



**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT ALEJANDRO TOLEDO
OF PERU DURING THE FORUM "REFLECTIONS ON THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE INTER-
AMERICAN DEMOCRATIC CHARTER"**

September 16, 2002 - Washington, DC

Distinguished Secretary General of the Organization of American States,
Distinguished Dean of the School of Business and Public Management of The George
Washington University,
Distinguished President of the Permanent Council,
Distinguished Assistant Secretary General of the Organization of American States,
Distinguished Members of the Panel,
Ladies and gentlemen,

A year ago, We gathered in Lima to reaffirm our conviction that Democracy is the only way to face the future of our region, and by consensus we approved the Inter-American Democratic Charter, in the framework of the twenty-eighth Special Session of the OAS General Assembly.

Today, celebrating the First Anniversary of its signature and considering the sequence of events occurring in the region, I can firmly say that the instrument we adopted twelve months ago has revealed itself to be essential for understanding the new reality of the peoples of the Americas and how to treat their problems.

Critics and skeptics of the Charter's relevance and effectiveness must be in a great deal of trouble. The efforts made by the OAS this past April, due to the events taking place in the brotherly country of Venezuela, as well as those it is currently undertaking towards this same purpose, clearly indicate the need to reflect on the principles enshrined in the twenty eight articles of the Charter.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Upon assuming office, our Government urgently needed to establish a series of measures and high-priority political goals to overcome the authoritarian legacy resulting from a decade of systematic human right violations, widespread corruption and destruction of the Rule of Law.

In the field of foreign policy, we noticed with satisfaction that Peru's concept of hemispheric relations coincided with the OAS agenda, which is undergoing a transformation process that is not as quick as many of us would wish for, but which allows a more coherent approach towards the challenges of the international setting.

We found that Peru could contribute substantially in this period of changes by providing an approach that converges with the efforts of the member States of the hemispheric body.

In the fight for democracy, and based on our past experience, we were convinced that Peru had important lessons to share with other nations of the continent in the strengthening of the rule of law and in fighting against processes that seek to weaken it.



The very own nature of the authoritarian model of government established in Peru the past decade, whose regime of formal democracy did not fall within the classic definition of a dictatorship, made it somehow immune to existing hemispheric mechanisms that were in some way worn down by time and limited by half-heartedly declarations.

All of this strengthened our conviction that a change was necessary and that we should go beyond Resolution 1080, and beyond the improved provisions of the OAS Charter enshrined in the 1992 Washington Protocol, which entered into force in 1997.

This is how my Government put forward with great enthusiasm, the idea first proposed to Congress in December 2001 by the President of the Council of Ministers and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Peru, Ambassador Javier Perez de Cuellar, of adopting an Inter-American Democratic Charter as a means to prevent the emergence of new authoritarian practices in the hemisphere.

The initiative developed and when it was introduced by Peru at the III Summit of the Americas in Quebec, it had the following four objectives:

First, to deepen and enhance hemispheric mechanisms aimed to protect and promote democratic institutionality in member States.

Second, to strengthen the capacity of the OAS to comply with one of the most important mandates entrusted to it by the Charter of the OAS, which establishes the promotion and consolidation of representative democracy as one of its essential purposes.

Third, to establish, at a continental scale, a common assessment of values contained in democracy, mainly in the social and institutional fields, and

Fourth, to reaffirm democratic governability as a hemispheric value that transcends the borders of member States.

The negotiation process developed by the Permanent Council, which culminated in the adoption of the final text of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, constituted an extraordinary confluence of political wills.

The original document introduced by Peru was notably enriched and enhanced by the contributions of the delegations of all member States, turning it into an integral text of a collective nature and patrimony of all the countries of the hemisphere.

Furthermore, during the Charter's drafting process the opinions of civil society were gathered, thus giving the Inter-American Democratic Charter a level of legitimacy that is seldom attained in the Americas.

Therefore, we are not mistaken to say that the Charter is a clear example of the new consensus in the hemisphere, which faces the challenges of this century and is the basis for a qualitative change in our relations as peoples and States.



Ladies and gentlemen,

The dramatic framework in which the Charter was approved in Lima, on September 11, 2001, a date engraved in our collective memory forever as a radical change in contemporary history, has, however, an encouraging symbolism.

Shocked by the magnitude of the destruction and suffering of thousands of human beings in the United States of America, sacrificed by the insanity of terrorism, the 34 Foreign Ministers of the hemisphere, representing their States, stood up and ratified that democracy and the exercise of human rights are the hemisphere's only effective alternative to address the threat of terrorism and create more just societies within a framework of cooperation and development.

The Inter-American Democratic Charter is the most important institutional advancement of the OAS of the past decade and shall be the first political reference and navigation chart of the Organization's agenda for the coming years. It is not in vain that some have pointed out that it is the Political Constitution of the Americas.

The Democratic Charter constitutes the first effort to systematize existing hemispheric mechanisms aimed to protect and promote democracy.

But, its special political significance and innovation resides in the fact that the Charter creates, aside from improving already existing mechanisms for the protection and promotion of democracy, a new mechanism to deal with the subtle changes in the constitutional rule that greatly affect the democratic order, besides the traditional coup d'état.

The Charter empowers the OAS' Permanent Council and the General Assembly to adopt decisions that can be reached to suspend a member State from the Organization, in response to an unconstitutional interruption in a State or upon an eventual rupture of its democratic order.

From this point of view, the Charter has not only a doctrinal value, but also means a step forward with a very innovative contribution in the procedures for defending democracy.

However, the Inter-American Democratic Charter is not only a punitive instrument. It also contemplates important preventive aspects, which are to be developed in more depth, aimed to allow any member State to voluntarily appeal and request assistance and cooperation from the OAS when its democratic political process or legitimate exercise of power could be threatened.

The Inter-American Democratic Charter provides us with a modern and comprehensive vision of democracy, consecrated as a right, interrelated with the protection of human rights and based on the fight against poverty and extreme poverty, social and economic development, social cohesion and execution of social policies that include and not exclude the less favored segments of the population.

THE CHALLENGES



Now it is the moment for reflection and to seek new perspectives.

We are gathered here to commemorate the first anniversary of the Inter-American Democratic Charter and to examine some of the challenges faced by our Nations and our hemispheric organization in the field of democracy.

It is our turn now to fulfill the commitments undertaken and put into practice in our countries the essential elements of representative democracy enshrined in the Charter.

By adopting the "Andean Charter for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights", the Presidents of the Andean Community have, from our side, recently undertaken the challenge of defending democracy and human rights.

We should also confront the challenges arising from the new threats for governability and democracy, which are no longer coming from sectors that have a certain degree of power within our societies, but rather from the less favored segments of the population that see how their demands go unnoticed and feel excluded and deprived.

These internal threats arise when the basic needs of sectors of the population cannot find institutional channels to deal with their demands. This fact is particularly evident in countries like Peru where, for a whole decade, national self-esteem was damaged and citizens divided, lied to and manipulated. In these countries, the credibility of democracy is a key issue.

Our States have the categorical imperative of creating such institutional channels and dialogue mechanisms to assist those demands. We must develop inclusion mechanisms, as well as social cohesion mechanisms to recreate legitimacy in their relationship with those governed.

We have the urgent and unavoidable duty of reversing this increasing trend towards disenchantment with democracy. If we do not do this, we will be inexorably threatened by the constant uncertainties of our history, of falling back on an authoritarian regime under the pretext of imposing order, which would be a mediocre, authoritarian, corrupt and savage order.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The subject of democracy can no longer be considered detached from other important subjects of the hemispheric agenda. Neither can we affirm that the democratic model is restricted to the formal structure of the rule of law and within the regular renewal of authorities by means of free and fair electoral processes.

It is not limited to civil and political rights, but also projected to the rights of second and third generation, which include the right to development. As the Charter indicates, "democracy and economic and social development are interdependent and mutually reinforced".

Democracy can only be preserved and strengthened in an environment of security. The need to associate the concept of democracy with security, that is to say "Democratic Security", is no other than putting into practice democratic consensus and dialogue when debating security issues.



There must be democratic control over the use of force and, consequently, institutional subordination of the armed forces to the democratically elected authorities. These issues must be carefully considered during the next Special Conference on Security, to be held in Mexico in 2003.

In the same manner, the current context makes it imperative for the States of the hemisphere to begin, based on the parameter of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, an honest and transparent dialogue regarding social and economic problems seriously threatening our democracies today.

In our case, this past July, political parties, managerial unions, central unions, the Catholic Church and prominent representatives of civil society signed the National Agreement on Governability. The ceremony was attended upon special invitation, by Secretary General Cesar Gaviria and other outstanding international personalities.

In the Agreement, which enjoys the widest national support, the leaders of the country have expressed their commitment to develop and support, in a twenty-year period, twenty-nine state policies directed to attain four major objectives in areas of vital importance, such as: democracy and the rule of law, equity and social justice, competitiveness and public ethics, and decentralization.

In the same manner, we are aware today of the need to reconcile macroeconomic policies with measures to boost development and guarantee governability. This in fact was the result of the United Nations Conference on Financing Development and of the Second Meeting of South American Presidents.

During this last meeting, my Government proposed the creation of a Financial Solidarity Fund to Defend Democracy and Governability. As we stated then, the purpose is to collect fresh resources for public investment in the economies of the region so as to boost the economy, generate employment, and protect them from any adverse financial shock.

We are convinced that Peruvian democracy is not an island in Latin America or the World, therefore we cannot judge it isolated from this global context for the region's democracy is at stake.

In this sense, my government has insisted in several fora on the need to adopt a common policy to reduce defense expenditures in order to free resources that can be allocated for education and health programs.

We have practiced what we preach. Thanks to our armed forces' understanding and cooperation, this year's budget has been modified substantially and resources for social programs have increased.

At the same time, we have successfully begun to hold meetings with our neighboring countries to evaluate the reduction in defense expenditures, being particularly important the agreements reached with Chile a few weeks ago.



Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our countries have big goals to accomplish in order to promote the economic and social well being of their people, in democracy. In the case of my country, a series of actions are being developed to adequately assume these challenges.

Within the regional context, only hours away from assuming the role of President I signed, together with the presidents of the Andean Community of Nations, the “Machu Picchu Declaration on Democracy, the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Fight against Poverty”, a document that reflects the importance given by Peru to linking democracy, indigenous peoples and the fight against poverty as a means to create a country of all bloods, a society based on diversity, pluralism and tolerance.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are at a crossroad in the history of this continent, and the difficult situation that several of our countries are experiencing does not allow us to experiment with policies when life and the rights and hopes of our peoples are at stake. Experience teaches us that the only road we should follow is the rule of democracy and the rule of law, in an integral perspective of development.

I would like to finish by expressing our deep appreciation to the OAS General Secretariat and the George Washington University for this remarkable initiative.

I reiterate the full and complete support of the Government of Peru to the task of disseminating the Charter, which in our case shall be a landmark this coming September 24 and 25, when we shall greet in Lima the participants of the international meeting entitled “A year since the Inter-American Democratic Charter”.

Thank you.