



**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”

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Permanent Observer Mission of Sweden

Remarks delivered by:

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Sweden appreciates this dialogue with the OAS Secretary General, and the yearly General Assemblies are a valuable opportunity for dialogue with American partners.

Our relations with the Americas are profound and encompass people, trade and shared values. Our bilateral relations with Latin America have a long history. We have a vibrant Latin American community in Sweden, which makes the region visible in our country and contributes to make us a multi-cultural society.

Sweden has for many years been active in development cooperation with many Latin American partners, mainly in the areas of human rights, democracy and peace building. We have long-standing partnership with the OAS, and have contributed some 44 million USD to its democracy and peace-building programs since we joined as an observer 1996.

Many Latin American countries have had a positive development during the last decades. Economic growth has overall been strong, and many millions have left poverty behind. Democratic governance and the rule of law have overall been strengthened, and many countries have confronted a history of dictatorship and human rights abuse.

As a consequence, Sweden’s relations with Latin America today have less emphasis on development cooperation, and more on trade and economic exchange than in the past.

This year’s theme puts OAS right in the center of a debate of critical importance for the Americas. Many countries, not least the Northern Central America including our host-country Guatemala, are making enormous sacrifices combating drug trafficking.

The scourge is not restricted to the Americas. Drugs trafficking and the incomes from it destabilize other parts of the world (the Sahel, Afghanistan). In Sweden drugs abuse afflicts our citizens’ health, and trafficking fosters organized crime.

Sweden fully shares the view that the combat of drugs trafficking is a global problem, for which we all share responsibility. The basis for our common action continues to be the United Nations Conventions on Narcotics of 1961 and 1988.

We welcome the comprehensive report of the OAS Secretariat, which together with the debate of this meeting will be of great value for our national considerations.

Over the last 50 years, the OAS Human Rights System has developed into one of the most ambitious endeavors to apply universal Human Rights standards on a regional and national level. Across the American continent, the OAS Human Rights Commission and Court have played a historical role in the strengthening of democracy and rule of law. And the Inter-American Human Rights System continues today to fulfill a vital role, upholding universal standards and protecting individual citizens.

To other parts of the world, the OAS Human Rights bodies are a source of admiration and inspiration. The jurisdiction emanating from them is of great relevance for other regional Human Rights bodies.

It has therefore been with some concern that we have followed the past years' discussion on reforming the Inter-American Human Rights Commission. To be sure, all institutions can be improved and none should stand above scrutiny. But there would be a lot to lose if the Commission was radically changed -- especially if the Commission's independence would be restricted.

On that background, the outcome of the extraordinary General Assembly in March was quite positive. Sweden welcomes that a solid majority of OAS Member States defended the independence of the Human Rights Commission. And we hope that this outcome will now permit the Commission to get on with its valuable work.