*Jonas Lovén, Deputy Director General for the Americas, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Sweden*

**Intervention by Sweden at the observer countries’ dialogue with the Secretary General, OAS General Assembly in Washington 14 June 2015**

Dear Secretary General, excellencies, fellow delegates,

It is an honour and a pleasure to address you, Mr. Secretary General, for the first time in this new capacity. Your election brings promise and opportunity to the OAS in a challenging time.

Last week, the EU and CELAC celebrated a second bi-regional summit in Brussels. Overall it was a very successful summit with high attendance on both sides. Text negotiations were somewhat laborious as diverging views on a number of subjects surfaced. But discussions between ministers and heads of state and government were held in a very good atmosphere. Even though viewpoints continued to be different, perhaps more within than between the two regions, the leaders tended to focus on the values and challenges that we all share.

The summit confirmed the close bi-regional partner that the EU has in CELAC. Still, I and many EU colleagues have made the trip to Washington to follow the OAS General Assembly, only a few days later. That is a testimony to our continued interest for the OAS.

Speaking for Sweden, we see that the OAS has played, and continues to play, an instrumental role in the three areas of peace, democracy and human rights.

In these areas the countries of the Americas have made historic progress during the last few decades. With a peace agreement in Colombia, the last armed conflict of the continent will be laid behind. Democratic elections and the rule of law is the general norm across the continent.

But progress made does not mean that the job of the OAS is done. Our own European experience has shown us that the assistance, mediation and not least scrutiny of regional organisations are invaluable tools to maintain peace and high standards of democracy and human rights. My country is no stranger to receiving criticism from the EU, the Council of Europe and, indeed, from other UN members through the Universal Periodic Review.

The OAS Human Rights system is a source of admiration and inspiration to other parts of the world. They continue to have a strong impact and relevance in the region, and the jurisdiction emanating from them is of great relevance for other regional Human Rights bodies.

Sweden has seen good reasons for supporting the OAS in these areas. Over the years some 45 million USD of our development cooperation has been channelled through the OAS. In recent years, our budgets for Latin America have decreased, reflecting the progress the region has made. Still, we have recently been able to contribute to the OAS border mission between Belize and Guatemala as well as the initiative for mediation between youth gangs in El Salvador. Within limited means, we look forward to remain an interested and, when the occasion arises, contributing partner to the OAS.