



## Organization of American States

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**Press Release**

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### **IN BOLIVIA, OAS ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL OPENS MINISTERIAL MEETING ON THE ENVIRONMENT**

Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia—The Assistant Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS), Albert R. Ramdin, called for countries in the hemisphere to implement national policies that will help bring the benefits of sustainable development to all their citizens, and recommended that governments work cooperatively with all sectors of society to establish such strategies.

Speaking today at the opening ceremony of the First Inter-American Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities on Sustainable Development, taking place in this South American nation, Ramdin stressed the importance of regional cooperation to respond to the new environmental challenges emerging in the region.

“Development strategies need to include sustainability as an essential requirement for the balanced, interdependent and integral attainment of economic, social and environmental goals,” said the Assistant Secretary General. He added that “the principle of sustainability speaks to the absolute importance of adopting policies and strategies that encourage changes in production and consumption patterns, in order to provide a better quality of life for people, as well as to preserve the natural assets on which all life forms depend.”

The two-day meeting is bringing together environmental ministers, other governmental representatives and experts in environmental management from the 34 OAS member states to study a number of key environmental issues.

During his welcoming remarks at the opening session, Bolivian Minister of Foreign Affairs David Choquehuanca outlined the main areas of work to be addressed in the next two days, which include discussions on how to make progress in the field of sustainable management of water resources; strengthen public policies and strategies to minimize the risks of natural disasters; and develop sustainable markets in the agricultural, forestry and tourism sectors.

The Foreign Minister warned that the world’s resources are being consumed more quickly than the planet can replenish them and argued that a focused concern on the health of the planet is critical. Choquehuanca called for a change of course in the modern world’s dependency on and exploitation of oil, and said citizens must find a balance and “a harmony between man and nature.”

The Bolivian diplomat said this meeting provides an opportunity to advance an agenda for the countries of the region to create partnerships that will help address the serious problems that threaten the future of the hemisphere and of the planet.



In his remarks, Assistant Secretary General Ramdin noted that the OAS is committed to working with member countries towards achieving these goals. “The way forward—indeed the only way forward for us—is to work together with renewed purpose and vitality, with a clearer focus and a more deliberate strategy towards lasting stability, equitable growth and sustainable development,” he said.

The ministers are working on the Declaration of Santa Cruz, which will provide a framework for improving regional cooperation and implementing practical strategies to address environmental challenges in the Americas.

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