see peace prevail throughout the Hemisphere.

María Victoria Fallón from the *Grupo Interdisciplinario por los Derechos Humanos* said that a prerequisite for citizen security was for all citizens to have their basic needs met, and that citizens were very often powerless against the might of the state. She also noted the importance for human rights organizations that progress made by states in that area not be jeopardized by the decisions of other organizations or countries. Ms. Fallón stressed that it was not a question of whether or not legal measures had a legal basis and that not all justice was "positivized".

Concerning the comments made by the Secretary General on the precautionary measures of the IACHR in the Belo Monte case in Brazil, Ms. Fallón mentioned that such observations did not contribute to the advancement of human rights as they ran counter to decisions adopted by the IACHR for the protection of human rights. She expressed her concern that a principal organ of the OAS should disavow opinions of the IACHR and recalled that Brazil had previously accepted precautionary measures, which implied that the source of those measures was legitimate. In conclusion she held that the General Secretariat should support and endorse the IACHR as one of the principal organs of the inter-American human rights system.

Martín Sánchez Zinny of the *Cámara Interamericana de Transportes* expressed his concern about offenses committed against passenger and goods transportation.

Mónica Zalaquett from the *Centro de la Prevención de la Violencia* voiced her concern over the criminalization of young people from low-income sectors and said that the OAS should encourage an emphasis on prevention policies, such as job placement programs in critical areas.

Ericka Álvarez from *Instituto Interamericano de Discapacidad y Desarrollo Inclusivo* mentioned that while some countries have adapted their domestic laws to international treaties on persons with disabilities, that was not enough for getting rid of discrimination. He said that rights were not fully observed unless they were completely guaranteed.

Renzo Pomi of *Amnesty International* mentioned that one of his organization's prior priorities for the region was to strengthen the inter-American human rights system and defend its integrity and independence, including in the area of precautionary measures. With regard to the Belo Monte case, he said that they respected the opinion of the Secretary General in that regard but differed with his view as to whether or not precautionary measures were binding upon states that had demonstrated their willingness to implement and comply with them. He called for the mechanism to be strengthened, rather than weakened, bearing in mind that there were other international organizations that applied implicit powers that were not contained in specific treaties or conventions.

The **Secretary General** said that he was profoundly in favor of the existence of precautionary measures and a staunch defender of human rights, and mentioned that the Rules of Procedure of the IACHR offered the possibility of requesting the Inter-American Court of Human Rights to adopt such provisional measures as it deemed appropriate. In that connection, he noted, with respect to the Belo Monte case, that the IACHR could equally have sought the opinion of the Court on the matter, and he added that it was very often advisable, particularly where people of limited means were concerned, for

there to be firm rules by which to abide. He reiterated that every year at the inauguration of the sessions of the IACHR he has called for universal compliance with its decisions and penalties and for it to be given the funding it that needed, not only to enable it to carry out its functions, but also to promote it, so that it could be more than the prelude to the Inter-American Court.

The Secretary General noted that the Government of Ecuador had not vetoed the decision to readmit Honduras to the OAS and that President Correa had personally told him that one of the conditions for recognizing the government of Porfirio Lobo was that the persons accused of taking part in the coup d'état of June 28, 2009, be brought to justice.

On the matter of transportation, the Secretary General said that, to an extent, the topic was part of the security issue; airport security was part of the fight against terrorism. He added that organized crime was a recent phenomenon in terms of control of drug, arms, and people smuggling routes.

The Secretary General said that Nicaragua had one of the lowest per-capita incomes in Central America, and yet, at the same time, it also had the lowest crime rate. He stressed that it was essential to work for the inclusion of the 25 million young people in the Americas who were neither employed nor studying, in order to prevent them joining criminal organizations. He also referred to the positive results of the OAS's judicial facilitators program.

The Secretary General mentioned that there were increasingly fewer spaces for discrimination but that it persisted, given the huge amount of passive discrimination that still existed, even if was not openly discussed. On the subject of reproductive rights, he said that this was an issue that the Pan American Health Organization addressed with considerable success.

Iris Judith Baptista Gutiérrez of *Comité de América Latina y el Caribe para la Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer (CLADEM)* expressed her rejection of the traditional view of security, which centered on issues such as arms trafficking and terrorism, where a predominantly militaristic approach was adopted. She said that violence mainly occurred in areas of greatest poverty and that the Declaration of San Salvador should include the structural causes that gave rise to violence, as well as a gender-aware perspective and how that affected women, in addition to prevention measures. She also requested that Member States provide female sexual assault victims with the support and assistance they needed.

Aldo Donzis of the *Delegación de Asociaciones Israelitas de Argentina (DAIA)* referred to the attacks on the AMIA and the Israeli Embassy in Argentina. He said that everyone in society was a potential victim of international terrorism and that the most effective tool was prevention.

Wilfredo Guzman of the *Disabled Peoples' International* commended the Government of Panama on its contributions to SEDISCAP, but noted that its achievements and the reports prepared by Member States in that regard were still unknown. He said that corruption and lack of transparency undermined the efforts of Member States and requested the leadership of the Secretary General in putting an end to violence against persons with disabilities.

Natalia Korobkova of *World Vision International* mentioned her concern that Member States did not give the necessary priority to health and education in national budgets.

María Inés de Ferrari from *Corporación Participa* shared with the Secretary General a letter from *Alianza Afrochilena* requesting him to urge the Government of Chile to include the Afro-descendant variable in the national census as a means to ensure their identification and visibility.

Clément Chartier of **Metis National Council** expressed his gratitude for the Seminar on Mechanisms for the Participation of Indigenous Peoples held at OAS headquarters in Washington, D.C. from June 22 to 23, 2010, and thanked the Secretary General for his support of the proposed American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Mirta Carolina Moragas Mereles of **AIREANA, Grupo por los Derechos de las Lesbianas** voiced her concern about murders committed in the region for reasons of sexual orientation, gender, and religion, as well as about maternal mortality. As regards citizen security, Ms. Moragas Mereles mentioned that states should ensure the necessary conditions for freedom and equality and not advance security by repressive means. She also considered that the issue of sexual and reproductive rights should be covered by a convention in order to ensure equality.

Valeria Rubino of **Colectivo Ovejas Negras** remarked that the OAS is making a big contribution to the advancement of democracy and regretted the current violence in Central America. She expressed thanks for the social recognition and respect for transsexual identity advocated by the OAS.

The **Secretary General** mentioned that the structural causes of violence are recognized in the Declaration. He said that he also subscribed to the view that violence was caused by poverty and lack of opportunity, but that these were not the only factors that caused it. He stressed that in the majority of countries crime was cited as the greatest problem faced by societies and that other problems included contract killing, impunity, and recidivism.

On the subject of terrorism, he drew attention to the Inter-American Convention against Terrorism and recognized the danger of using terror for political ends and how that immobilized society. He also said that very often terrorism was not just international but occurred at a local level.

The Secretary General expressed surprise at the comments of the director of *Participa*, and recalled that the citizen usually defined him or herself in national censuses. He said that he was not aware that the Afro-descendant category did not exist in Chile and he promised to support Alianza Afrochilena's request.

Ms. Klinger, Director of the OAS Department of International Affairs, the entity that coordinates relations with civil society, thanked the civil society representatives for taking part and the Secretary General for his presence and commitment.