

"THE OAS INTO ITS SECOND CENTURY"
Ambassador Luigi R. Einaudi
Informal Meeting of OAS Permanent Council
February 15, 1990

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to make a few brief comments. I will begin with two announcements by way of illustration.

First, I hope all of you are aware that the U.S. Mission has been trying to contact the Representatives to invite them to a briefing tomorrow afternoon, at the Department of State regarding U.S. views of the Summit Meeting now underway in Cartagena. The briefing will be conducted by Assistant Secretaries Aronson and Levitsky, both of whom are with President Bush at the Summit. The meeting will be at four o'clock, and I hope that you or your representatives can be at the C Street entrance a few minutes earlier.

My second announcement deals with the financial crisis of the Organization. One of the more painful lessons I have learned in the three months I have served here as the United States Representative, is that we have gone month to month in a very difficult and destructive situation, not knowing when payments will be received and hence not knowing whether salaries would be paid or mortgage payments met. As we all know, there are many ways of trying to approach this problem. Some go to such fundamental issues as the structure of the Organization or the system for assessing quotas to be paid by member states (this last an issue particularly now that we have a new member in Canada).

Today I want to announce a more mundane yet still important step. It will enable the United States to comply with the General Assembly Resolution which asks that we provide a proper schedule of payments for the amounts we in fact will pay. My delegation has obtained a commitment from my government to take those funds that are currently available for the Organization during the rest of the U.S. fiscal year, and divide them into three equal payments according to a predictable schedule. We will make payments to the OAS this month of February, the next month of March and the final payment in June. In each case, the payment will be slightly more than seven million dollars. This will complete the disbursement of the monies currently approved for the Organization

for this fiscal year. (Of course, because the OAS budget is established on a calendar year while the U.S. fiscal year goes from October 1st to September 30th, additional payments from the Fiscal Year 1991 U.S. budget will still be made during calendar year 1990.)

There is a possibility -- it is only a possibility at present -- but it is possible that the U.S. Congress will decide to approve the release of the entire appropriation for the Department of State for fiscal year 1990. If that were to happen -- I underscore if because it may not happen -- the United States would then be in a position to pay its full annual quota to the Organization for the first time in eight years.

As things now stand, the basic fact is that we have successfully started to put our contributions in order. We believe the Organization deserves at least that much respect, and we hope that we will be able to meet our obligations in full. In fact, the Administration will again seek partial payment of U.S. arrears, as well full quota payment, in its request to the Congress for the next fiscal year.

These two announcements have their significance for this Organization as it approaches its centennial.

-- Ending the uncertainty of quota payments is important because it is very difficult for the Organization to work effectively if it has no assurance that it will survive. Over recent months, this uncertainty has been profoundly debilitating for the Secretariat and its able personnel.

-- Holding a briefing, even on a Summit, can be a very mundane kind of thing. And in some ways I am sure it will be. Mass briefings are always a little bit too formal, and one can never get out of them everything that one wants to get. Nonetheless, the briefing goes directly to the question of the role of this Organization, the space it should occupy.

I believe the OAS and the Representatives to this Permanent Council should be broadly active. They should be familiar with the workings of my government and active in other happenings here in Washington, even in areas that in other times or from other perspectives might be considered primarily or exclusively the preserve of bilateral ambassadors. Let me be clear: in no way am I seeking to usurp the prerogatives of the White House Ambassadors or to interfere with the proper conduct of bilateral affairs. Rather, I seek to strengthen both.

You will remember that when I was sworn in last November,

Secretary Eagleburger said very explicitly that most of our business will continue to be done, as indeed it must, through normal bilateral channels, but that the OAS would serve as "the basic sounding board of the Western Hemisphere."

Let me quote Eagleburger precisely: "Mutual responsiveness is developing into a key for our bilateral relations. And bilateral relations are crucial to the way things are done. At the same time, multilateral diplomacy shapes much of the setting in which bilateral relations take place. From the start, President Bush and Secretary Baker have made clear that we intend to give a new emphasis to our multilateral activities."

The role of the OAS, and of international organizations in general, is that they can help to establish a climate or framework within which bilateral communication and cooperation can be more effective. On issues that are of regional importance and that affect more than just one or two of our countries, the OAS can strengthen communication and provide opportunities to explore broader implications, even to devise a common approach. Our objective as our countries' representatives to the OAS should be to strengthen our respective countries' ability to cooperate in bilateral and practical terms.

By being informed, active, and aware of what others are doing, those of us who represent our countries here at the OAS and who are not saddled with the day-to-day conduct of bilateral relations have an opportunity, indeed an obligation, to strengthen the ideas and principles on which our relations are based. I say this with an explicit bow of respect to those Ambassadors -- our colleague from Paraguay, and most of our colleagues from the Caribbean -- who bear both burdens. They must deal not only with our sessions here in the OAS but also with the full weight of bilateral relations. By comparison, the rest of us are privileged. Not having to worry about day-to-day affairs, the rest of us can search beyond to what may matter tomorrow. We have the time to be able to afford to explore new possibilities.

Which brings me to my central point. I have a vision of the OAS that involves two goals for its second century. The first is to develop, strengthen and where possible reconcile the various fundamental principles that inspire our cooperation.

One of the fundamental principles of the Organization -- in fact I would say that it is the principle that in many ways made the Organization possible -- is the principle of non-intervention. We start from the recognition that the OAS is an association of sovereign states. And no matter what

extraordinary changes are wrought in the world even as we speak, this is still a world of nation states. No matter what happens, we are still going to have to learn to cooperate on the basis of respect for sovereignty.

But -- and here is both the opportunity and the problem -- history does not stand still. There is an evolution in international law and in the content of the cooperation that we seek. In this hemisphere an evolution is underway that affects fundamental questions at the heart of the original promise of the New World: democracy and respect for human rights.

One of the enormous strengths of the OAS as it enters its second century is that its membership is overwhelmingly made up of states that organize themselves in ways that are democratic. The frozen night of dictatorship is giving way to a modern pluralist dawn. This is an important strength, and I would submit that it is strength that is vital to today's rapidly changing world. I believe that we in this hemisphere are ahead in terms of evolution, and in terms of the suffering that evolution requires, of other areas of the world such as Eastern Europe which are only now beginning to face the problems of attempting to construct a democratic polity.

In our second century, one of the issues that we will face is the reconciliation of our first principle, the principle of non-intervention, with our second principle -- let us for simplicity's sake call it the principle of democratic organization and life. This will be a very difficult challenge. It will be made easier symbolically by the generosity of Paraguay in offering to host the General Assembly this June. Paraguay is one of the countries that is giving meaning to democratization. It is doing so in its own way, according to its own schedule; yet it has at the same time attracted the plaudits of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. In so doing, Paraguay underscores the potential for the Organization as a whole.

The second goal in my vision for the future of the OAS derives from another of the lessons that I have sensed during the short time that I have been privileged to participate in the work of the Permanent Council. It is that we must develop a positive agenda. We have been coming together too often on a basis of conflict. Sometimes it is bilateral conflict and tension, sometimes the problems are more general. In each instance, they are problems that we must face, that we must deal with. But their conflictive nature does not inspire a vision of a broader cooperation and a better future for our peoples.

I believe this Organization must include in the definition of its role and space both the elaboration of principles to

facilitate our cooperation and also a broader understanding that will motivate -- and I said motivate, not justify -- cooperative activities to the mutual benefit of all our countries regardless of the particular forms of organization, culture, and background.

So my sense is that two very special areas belong to this Organization and define its role -- its operating space -- in comparison to bilateral relationships and activities. The first is the reconciliation of principles. The second is the forging of a common agenda. And the second area, the forging of a positive agenda, is unique also with regard to other international organizations. The regional agenda is not space that belongs to the United Nations which is a global organization. The development of the positive agenda is space that is ours: it is the space of the regional organization devoted to increasing regional cooperation.

(Text edited for style by the author.)