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**FORTY-FIFTH REGULAR SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**“PRESENT AND FUTURE OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES”**

**DIALOGUE OF THE HEADS OF DELEGATION, THE SECRETARY GENERAL, AND THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL WITH THE HEADS OF DELEGATION OF THE PERMANENT OBSERVERS**

**REMARKS BY JAN-PAUL DIRKSE**

**AMBASSADOR-AT-LARGE, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS**

**Washington, D.C., June 14, 2015**

Thank you Chairman for giving me the floor. Good afternoon mister Secretary General, present Assistant Secretary Generals (old and new), your excellencies. Ladies and gentlemen.

I’m privileged to be here and to speak to you today on behalf of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. We strongly value our role as permanent observer to the OAS. We attach great importance to the organization and to the region, in particular because three of our four autonomous countries in the Kingdom, Aruba, Curacao and St Maarten, are located in the Americas.

Or as we say: One Kingdom, Four countries: European and Caribbean. Therefore, I am happy that Minister Andy Lee of Aruba and Minister Xavier Prens from Curacao are also present today. We really go into this general assembly with one voice, as one team.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Secondly, I would like to congratulate both the new Secretary General and the Assistant Secretary General with their high positions and wish them all the best in the coming years, beginning with this General Assembly with the appropriate theme ‘Present and Future of the Organization of American States’. The fact is that this is a very important moment for all of the American states.

There is a difficult task ahead of adapting and reorganising the organization to the challenges of the 21st century. The Kingdom with countries in the Americas would like to support the Secretary General and demonstrate our commitment to the partnership with the Americas.***La union hace la fuerza***. The union – in unity, there is strength.

Therefore, the Kingdom of the Netherlands was honoured to be present at the historic Summit of the Americas in Panama last April. Our Prime Minister Mark Rutte, together with Prime Minister Mike Eman from Aruba, stressed the importance of the Americas to our Kingdom.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The four pillars of the OAS coincide with the policy priorities of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The focus on human rights, peace and justice and democracy reflect the fundamental trans-Atlantic values which we share with the OAS. Like the OAS members and permanent observers, the Kingdom of the Netherlands is committed to **peace, justice and development**. Let me therefore quickly go over some of our commitments to the OAS.

Regarding **Peace**, the Kingdom of the Netherlands has recently renewed its commitment to the OAS Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia. We were very pleased with the agreement between the Colombian government and the OAS, reached back in December on extending the Mission’s mandate until 2018.

Regarding **Justice**, one of the programs we have long supported is the Inter-American Program of Judicial Facilitators (or *Facilitadores Judiciales*). This programme combines in a great way the four pillars of the OAS and we have been impressed with its success.

More than 9.000 Facilitadores Judiciales have worked together to settle disputes and solve conflicts between citizens. The Kingdom of the Netherlands has allocated 15 million USD for the programme until 2016. We are considering further financing of this successful program; however we need the support of other contributors as to expand the reach of the program beyond the 3 million people who currently have access. We call upon other permanent observers and OAS member states to ensure the continuation of this program.

In addition, the Kingdom of the Netherlands is a proud supporter of the **Inter-American Commission on Human Rights**. We strongly believe in the value added by this independent commission, for instance on the issue of LGBT.

Regarding **Development**, it is important to note that three of the four autonomous countries of the Kingdom are Small Island Developing States. Each facing their own problems. The governments of the Caribbean countries of the Kingdom would very much like to explore the issue of tourism security. We are committed to continue to work with the OAS on relevant issues and to strengthen exchanges between our countries. In the end, it is simple: We must press hard –together- to help create jobs and economic opportunity for our young people. To give them a perspective in a fair and free world.

Your excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Kingdom of the Netherlands strongly believes in working together with you and your Member States on issues of peace, justice and development. Both bilaterally and multilaterally. And in partnerships that are based on **equality, respect and mutual understanding.**

Because we believe so strongly in these principles, the Kingdom of the Netherlands is proud to have been the largest financial donor to the OAS amongst the Permanent Observers for several years now.

That same spirit of partnership is also core to our bid for a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council for the term 2017-2018. As a Kingdom representing both Caribbean and European interests, we are ready to serve on the Council as your partner for peace, justice and development and to make your and our collected voices heard.

Mr. Chairman

Let me conclude by saying that the Kingdom of the Netherlands strongly believes in the OAS as an organization is able to achieve our common goals. We look forward to fruitful discussions in the coming days.

Thank you.