

**Remarks for Ambassador Mauricio Cortes Costa, Executive Secretary for Integral Development of the Organization of American States on occasion of the Dialogue on implementation of core priorities of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)**

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10:00 AM

Organization of American States  
Guerrero Room

Mr. Secretary General it is a pleasure to have you here today to further our ties in such an important area for our member States. I would like to formally congratulate you on your appointment and let you know that we are looking forward to continuing to work with the Secretariat under your leadership.

Ambassadors, Representatives of Permanent Missions to OAS, representatives of international and regional organizations, US government officials and esteemed colleagues:

I would like to welcome you and thank you for being here today and providing us with the opportunity to host this dialogue on support of core priorities for the implementation of the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

The prevention of illegal trade or “traffic” of wild life and endangered species has been at the center of priorities of OAS member States for decades. All member States are signatories and have ratified CITES, and since 1994, within the framework of the first Summit of the Americas, called for support in the implementation of the Convention through the promotion of strategies to address the loss of habitat for wildlife and the effective implementation of laws, policies and regulations that address the protection of wild flora and fauna and the illegal trade in endangered species.

As economic growth progresses in the region and countries engage in increased trade, CITES implementation becomes more critical. Especially in a region as mega diverse as the Americas with such critical habitats that require protection to ensure the wellbeing of our people.

It is not without concern that those of us with the mandate to support countries in the quest of protecting these habitats observe the lists of endangered species grow. In this regard it is imperative to join efforts with other international organizations and key stakeholders like those represented here today, to advance hemispheric actions, policies and strategies towards the fight against illegal trade in wildlife. At the same time, it is imperative to identify alternatives that ensure sustainable livelihoods for the people of our region.

As you will hear today, at the OAS we have some interesting mechanisms that support this objective, but without cooperation, their benefits cannot be maximized.

The discussion on efforts in this area is at the center of the preparatory process of the Second Inter-American Meeting of Ministers and High Level Authorities on Sustainable Development that will take place in Santo Domingo in November, as we commemorate as well the International year of biodiversity and the 70th anniversary of the Convention on Nature Protection and Wild Life Preservation in the Western Hemisphere, the first binding instrument that called for regulation of wildlife trade.

The need to support countries achieve a comprehensive protection of species of flora and fauna and improve and promote legal, financial and institutional mechanisms is worthy not only of dialogue but of concrete actions. Hence from your discussions today, we look forward to having a clearer roadmap to join efforts in a proactive fashion to strengthen the CITES Work Program in our Hemisphere.

Thank you,