

Excellencies,

It is my distinct pleasure to be here today to announce and formally hand over to the BDF and GA specialized equipment that has been purchased thanks to the very generous donations received from the European Union and the Government of Canada.

The equipment that will be donated consists of 100 GPS units, four satellite radios, solar panels and chargers, as well as laptop computers to upload specialized software, worth more than US\$200,000. These devices will be distributed equally among the BDF and the GA.

We are very pleased to be making this donation today since it is the first time that the OAS AZ Office through the Peace Fund is able to provide such sophisticated devices to the security forces of Belize and Guatemala.

Although the provision of communications equipment is contemplated in the CBMs, in the past, thanks to the support of the United Kingdom, we were able to donate GPS units to the armies. Likewise, the governments of Mexico, the United States, Spain, and Germany have been staunch supporters of our work.

Today, thanks to the EU and Canada, we are able to take that support one step further with this significant donation in the form of highly specialized military equipment.

Our hope is that this contribution will not only help improve communications among the officers when they are deployed to remote rural and jungle areas but also contribute to keeping the Adjacency Zone better monitored and more peaceful. The radios will enable connections to be faster and more timely, and the officers will be able to rely on uniform GPS devices with precise data readings. In this regard, I am pleased to inform that our verification officers have been working round the clock to calibrate all 100 units so that they are ready to use as we speak.

In closing, I would also like to say that since the OAS Office was established in 2003, regular military to military encounters have taken place, all of which have boasted highly successful results. During these meetings we have been constantly reminded of the very cordial and cooperative relationship that exists between the BDF and the GA and we have been regular witnesses to the impressive success rates of the contact patrols. Not to mention that since the negotiation process began under the auspices of the OAS there has not been one single confrontation between the armed forces of Belize and Guatemala, a reality that sharply contrasts the one before our involvement in the process.

At a time when the next steps at the political/diplomatic level are being worked out, what we *can* say is that the work that has been advanced on the ground has been greatly productive. The OAS Office in the Adjacency Zone has helped defuse hundreds of incidents; forged numerous alliances among bi-national counterparts; offered specialized training and workshops in specific technical areas; implemented a very popular culture of peace program that benefits hundreds of local students on an annual basis; and, as mentioned earlier, facilitated increased cooperation among the armed and security forces of Belize and Guatemala who now boast a strong military to military relationship, which includes frequent coordination meetings, information exchanges and joint evaluations of the security situation in the Adjacency Zone.

We are proud to support both armed forces and we are extremely grateful for the support we have received from them when carrying out our own duties. Please rest assured that we will continue to search for additional ways in which we can be of assistance so that together we can improve the lives and conditions of the communities in the Adjacency Zone who are counting on us.

In closing, allow me to brag a little bit. This Office and the work that it has achieved is a model project, which countries in other parts of the world, such as in Africa, are looking at to replicate. We have a small staff and a small budget but highly cost-effective –as a Scandinavian Ambassador once told me: it's the cheapest peace mission in the world! We owe our success to the five people that run this Office: Sergio, our Director, Juan Carlos, Luis, Isis and Leandro but they also cannot do what they do without the support of the international donor community, so thank you to all! I sincerely hope that we will be able to count on that support as we continue to plant the seeds of peace along the Adjacency Zone. The choices that we make define us. The governments of Belize and Guatemala, with the support of the OAS, have chosen to find a solution to the territorial differendum through peaceful means. Please continue to help us make that choice a reality.

Thank you very much.