

Speech

Organization of American States



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THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES
AT THE OPENING OF THE 28TH MEETING OF THE SIRG
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On behalf of Secretary General Cesar Gaviria, it is my pleasure to welcome the National Coordinators and representatives of the partner institutions of the Summit of the Americas Process to the OAS for the 28th meeting of the Summit Implementation Review Group.

I am also very pleased to welcome a new group of participants to this meeting: representatives of civil society organizations who are observing our deliberations this morning. This session of the SIRG is an effort to develop partnerships between civil society, governments and regional institutions in order to strengthen hemispheric cooperation.

The past six months have witnessed much summit implementation activity, both at the political level, and at the technical level.

At the political level, member governments have held a series of important meetings including:

The Defense Ministerial of the Americas, held in late November in Santiago de Chile, where Ministers of Defense expressed their commitment to the Inter-American Democratic Charter and to the constitutional subordination of the armed forces and security forces to legally constituted civil authorities of our states.

The Inter-American Forum on Political Parties, a group created by the Summit Process, which met for the 2nd time in December in Vancouver, Canada.

The Second Meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas, held in Panama in February.

The Third Regular Session of the Inter- American Committee Against Terrorism which was held in San Salvador in January.

The High Level Meeting on the Special Security Concerns of Small Island States, held in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

A Meeting of Experts on Confidence and Security-Building Measures, held in Miami in early February.

Much of this work has been in preparation for the Regional Conference on Security, to be held in Mexico in early May, to review the security architecture of the Hemisphere.

Meanwhile, the overall summit agenda is being advanced on a daily basis by the partner institutions: the General Secretariat of the OAS, the IDB, ECLAC, PAHO, IICA, the World Bank, the Corporación Andina de Fomento, the Caribbean Development Bank, and the Central American Bank for Economic Integration, all of them through the Joint Summit Working Group.

The report from the Working Group, which will be discussed during this meeting's first plenary session, contains information on an impressively broad range of subjects. From support to electoral processes and procedures; to the fight against corruption; strengthening the protection of human rights and access to justice; the fight against transnational organized crime and terrorism;

to trade and investment, transportation, sustainable development and governance, probably the central challenge to our societies.

Allow me to mention a few key activities highlighted by the partner institutions:

(IDB)

The Inter-American Development Bank has been particularly active in providing support to integration processes, including the Plan Puebla Panamá, and the initiative for the regional infrastructure integration of South America. The Bank is also providing technical support to Central American countries in their free trade negotiations with the United States.

The Bank has also prepared seven new sectoral strategies directly connected to the mandates of the Summit:

- o o Sustainable economic development
- o o Poverty reduction and promotion of equity
- o o Modernization of the State
- o o Social development
- o o Connectivity
- o o Regional integration, and,
- o o Environment.

(IICA)

The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, IICA, is supporting the Summit mandates on agriculture and on rural life, through National Agencies for Technical Cooperation which draw on both public and private authorities to address the specific objectives of each country.

IICA is active in the Summit's sectoral ministerial meetings and is helping to prepare the Second Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Rural Life, to be held in November in Panama.

(PAHO)

The Pan American Health Organization continues to lead the implementation of the health mandates of the Summit Plan of Action. PAHO was given the mandates for Health Sector Reform; Communicable Diseases, Non-Communicable Diseases and Connectivity. PAHO has mobilized resources from the international community and is working with member countries to control communicable diseases, and to reduce the price of anti-retroviral drugs, ensuring access to them by HIV-AIDS infected people.

(The World Bank)

World Bank lending in the Latin American and Caribbean region demonstrates broad harmony between client demand and the development priorities set out in Quebec City. There is particular convergence in the areas of good governance, the fight against corruption, strengthening of judicial institutions, trade and financial sector reform, infrastructure, agriculture and increasing the participation of civil society in development decisions.

In fiscal year 2002, the World Bank provided 56 loans to 21 countries in the region for approximately \$4.4 billion. These were used to support reform of the financial sector, reflecting the economic and financial instability which has affected much of the region. Education along with Health and other basic social services made up the other main areas of Bank support in the region in 2002. Looking forward, basic education and health will be top priorities for bank support in some 15 countries. Other key areas for the Bank include water, sanitation and the environment.

(ECLAC)

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in collaboration with International Organization for Migration, organized the Hemispheric Conference on International Migration, held in Santiago Chile in November. ECLAC has also been active in transportation-related activities throughout the region and has collaborated with the Western Hemisphere Transport Initiative and with the International Association of Maritime Economists. ECLAC has undertaken, with the IDB, a project on vulnerability indicators and the accumulated impact of disasters.

(OAS)

In addition to the work of its Summit Secretariat, the OAS General Secretariat is implementing innovative programs on indigenous rights, gender mainstreaming and outreach to civil society. Of course, the Inter-American Democratic Charter inspires countless activities to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Finally, it gives me great pleasure to announce that the Secretary General has appointed Dr. Irene Klinger as the new Executive Secretary of the Summit Secretariat, effective May 1, 2003. We all know Dr. Klinger from her work as the Director of External Relations at the Pan-American Health Organization, where she has ensured the active participation of PAHO in the Summit Process. I wish her all the best in her new endeavors.

CONCLUSION

Since the last SIRG meeting, the General Secretariat of the OAS has continued to be deeply engaged in negotiations for the peaceful resolution to the crises in Venezuela and Haiti.

Governability is emerging as a central challenge for the Hemisphere as a whole. The Government of Chile has perceptively suggested this topic for the heads of delegation discussion at the upcoming OAS General Assembly, which will be held in Santiago de Chile, June 8 to 10.

I hope to see many of you then. I hope that, as in 1991, when a General Assembly meeting in Santiago adopted Resolution 1080, which became a key precursor of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, that Assembly will mark new advances.

These are unsettled times, times that call for adjustment and compromise to identify how to address the challenges facing our hemisphere, the deepening of democracy to include opportunity for all sectors and groups in society, and the place of the hemisphere in the world. These are topics perhaps best addressed by our Heads of State and Government; for Presidents can do what we cannot: identify the road ahead. But preparing the way, as you all know, is also the business of this Summit Review Process. We too have our responsibilities.

Thank you very much.

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