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**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY AMBASSADOR DR. ARISTIDES ROYO,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF PANAMA TO THE OAS,
UPON ASSUMING THE CHAIR OF CICTE**

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

The safe, protected, and efficient operation of global trade and transportation infrastructures, installations, and institutions contributes to prosperity, competitiveness, and development, for both Panama and the international community.

Clearly, this task is a commitment that can only be met in the context of broad and transparent multilateral cooperation. We are pleased, therefore, that this concern of Panama's was set out in the Declaration of San Carlos, and we are particularly committed by the fact that as a consequence, the inter-American community has placed its trust in my country to lead the Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism during the 2007-2008 period.

In Panama's case, that goal and that stance are of greater relevance. We Panamanians understand that our country is an internal border for many countries and a key element in their foreign trade flows and in the expansion and globalization of international trade.

Understanding that destiny and responsibility, the Government of President Martín Torrijos has developed a new approach to Panama's security that emphasizes the security of the global transportation and trade that transits through our strategic geographical position.

With that in mind, the executive branch of government has adopted the Panamanian Initiative for Secure Trade and Transportation (IPC&TS) as a conceptual and practical framework for national security and as a key asset in Panama's strategy for enhancing the competitiveness of international trade and transportation.

As such, the Panamanian Initiative for Secure Trade and Transportation is a non-military tool for addressing asymmetrical threats of low detectability and low predictability and a new strategic approach for sharing security commitments and responsibilities with the global community, in accordance with our Constitution, the Torrijos-Carter Neutrality Treaty, and the guidelines of Panama's security policy.

Secure trade and transportation is the most strategic component of our competitiveness; it maximizes the nation's ability to fully avail itself of the growth in global trade, and it must equip us with public security agencies that are efficient, credible, and reliable; it enables us to anticipate, prevent, and combat threats to security related to our historical advantages in global trade and transportation, and it will allow us to develop reliable programs for interinstitutional and intergovernmental cooperation.

That strategic vision, as we are preparing to assume the responsibility of chairing CICTE and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee, requires us to forge partnerships with many different players, based on mutual respect, shared interests, and transparent cooperation regarding secure trade and transportation.

In assuming the Chair of CICTE, Panama undertakes to make a resolved contribution to strengthening the inter-American capacity for successfully tackling organized crossborder crime and terrorism, the illegal drugs trade and associated offenses, the illegal trafficking of arms, explosives, and human lives, the illegal trade in strategic products and weapons of mass destruction, and the diversion towards illicit ends of dual-purpose goods.

Panama, probably more so than any other country, is aware that in an increasingly globalized economy, a sea-borne criminal act or terrorist attack leading to the closure of a key interoceanic passage or port could cost thousands of lives and billions of dollars and could severely curtail the national capacity and sustainability of many of its partners in the international community.

Panama is a crossroads where the security of trade and transportation make a clear contribution to the security, prosperity, competitiveness, and development of its partners in the world.

From that perspective, Panama understands that the Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism must continue to develop as a platform for plural understanding and for open and strategic partnerships among the members of the inter-American and global communities regarding secure trade and transportation; that it must contribute to the modernization of our relevant national institutions, networks, and infrastructures; that it must build mutual international confidence and credibility in order to effectively meet the challenges of terrorism, common crime, the proliferation of strategic products, the trafficking of weapons of mass destruction, and the diversion towards illicit ends of dual-purpose goods.

We receive this mandate in the understanding that the community of nations of the inter-American system supports and shares the view that CICTE is an exceptionally valuable tool for confronting new, asymmetrical, and elusive threats to our national security and the security of our partners in the global community.

In assuming the Chair, we therefore undertake to continue strengthening the initiatives already approved by our Committee and to promote the programs that put them into practice, and, in compliance with the focus on the protection of critical infrastructure enshrined in the Declaration of Panama, I propose that this conference should study, among others, the following additional initiatives:

An International Conference on Secure Trade and Transportation, to be held annually in Panama, which will regularly bring together authorities and experts from the public and private sectors to assess the status of trade and transportation security at the global and regional levels; to analyze and plan for the challenges arising from maritime piracy, organized crime, terrorism, and biohazards; to share information, experiences, and know-how; and to promote the showcasing, transfer, and acquisition of technological innovations in products, equipment, and logical supports intended to ensure the security of global trade and transportation.

A Forum between CICTE and Inter-American Civil Society, held regularly and attended by appropriate key civil society players, in order to educate, raise awareness, and inform about critical infrastructures belonging to themselves and to the other members of the inter-American community.

A Coordination Forum between CICTE, the CTC, APEC, and other intergovernmental organizations from beyond the region, so we can optimize resources and maximize our capacity for response, thus ensuring the highest level of joint protection.

A Training Program for Judges and Prosecutors, to build their skills in the enforcement of the international conventions ratified by the member states of the Organization of American States for combating terrorism and organized transnational crime.

Esteemed delegates: on behalf of His Excellency Martín Torrijos, President of the Republic, I sincerely thank you for having honored us with your trust. We are certain that, with the participation of everyone involved, we will achieve significant progress in the correct direction.

Thank you very much.