



**Organization of  
American States**



**Dialogue between the Heads of Delegation, the Secretary General and the Assistant Secretary General  
with the Heads of Delegation of the Permanent Observers on the theme of the General Assembly “For  
a Comprehensive Policy against the World Drug Problem in the Americas”**

**June 4, 2013 - Antigua, Guatemala**

**Permanent Observer Mission of Austria**

Remarks delivered by:

**Gregor Csörsz, Alternate Observer of Austria to the OAS**

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Secretary General, Mr. Assistant Secretary-General,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Austrian government, I would like to express our appreciation for the invitation to participate in the dialogue between the Member States and the Permanent Observer Countries of the Organization of American States. I also would like to extend our warm thanks to the Government of Guatemala for hosting us here in the beautiful city of Antigua.

Austria welcomes and appreciates the focus of the 43rd Regular Session of the General Assembly addressing the drug problem in the Americas. In particular, Austria commends the broad and interdisciplinary understanding, as reflected in the draft declaration, of the world drug problem, and the necessity for a balanced and comprehensive approach to the world drug problem. From an Austrian point of view, alternative development is one of our priorities in the international cooperation on drug policies.

Being a strong advocate of the rule of law, Austria has closely followed and participated in the establishment of an effective global framework aiming at facilitating solutions for the world drug problem. International law in general and the relevant UN conventions do provide valuable assets in fighting the drug problem. Careful implementation and diligent application of the conventions' provisions is necessary to tackle the enormous problem. Support and assistance for the implementation of these instruments is one of the core responsibilities of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, headquartered in Vienna.

Austria also welcomes regional initiatives to complement the global framework and to create an added value to universal instruments, in particular in the fight against illicit drug trafficking. Taking into account regional experiences, enhanced co-operation among OAS member states to fight illicit drug trafficking and organized crime in general, is highly valuable. With a view to the close co-operation of European Union member states in the fight against organized crime, Austria bears in mind the gains and improvements, which can be achieved by such co-operation on a regional level.

As mentioned, successful strategies to address the world drug problem cannot be limited to measures and actions in the sphere of law enforcement alone. Thus, from an Austrian point of view, we also have to emphasize the importance of efforts in the fields of education and prevention. Educational

institutions, family and social environment, civil society institutions alike bear the responsibility to raise awareness towards the dangers of drug abuse in order to prevent and protect in particular adolescents of drug abuse.

Strengthening the capacity of national health care systems, be they public or private, is another essential element of any comprehensive anti-drug strategy. Aside of prevention, efforts of rehabilitation are not only necessary to aid the victims of drug abuse, but have also proven beneficial not only to their social environment but to society as a whole.

Mr. Chairman,

Austria's role as an active observer of the OAS dates back more than 3 decades. We have developed not only a very close relationship with the OAS and its member states but also a profound understanding of the region's challenges. Current budgetary restrictions unfortunately prevent us from announcing a bilateral financial contribution to a specific OAS program this year.

However, Austria is contributing to and supporting the work of EU/LAC co-operation and the UNODC. In particular, Austria supports UNODC projects on alternative development in Bolivia, Colombia and Peru, emphasizing alternative development as one of our priorities in the international co-operation on drug policies.

My country remains committed to maintaining a close relationship and co-operation with the Nations in the Hemisphere, both bilaterally and through the OAS.

I thank you for your attention and wish you a successful and productive General Assembly.