REMARKS BY THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES, HIS EXCELLENCY, AMBASSADOR ALBERT R. RAMDIN

(Delivered at the Inaugural Ceremony held on March 8, 2013)
Chair of the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism, Ambassador José Rodrigo Vielmann de León

Vice Chair of the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism, Ambassador Andrés González Díaz

Distinguished permanent representatives of the OAS member states

Secretary for Multidimensional Security, Ambassador Adam Blackwell

Secretary of the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism, Neil Klopfenstein

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the headquarters of the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States and thank you for taking part in this thirteenth regular session of the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (CICTE).

We are gathered here today in this Committee's decision-making session to address issues of great importance for the Organization and its member states: matters that have to do with the defense of lives and freedoms, promotion of respect for human rights, and safeguards for the stability needed for our citizens to develop their full potential.

Your presence here today is in itself yet another indication of an already constituted hemispheric commitment, which this Organization echoes and shares in every sphere of its activities, to forge our collective security by strengthening cooperation to prevent, combat, and eradicate acts of terrorism and thereby generate ample opportunities in our region for prosperous and peaceful coexistence.
In keeping with that objective, the Committee will spend the whole of today discussing a crucial topic: efforts to combat the financing of terrorist acts and money laundering. It is crucial, first and foremost, because it combats terrorism ahead of the commission of crimes against the bodily and material integrity of persons, freedom, and democratic institutions. By making the financing of terrorism the main theme of this session, CICTE underscores the importance of criminalization, in the framework of the rule of law, as a more effective way of preventing acts of terrorism.

This is worth highlighting because, even though the international community began combating terrorist acts in the United Nations framework as early as the 1960s through the promulgation of international criminal law treaties on the subject, it was not until the late 1990s that it decided to focus on predicate offenses and, chief among them, the financing of terrorist acts.

Attacking the sources of financing serves two purposes. First, it involves attacking the roots of the organization, planning, support for, and perpetration of terrorist acts. Second, however, combating the financing of those criminal activities may also be useful because that financing may sometimes be linked to the commission of other organized criminal offenses. We are talking about crimes that may go from destabilizing the economic and financial system to destabilizing an entire country's or region's institutions, thereby undermining the values underpinning the democratic and peaceful coexistence of the peoples of the Americas.

That is why the Inter-American Convention against Terrorism of 2002, after defining its scope of application and being aware of the importance of the subject, lists in Articles 4ff. "measures to prevent, combat, and eradicate the financing of terrorism" and specifically alludes to terrorist acts as "predicate offenses to money laundering." Combating the financing of terrorism is high up on the list of priority obligations imposed by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373 of 2001, which, because of its importance, was
adopted "Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations" on international peace and security.

The importance attached to preventing the financing of terrorist acts stems from a crime prevention rationale, existing universal and regional legal principles, and the destabilizing effect that may be wrought at various levels by potential connections between different categories of crime. The most significant of those connections is that sometimes established between the financing of acts of terrorism and the laundering of the proceeds from crimes such as drug trafficking, arms trafficking, trafficking in persons, and corruption, among others.

The goals pursued and methods used by those who finance acts of terrorism and those who engage in money laundering differ substantially. Whereas the latter are interested in illicit enrichment, those who finance acts of terrorism may use both legal and illegal sources to obtain the funds they need for their objective. In order to use funds from illegal sources, those who finance terrorist acts will attempt to 'launder' those funds so as not to leave traces of where they came from. That is why, although under international law each offense has to be defined as a separate category and each has its particular characteristics, there are obvious benefits to be drawn from joint analysis of terrorism financing and money laundering cases. The mechanisms for investigating both these categories of crime are often broadly speaking interchangeable and those positive synergies also extend to prosecution.

I know that you have been discussing all this in the run up to this thirteenth session of CICTE and will continue to do so over the next few hours, with a view to strengthening your systems and, above all, cooperation among your countries. Pooling our efforts to confront a challenge as daunting as that posed by the financing of terrorist acts is a prerequisite for success. In our societies today, constantly shifting payment and financial transfer methods, combined with ever new technology, make it difficult to track flows of money that might be used for criminal purposes without appropriate international cooperation.
In this, your countries' specialized agencies and, in particular, your Financial Intelligence Units or FIUs, play a crucial role. These are Units that our own Inter-American Convention against Terrorism called for and urged each state party to maintain. Without a smooth, swift, and constant flow of information among FIUs; without adequate training for their personnel; without proper coordination among the various competent state institutions; and without some well established procedures guaranteeing the confidentiality of communications, respect for civil rights, and the best possible use of investigation, all the legal measures adopted to combat the financing of terrorist acts cannot possibly bear fruit, whereby our goal is simply to make every effort to prevent or punish those acts and in that way contribute to the safeguarding of our citizens' lives, freedoms, and rights and to the integrity of our institutions.

The willingness to work on these issues through the Secretariat for Multidimensional Security and CICTE is something we demonstrate day after day. Since it was founded, CICTE has carried out numerous training and technical assistance projects in this field. Since 2006, more than 2,500 officials in the member states have received training. Assistance was also given with the processes involved in ratifying both universal legal instruments against terrorist acts and their financing (resulting in 60 ratifications) and the Inter-American Convention against Terrorism (resulting in an additional 7 ratifications, thanks to this effort).

Technical assistance has also been provided to a dozen or so countries to develop or amend laws and regulations against terrorist acts and their financing. Technical support tools have been developed, such as "CICTE's Practical Guide to the Prevention, Detection and Suppression of terrorist Financing" and important strategic partnerships have been forged with the most prominent international institutions and organization in this sphere, especially through coordination with the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and its regional branches (GAFISUD and CFATF), and the Anti-Money Laundering Unit of our Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD).
All these endeavors testify to our member states' willingness to combat the financing of terrorist acts and money laundering and to do so increasingly through joint and more effective efforts. I trust that this new regular session of CICTE will continue down that path, because that is how we will come closest to achieving our goal of preventing acts of terrorism, from which, unfortunately, our region, too, has suffered.

The work of CICTE and its Secretariat would not be possible without the support of all our member states and without our principal donors, Canada and the United States, to whom I would like to express our sincere appreciation. I would also like to mention the contributions of Argentina, Chile, Panama, Trinidad and Tobago, and Turkey, as well as the invaluable commitment of member states, such as Brazil, the United States, Mexico, and Paraguay, that contributed directly during the year with personnel for the CICTE Secretariat. The Organization would like to express its gratitude to all of them for making such an important and decisive contribution toward the achievement of the objectives that CICTE has set itself.

I trust that the thirteenth regular session of CICTE will continue and further advance the work it has done this year and that it will lend a new and more profound meaning to the concept of international cooperation by renewing and strengthening the resolve of the member states to combat terrorist acts and their financing.

Finally, I wish to thank Guatemala for its chairmanship of this Committee and the outstanding leadership shown by the Chair throughout the past year; the member and observer states for their support and active participation in the work of the Committee; and the Committee Secretariat for its dedication.

Thank you very much.