

AG/DEC. 60 (XXXIX-O/09)

DECLARATION OF SAN PEDRO SULA:  
TOWARD A CULTURE OF NON-VIOLENCE

(Adopted at the fourth plenary session, held on June 4, 2009)

THE MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND HEADS OF DELEGATION OF THE MEMBER STATES OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OAS), meeting in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, on the occasion of the thirty-ninth regular session of the General Assembly,

RECOGNIZING AND TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the concern expressed by their societies regarding violence in the Hemisphere, as well as the consequences that violence has for the social, economic, political, and cultural development of their peoples, affecting all population groups, especially those at risk, and seriously deteriorating their quality of life;

CONSIDERING that a culture of peace and non-violence must be viewed as a set of values, attitudes, and modes of behavior based on respect for life, human beings, and their dignity; that it gives priority to human rights, ending of violence, and adherence to the principles of freedom, justice, democracy, solidarity, tolerance, and respect for the diversity that characterizes the peoples of the Hemisphere; and that it must be promoted through education, dialogue, and cooperation;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT that governments have a fundamental role to play in the promotion and strengthening of a culture of peace and non-violence;

RECALLING that all persons are born free and equal in dignity and in rights and, being endowed with reason and conscience, they should conduct themselves fraternally toward one another;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT that full respect for and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms constitute the basis for the establishment and strengthening of a culture of peace and non-violence;

CONCERNED about the serious consequences of violence for the enjoyment and exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms;

RECOGNIZING that violence and crime are serious obstacles to social harmony and to democratic and socioeconomic development in the Hemisphere, and that there is an urgent need for a comprehensive approach to their prevention;

BEARING IN MIND that the elimination of violence against women is an essential condition for their individual and social development and for their full and equal participation in society;

RECALLING the importance of preventing, impeding, and punishing the violence, segregation, exploitation, and discrimination directed at groups in vulnerable situations, among others, children, adolescents, the elderly, and persons with disabilities;

CONSIDERING the importance of fostering and strengthening social responsibility in the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, with the voluntary participation of the citizenry, the community, the mass media, and the private sector;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT that the right to freedom of thought and expression is essential to the promotion and strengthening of a culture of peace and non-violence, because it is fundamental to democracy and the promotion of pluralism and tolerance, as well as to combating racism, discrimination, and xenophobia and preventing human rights violations;

CONCERNED about the impact of the economic and financial crisis, especially its social consequences and its effects on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals;

REAFFIRMING full respect for the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of states and nonintervention in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the Charter of the Organization of American States, and international law;

BEARING IN MIND the relevance of, *inter alia*, the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, of 1993; the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women, “Convention of Belém do Pará”; related declarations made by the Assembly of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM); and the global campaign “UNite to End Violence against Women,” launched by the United Nations Secretary-General in 2008;

RECALLING:

That both the Charter of the United Nations and the Charter of the Organization of American States advocate rejection of violence and promote a culture of peace;

The importance of the United Nations and inter-American legal instruments in this regard;

The Declaration of Bridgetown: “The Multidimensional Approach to Hemispheric Security,” adopted by the OAS General Assembly at its session in Bridgetown, Barbados, in 2002, as well as the Declaration on Security in the Americas, adopted at the Special Conference on Security, held in Mexico City, Mexico, in 2003, which underscored the multidimensional scope of security and that the purpose of security is the protection of human beings;

United Nations General Assembly resolution 53/25, which proclaimed the period 2001-2010 the “International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World,” and related United Nations General Assembly resolutions, as well as the Declaration and Programme of Action of the United Nations on a Culture of Peace of 1999;

United Nations General Assembly resolution 61/271, “International Day of Non-Violence”;

United Nations General Assembly resolution 63/23, “Promoting development through the reduction and prevention of armed violence”;

OAS General Assembly resolutions AG/RES.. 2164 (XXXVI-O/06), “Inter-American Program on Education for Democratic Values and Practices,” which underscored the importance

of education for peace, and AG/RES.. 2431 (XXXVIII-O/08), “Preventing Crime and Violence in the Americas,” as well as other General Assembly resolutions on this topic;

The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice, the United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of Their Liberty, the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-custodial Measures; as well as the Principles and Best Practices on the Protection of Persons Deprived of Liberty in the Americas, adopted by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, and the relevant sections of the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

The outcomes of the First Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Public Security in the Americas, held in Mexico City, Mexico, in 2008; the Meeting of Ministers of Health of the Americas on Violence and Injury Prevention, held in Mérida, Mexico, in 2008; and the Second Meeting of National Authorities on Trafficking in Persons, held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 2009; and

That the recommendations of the World Report on Violence and Health (2002) of the World Health Organization (WHO) state that the multifaceted nature of violence requires the adoption of multisectoral strategies with the commitment of governments and interested parties at all levels of decision making: local, national and international;

WELCOMING WITH SATISFACTION the important work carried out by the different organs, agencies, and entities of the inter-American system dedicated to the prevention of violence;

#### TAKING NOTE:

That, according to the WHO World Report on Violence and Health, violence is the result of the complex interplay of individual, relationship, social, cultural, and environmental factors;

Of the concerns expressed by the countries of the Central American Integration System (SICA) in the report of the First International Conference on the Structural Causes of Violence; and

Of the work done in the framework of the Inter-American Peace Forum, including the seminar “Democratization of Knowledge for the Creation of a Culture of Peace – Ceibal Plan,” held in Montevideo, Uruguay, in 2009; and

#### RECOGNIZING:

That violence can be manifested by or against individuals, as well as in families and other spheres of the community;

That inequality and social exclusion, as well as the lack of opportunities in society, contribute to the exacerbation of violence and that, consequently, it is essential to have economic and social development that offers equality of opportunity, justice, and social inclusion;

The fundamental role of family for the promotion and strengthening of a culture of peace and non-violence;

That children and adolescents can be exposed to violent behavior at home, at school, and in public due to a variety of factors, including cultural, economic, social, ethnic, and political factors;

That intolerance and violence directed at migrants and their families hinder a culture of peace and non-violence;

That violence in their societies, including armed violence, hinders the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and thus can affect economic and social development, which is essential for a culture of peace and non-violence;

The need to eliminate trafficking in, and the illicit manufacturing, use, and diversion of, small arms and light weapons, given that they aggravate violence in societies and hinder the consolidation of a culture of peace and non-violence;

That the progressive reduction of violence, respect for human rights, good governance, sound public administration, combating corruption and impunity, and the strengthening and upholding of democratic values and the rule of law are indispensable to creating and sustaining a culture of peace and non-violence;

The contribution of culture to the promotion of social cohesion and inclusion, as well as the positive impact of cultural activities, the contribution of creative industries, and cultural entrepreneurship, as means of combating, reducing, and preventing violence;

That free, pluralistic, independent, and responsible mass media can contribute actively to promoting the values of peace and non-violence, tolerance, and unconditional respect for human rights; and

That a culture of peace and non-violence includes efforts to meet the developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations,

#### DECLARE:

1. Their commitment to promote, within a framework of the rule of law, a culture of peace and non-violence, which is understood as a set of values, attitudes, and modes of behavior based on respect for life, human beings, and their dignity, and which gives priority to human rights, ending of violence, and adherence to the principles of freedom, justice, democracy, solidarity, tolerance, and respect for diversity.

2. The necessity to involve all sectors of society in fostering a culture of peace and non-violence.

3. The importance of broadly publicizing human rights by means of public policies that consolidate the efforts of the member states to promote a culture of peace and non-violence.

4. The importance of adopting measures necessary to prevent, impede, and punish the violence, segregation, exploitation, and discrimination directed at groups in vulnerable situations, among others, children, adolescents, the elderly, and persons with disabilities, as well as of seeking to ensure that domestic legislation addresses these acts of violence against them and that every effort is made to guarantee that they receive legal assistance when necessary to obtain redress.

5. Their commitment to promote actions aimed at safeguarding respect for the rights of indigenous peoples, persons of African descent, migrants and their families, and individuals in vulnerable situations, particularly those affected by violence generated by any kind of discrimination, including discrimination based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and xenophobia.

6. The importance of promoting policies to foster greater awareness and sensitivity among citizens aimed at combating discrimination against persons with disabilities and avoiding their rights being undermined by acts of violence.

7. The need to promote the strengthening of state institutions in order to provide protection and security for individuals and combat impunity, with full respect for human rights, and to facilitate access to and the administration of justice.

8. Their determination to design public policies and encourage legislative measures, as appropriate, in order to combat violence and discrimination.

9. Their commitment to develop public policies and strengthen multilateral cooperation for the purpose of promoting effective empowerment of women in political, social, and economic spheres, as well as educational initiatives to eliminate cultural patterns which tolerate violence and discrimination against women and girls.

10. Their commitment to make progress in promoting and implementing domestic legislation to prevent, eliminate, and punish all forms of violence against women.

11. The need to promote opportunities for collaboration and dialogue between public officials and communities, according to the characteristics of each population, in order to develop violence prevention and conflict resolution programs.

12. Their determination to design public policies and educational programs with a view of achieving a cultural transformation aimed at eradicating domestic violence.

13. The importance of developing and implementing educational programs starting from the early years of education, in both the formal and informal systems, that promote a culture of peace and non-violence.

14. The need to provide comprehensive assistance, in accordance with domestic laws, to victims of violence to enable their recovery.

15. Their commitment to continue sponsoring policies, programs, and measures that foster the role of family in the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence.

16. Their concern about the publication, circulation, or dissemination, including on the Internet, of materials that deliberately advocate, promote, or incite hatred or violence.

17. The importance of supporting efforts by local governments in reclaiming and safeguarding public spaces in order to provide safe surroundings.

18. Their determination to formulate and promote policies that incorporate sports, the arts, and other cultural activities, including the exchange of experiences, that foster respect for

cultural diversity and heritage, and that include stimulus of creative industries and cultural entrepreneurship, which strengthen a culture of peace and non-violence.

19. Their commitment to strengthen hemispheric cooperation to fight crime and violence, through the adoption of strategies that emphasize the role of prevention at its various levels and the administration of justice.

20. The importance of multilateral cooperation based on full respect for the sovereignty of states while factoring in the principle of shared responsibility to deal with the global drug problem and related crimes in a comprehensive manner.

21. The need to develop and strengthen programs for the prevention of drug use and abuse in view of the violence they generate in schools, universities, communities, and the workplace.

22. The need to develop and strengthen programs for the prevention and treatment of alcohol abuse, in order to prevent associated violence.

23. Their decision to address the criminal gang problem, its related aspects, and its effects on the social environment, taking a comprehensive approach that includes, *inter alia*, prevention and the rehabilitation and reintegration of individuals affected by this phenomenon, strengthening cooperation to combat the criminal gang problem in order to eliminate violence and intimidation generated within and among their societies.

24. The need to pursue efforts to implement the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (Programme of Action).

25. The importance of increasing cooperation, in accordance with their domestic and international commitments, to prevent, combat, and eradicate illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, ammunition, explosives, and related materials, in order to continue addressing crime and violence in society, as part of the consolidation of a culture of peace and non-violence.

26. The need to continue promoting the organization of prison systems based on respect for human dignity and human rights, including policies and practices geared toward rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

27. Their determination to address all types of violence against children and adolescents, especially child pornography in all its manifestations, including on the Internet, and to raise awareness of the scope and effects of the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents worldwide.

28. Their commitment to adopt policies and programs to ensure the social, economic, and cultural inclusion of youth, in order to create the necessary conditions for youth to live in a peaceful and non-violent society.

29. Their commitment to promote respect and tolerance for the cultural diversity, identities, and religions of their peoples, with a view to fostering a culture of peace and non-violence.

30. Their commitment to promote respect for and protection of the environment in the context of a culture of peace and non-violence, by including, *inter alia*, capacity building and the training of human resources in the formulation of development strategies and projects to ensure environmental sustainability.

31. Their intention to undertake coordinated cooperation initiatives to mitigate the impact of the economic and financial crisis and its effects on social programs, with the support, when appropriate, of international, regional, and subregional organizations.

32. To request the General Secretariat to carry out the necessary actions, with the support of member states, to achieve the implementation of this Declaration.

