

“Second Conference of Tourism Security in the Americas”.

Panama City, May 13-17, 2013.

Opening remarks, by Neil Klopfenstein, Executive Secretary of OAS/SMS/ CICTE

Hon. Abigail Castro de Pérez, OAS Representative;

Hon. Ernesto Orillac, Vice Minister of Tourism of Panama;

Hon. Bethany Wickens, Consul General of Canada;

Hon. Alejandra Maria Gabriela Bologna Zubikarai, Ambassador of Mexico;

Mr. Jesus Sierra, Chairman of the Hotel Association of Panama (APATEL)

Distinguished authorities;

Experts participating in this Conference;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

“Disculpen que no voy a hablar en español porque mi español no es bueno: voy a hablar en ingles como un “turista gringo”. (risas del auditorio)

It is a great pleasure for me to participate in the opening session of this hemispheric conference on a topic that is of the highest importance for the Member States of the OAS -- Tourism Security. For the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (CICTE) in the Secretariat of the Secretariat of Multidimensional Security of the Organization of the American States, it is rewarding to be part of this important initiative organized by the National Tourism Authority of Panama. I would like also to note the support of other relevant partners including the Central American Secretariat for Tourism Integration (SITCA); the Spanish Cooperation Agency; the United Nations World Tourism Organization; and the OAS Office of Tourism. We are working closely with all of these

partners to support and build our CICTE Secretariat Tourism Security Program. Today I look forward to sharing with you some of the things we are doing with both the public and private sectors to improve tourism security in the Western Hemisphere.

But, before I start I would like to thank the Government of Panama, especially the National Tourism Authority for hosting and organizing this Conference.

Tourism is, for many of the countries of the Americas, a major source of wealth and investment, as well as a major contributor to our social progress and economic well-being.

Indeed, Tourism is fundamental to many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is a huge source of foreign exchange and a major generator of jobs; and it is clearly, one of the fastest, if not the fastest, growing industry in the region. Its importance is reflected in the share of GDP it contributes to the economy and prosperity of our countries in the hemisphere, more than 8.5%. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the Americas received 16% of the world's total of international tourists. And, tourism income in the region represents 20% of the world's total. These data show that protecting the tourism sector in our countries is vital to secure a major source of income and development. Indeed, improvements in tourism security have implications that reach far beyond the tourism sector, as they contribute to the overall security and prosperity of the Americas.

From a terrorist and crime perspective, tourism and recreational facilities, are

considered soft targets. In recent years, many of the OAS Member States have experienced a marked increase in crime. The large volume of visitors, their diverse nationalities, and the growing economic importance of tourism in our Hemisphere increase the damage that can be caused by either a terrorist or criminal attack on a major tourist facility. Visitors from all over the world select tourism destinations in the Americas because of our natural and cultural attractions and because of our reasonable prices. But, we must not forget that security is also an important factor when making travel decisions for pleasure.

Over the last several years, the tourism industry has suffered negative publicity because of the increased level of organized crime and violence in the Americas. Although not targeted at tourists, this activity has nonetheless resulted in an international public perception of insecurity in the region, which has negatively affected our tourism industry.

In general, the threats to tourism security and safety in the Americas include drug trafficking, human trafficking -especially sexual exploitation of children and women-, kidnapping, extortion, and transportation security issues, as well as the natural threats, pandemics and weather disasters. Of course, not all of these threats affect all countries in the Americas equally, and this list is not comprehensive. Even though tourists face a number of threats in our region, it is important to remember that, fortunately, few tourists are directly affected by violence and crime. But we must also remember that, unfortunately, it is that lonely case which can damage the reputation of a tourist brand, destination, country, and even an entire region.

Because the tourism sector is the lifeblood of many countries and municipalities of our region, training activities which strengthen security capabilities and encourage preventive measures are vitally important. In addition to improving security for visitors and locals alike, these capacity building programs help build greater public confidence and promote better cooperation between the public and private sectors to protect tourists and citizens from a range of safety and security threats.

Tourism security absolutely requires the participation of both the public and private sectors and in that their confidence is important. Although providing security to citizens, visitors, and property is traditionally a basic responsibility of governments, certain tasks and risk management in tourism security must be shared with the private sector. For example, tourism infrastructure is often owned and/or operated through public/private partnerships or by private entities in many countries of the Americas. Governments must play a leadership role by pulling all of the interested parties together, promoting greater understanding of the interests and concerns of all respective sectors, and then establish the appropriate laws and regulations. This, of course, is easier said than done. Bridging the public-private sector divide is often a significant challenge for many of us in the Americas.

The OAS/SMS/ CICTE's Secretariat Tourism Security Program started as a pilot project in the Caribbean countries in 2005 to support nine Member States in their security preparations for the 2007 Cricket World Cup. In 2008, OAS Member States created a mandate for the CICTE Secretariat to provide technical assistance and capacity-building

for the security of tourism and recreational facilities.

CICTE training is designed to consider the unique qualities and particularities of our beneficiary countries and their individual tourist destinations. Indeed every place is different. Our approach is multidimensional in scope. As with most CICTE programs, the Tourism Security Program aims to strengthen the capacity of Member States to prevent and respond to safety and security incidents, whether perpetrated by terrorists, criminal organizations, common criminals, accidents or natural events.

With the major support from the Canadian Government and additional funds from United States and Spain, the CICTE program started in the Caribbean and has expanded to other Latin American countries, including Mexico and Central America. With the support of the OAS Tourism Office, we have recently extended our programs to benefit South American countries.

The objective of the Tourism Security Program of the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (CICTE) is to help prevent crime and mitigate risks in the tourism industry, and by doing so, we are helping countries promote safe tourist destinations which support the economies and overall prosperity of the OAS Member States.

Specifically the CICTE Program seeks to enhance the capacity of public and private security officials of our beneficiary countries to deal with tourism safety and security issues and to further strengthen public-private partnerships to protect both tourists and

tourism facilities. The training activities are specifically developed for a public-private audience, and structured to address issues faced by law enforcement, and other public officials, as well as by business and security managers who work in tourism and at tourism facilities. Our program specific objectives are:

- To strengthen the capacity of security systems within the tourism industry against security threats.
- To improve preparedness by promoting methods of planning, prevention, and crisis management.
- To promote sharing of information and best practices and the establishment of a network of tourism security experts in the region.
- To increase cooperation between the public and private sectors in the tourism industry and promote or enhance development of partnerships in crime prevention.
- To promote a culture of crime prevention and security awareness and understanding of the balance needed between economic and security issues in the protection of tourist and recreational facilities and related transportation services.

Our tourist security program starts with two-day stakeholder preparatory meetings and workshops, followed by five-day specialized training courses, and then ends with a program evaluation 3 to 6 months later. Approximately 120 persons (from the public and private sectors) participate in these activities in each beneficiary country.

Participants include tourism police and other law enforcement officials from the public sector, and hotel and security managers from the tourism private sector.

When we design our training courses, the OAS/SMS/CICTE Secretariat ensures a sound balance between the theoretical and practical, including the use of power point presentations, classroom exercises, case studies, identification of best practices, and presentations of key concepts and methodologies. We focus on a number of important issues and capabilities. These include Security in the tourism industry, Emergency / crisis management, Communications, Hotel and facility security, Threat Analysis and Security Surveys and Assessments. We tailor our training to the specific needs and issues of our host country in which we are working. And finally, we take follow up and evaluation very seriously. About three months after the completion of the course, the CICTE Secretariat performs an evaluation in the country/location where the training was conducted. This post-training follow-up evaluation assesses whether participants have retained the knowledge and skills gained through the course and checking to see if they are applying them in their individual work.

I would like to emphasize that in addition, we are building sustainability. We are using our training programs to create a network of public and private sector specialists who we call (“tourism security liaisons”). These “liasons” have displayed leadership and commitment in our training programs. We invite them to participate in subsequent training programs to share their experiences and best practices with their colleagues from other countries. Our “tourism security liaisons” are drawn from several tourism

destinations including Mexico, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Panamá, and the Caribbean. This network is a wonderful way to build contacts and cross- fertilize!

Our OAS/CICTE Tourism Security Program has allowed us to strengthen relationships with other international organizations and partners. For example:

- 1) The UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) and the CICTE Secretariat agreed to join forces to conduct the research necessary to analyze the needs of the tourism sector in Mexico. UNICRI subsequently included these observations in its international observatory findings on public/private partnerships in the region.
- 2) With the Organization of Security and Cooperation of Europe (OSCE), CICTE Secretariat has shared its experiences of working together on public-Private partnership to enhance tourism security.
- 3) The World Tourism Organization, through the OAS Tourism Office, is supporting the CICTE Secretariat Tourism Security Program under the framework of the MOU signed between WTO and the OAS.
- 4) The Central American Secretariat for Tourism Integration (SITCA by its acronym in Spanish) has been an active partner with us in this part of the Hemisphere.

So, now, 4 years into our work, what has the CICTE Tourism Security Program

accomplished in the Americas?

1) We have mapped the security and crime situation in every tourism location where we have offered our program, and thus, have identified specific needs for training.

2) We have improved participants understanding of concrete tourism security challenges. The knowledge and technical skills acquired through our training courses have strengthened their capacities to use tools such as risk and threat assessments methodologies, and to take advantage of identified best practices;

3) We have raised awareness on the need to improve communication and coordination between the public and private sectors of tourism industry. Our training has improved professional working relationships which assist in the development of strong public-private partnerships in tourism security.

But our training is not perfect. So, what have learned in the past 4 years about tourism security in the Americas? What do we need to keep working on?

1) First, It is important to be sensitive to the way the issue of tourism security is addressed with local authorities and stakeholders to avoid magnifying a security situation in the media and sending the wrong message to potential visitors. To accomplish this, we must always emphasize to stakeholders the preventative nature of our training and the importance of being prepared to prevent and react to terrorist attacks, criminal threats, natural disasters, and other crisis. We must also remind and

assure our local stakeholders that we do not offer training because of a particular security problem, but rather because of the importance of the tourism industry to their national economy.

2) We have noticed there is a huge demand for tourist security training that is certainly manifested by this audience here. Many countries would like us to reach more audiences and other locations. Therefore, the CICTE Secretariat is working to share our training materials through manuals, a video of the training course, pre-reading materials, tests, practical exercises, online training courses, a “virtual” library and a train the trainer program. We are also considering the use of videoconference tools to reach more participants in more locations.

3) And lastly, Working together is key! A major goal of our training courses is to get participants to cooperate, coordinate, and communicate with each other. We must remember that tourism security depends on everyone: the police, the port authorities, fire fighters, prosecutors, emergency/crisis first responders, hotel owners and private sector tourism security managers and a haul list of actors. Only by working together can we succeed.

And “working together” is an excellent way to conclude this long speech!, and I apologize for its length.

For us to promote a thriving tourism industry in the Americas, as well as a safe and secure one, we must all work together. Therefore I call on you to use these days together

to learn from each other, to build relationships and networks, and yes, have a little fun!
After all, that is what tourism is all about!

On behalf of CICTE and the Secretariat of Multidimensional Security of the Organization of the American States, I wish you a most productive conference.

Thank you for letting me be a part of it! We look forward to continuing our work with all of you to promote a safer Americas for tourists.