

**Statement by the
Minister of Justice and Police of the Republic of Suriname,
HE Chandrikapersad Santokhi**

**at the
VII Meeting of Ministers of Justice or of Ministers or
Attorneys General of the Americas
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Agenda item: Dialogue of Heads of Delegations

**Topic: Hemispheric trends and legal and judicial
cooperation in criminal matters**

Mr Chair,

I thank you mister Chair, the Secretary General of the Organization of American States and other delegates who have addressed the conference for the valuable contribution and information, which underscores once again the efforts and measures we are taking in the Region to strengthen the security in the Region as well as the rule of law in our own nations.

In this regard I want to share with you and other delegates the developments in Suriname in the area of Security, the combating of organized crime and the rule of law.

Mr. Chair,

My country is aware that during the last decennia the security landscape, nationally, regionally and globally has been changed fundamentally.

The concept of security has nowadays broadened and includes a wide range of potential threats such as:

1. Terrorism;
2. Transnational Crime (trafficking of drugs, persons and arms, money laundering)
3. Poverty and environmental degradation;

4. Interstate conflicts and genocide and
5. The violation of Human Rights.

The functions of various International Organizations have become more and more complementary and mutually reinforcing.

In general it can be stated that combating and eliminating the various kinds of threats cannot be carried out in isolation since most of them are interrelated and have a transnational character. In this respect the far reaching impact of information and communication technology should not be underestimated.

The new security environment has necessitated the many actors towards a closer cooperation and coordination between Governments and Regional Organizations such as the OAS, CARICOM, and global Organizations such as the United Nations.

In an early stage the Government of Suriname initiated a number of policy measures in order to effectively combat and / or eliminate potential threats. We took a very pragmatic approach to control these threats which I want to share with you mr. Chair.

Firstly we started with the process of analyzing and making visible the threats of the organized crime, the criminal organizations and the persons behind these threats.

We have done this by establishing and composing specialized teams of experts who were in charge of intelligence and information gathering, case studies of several criminal cases, international cooperation and sharing of intelligence and law enforcement information, the use of modern technique to tackle criminal organizations on its weak sides f.e. control of communication and analyzing the weaknesses of the criminal organization.

Based on the results of these analyze my country designed an Action Plan and a strategy to eliminate the threats and dismantle the criminal organizations.

The main objective was to dismantle the criminal organizations by tackling them, in particular, in their weaknesses. Therefore we had

identified the top ten criminal organizations, which were threatening the Surinamese nation, by prioritizing to dismantle them step by step.

To achieve these objectives we put in place the following conditions:

- modifying of the existing law for example the penal law, the criminal proceeding law including new legal provisions like criminalizing of conspiracy and the preparation to committing this, the punishment of organized crime and criminal organization, the introduction of new legislation in the area of Trafficking in person and human smuggling, money laundering, drafting legislation on counter terrorism and the start of the political debate in our Parliament in order to approve the anti-corruption legislation;
- Establishing of investigation and intelligence teams;
- Establishing of well equipped and well staffed units (the vetted and embargo units) and
- Strengthening international cooperation by establishing joint investigation and intelligence team and by organizing the International Anti-Narcotics Conference in Paramaribo, Suriname in 2006.

Several countries and international organizations had participated in this conference. To strengthen the counter narcotics strategy in Suriname, the conference had adopted a comprehensive action plan to combat drugs and drug related crimes based on strong international cooperation.

Thereafter my country started to tackle the criminal organizations and as a result I can inform the REMJA meeting that we managed to dismantle 9 of the 10 top ten criminal organizations from which several members are arrested, prosecuted and sentenced for many years. Some where extradited to other countries while on the other hand, criminal financial investigations are still in process against those criminals.

Mr. Chair,

The positive side affects of these strategy is that the violent crime rate is going down whilst the security feeling in the community is changing positively. However, we noticed also some negative side effects f.e. the moving of criminal organizations or there cells to neighboring countries. Therefore we took the initiatives to strengthen the bilateral relations and cooperation in the area of cross border crime with Colombia, Brazil and Guyana.

In this respect Colombia offered to Suriname a training program in the form of a workshop to strengthen the capacity of the drugs enforcement units, while after two weeks we will have a high official border meeting with Guyana to discuss several border issues. We see also the improvement of the rule of law in the country.

Mr. Chair,

Not only these measures have strengthened and improved the rule of law in my country, but also the steps of the judiciary in Suriname to bring justice to the human rights violators of the 80ies who had considered themselves as untouchable in our society. They are now facing trial in the Republic of Suriname.

Mr. Chair,

I take the opportunity to thank the Organization of American States and the United States of America and other countries who are supporting the several initiatives of the Republic of Suriname and we consider them as strong and reliable parties in guarantying security and rule of law in our country based on the principles of shared responsibilities and collective efforts.

I Thank You