

Speech

Organization of American States



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THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES
AT THE CLOSING SESSION OF THE SECOND REGULAR
SESSION OF THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMITTEE AGAINST
TERRORISM (CICTE)
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, delegates, ambassadors, and friends.

I regret that I was unable to be with you earlier. I am, in fact, just back from participating in the presidential inauguration in Honduras. Fortunately, I know that the Secretary General was able to open this meeting yesterday, and what he said about the framework within which the Organization of American States (OAS) is working and supporting this effort cannot be improved upon by me. In fact, it sets the policy fully.

I understand that what this meeting has itself demonstrated is that the political will of the member states is very much there to continue this fight against terrorism, and to do so in a way that can be increasingly effective. I am struck that perhaps the simplest way of putting the moment where we are now is that we need delegates to the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (CICTE) who can coordinate and who will have available to them a common framework that they can use for their work and their coordination.

In that sense, everyone I have spoken to recently assures me that first, the number of high-level delegates who have participated in this meeting does suggest that the political will is being translated into the sending to these meetings of people who know and who are in thus in a position to coordinate respective national policies. I am also assured that most of the basic understandings for the proposed Convention against Terrorism have now been worked out and that the chances are excellent that a draft convention will be presented at the next General Assembly in June in Barbados. That is very good indeed, because it makes clear that the basic juridical framework within which cooperation against terrorism can take place—the rules of the game—are going to be advanced and that CICTE will be in a strong position to undertake its coordinating efforts.

Looking ahead, it seems to me that we did need—certainly people like myself, who sometimes are overly optimistic, needed—something of a reality check to avoid seeking to develop new bureaucracies or programs that could only duplicate efforts or distort priorities. On the other hand, it seems to me that as realistic as we must be about resources and availabilities, it is extremely important that we give ourselves an aspiration check, that is, that we not stop until we in fact have advanced cooperation, coordination, information exchange, and training in such a way that the various recommendations, which I understand have been or are in the process of being approved by this meeting, can be effectively implemented.

Many of these recommendations are technical ones, because they deal with harmonizing national legislations so that all forms of terrorism can be more effectively dealt with. They deal with the implementation of security measures at air and seaports; the freezing and confiscation of terrorists' assets; collaboration among law enforcement agencies of member states; and particularly subregional collaboration, which is often extremely effective within a hemisphere as diverse as this one, and which can in turn become building blocks, not only for broad inter-American cooperation, but for paving the way for juridical and cooperative progress internationally and globally.

I think that these understandings, if they can be put into practice effectively, are

extremely promising and important. CICTE has put itself in a position in which, once we have the Convention against Terrorism, the coordination can be even more effective. And if, as I suggested, the effort to keep this new body from draining resources from the Regular Fund of the Organization is a praiseworthy one, I hope that member states will also continue to consider the possibility not only of sending the best possible delegates, but also of seconding personnel who will be in a position to help ensure that the CICTE Secretariat is in a position to be as responsive and effective as possible.

I would like to make one final comment. Yesterday, I had the great privilege of having breakfast with the new President of Honduras, Ricardo Maduro, and his new Foreign Minister, Guillermo Pérez Cadalso Arias. President Maduro's first words to me were: "How can you help us on citizens' security?" I must say that the question is sharper and harder than any answer I was able to give him, but I thought I should pass on the concern. I understand CICTE is coordinating effectively with the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) and that many of the activities that CICAD has underway in the form of information exchange, in the form of training, thus ultimately creating the kind of professional environment in which it is possible to make cooperation more effective in the entire law enforcement area. Whether it be narcotics traffickers, kidnapers, or terrorists, many criminals use similar kinds of resources and exploit similar weaknesses in our own cooperation and our own systems. I believe our real objective in the long run and the real framework within which the work of CICTE must be appreciated and supported is that of contributing to the greater security and prosperity of all of the member states and of all of the citizens of our hemisphere. So it is with that aspiration, which I admit has to be kept in check with reality, but which nonetheless should remain and certainly will remain my guidepost, I am delighted to have had this chance to share this moment with you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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