

# Speech

Organization of American States



**LUIGI R. EINAUDI, ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL OF  
THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES  
INAUGURAL SESSION OF THE XXXV REGULAR SESSION  
OF THE OAS GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
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Governor Bush, Secretary Rice, thank you for hosting this General Assembly and for doing so in the Great State of Florida.

Secretary General Insulza, Ministers, thank you for allowing me to report as I end my five years as Assistant Secretary General.

My message tonight is simple: For all of us in this room, the opportunity to build in this hemisphere a strategic foundation based on democracy and therefore simultaneously open to the world and beneficial to the peoples of the Americas has never been better.

The first reason is political: The last time the US hosted the General Assembly in Atlanta in 1974, South America was run largely by dictators, Cuba had already completed fifteen years under Fidel Castro and most of the Caribbean and Canada had yet to become members of the OAS,

Today, with the important continuing exception of Cuba and a few recent stumbles elsewhere, the hemisphere has become democratic. The days of colonialism and military dictatorship are long past. After 15 years of democracy, it is true, the results are less than hoped for. Our democratic claims are still mocked by injustice -- poverty, impunity from justice and ignorance -- and the violence and instability they engender.

Despite these obstacles, since 1991 a regional jurisprudence of democracy has begun to take shape. Much of it was codified in 2001 in the Inter-American Democratic Charter. Many ambiguities remain; key among them the rights of sovereignty, but the fact is that the fiercely sovereign states that make up the OAS have agreed that democracy should be the architecture of regional cooperation.

Unfortunately, our member states have not yet completed the design. When a member stumbles, cries of alarm are still more common than a supporting and steadying hand. There is no system of solidarity, only the potential punishment of ostracism. A system of solidarity should, in my view, be developed to assist members when or even before they stumble -- not by intervening, but, for example, by strengthening the rule of law or by helping to improve public education. The potential is there, but we are still short of the needed definitions and resource commitments.

A second source of opportunity is the pace of regional integration. Fifty years ago, I was sent as a delegate to meetings in South America because no student leader could be found at my major university who spoke Spanish. "Send Einaudi, at least he speaks Italian," was the conclusion. And when I got to Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay in 1955, I found more people who spoke Italian than ones who spoke English. Both situations would be impossible today.

Today, in the United States, Spanish is on its way to being a second language; in South America, English is now spoken even in the farthest reaches, and in the Caribbean many speak English better than we do here in the United States.

Today, South Florida is home to persons from all over the Americas. It is beautiful, but it is not unique, our intensifying geographic, economic and cultural ties could make a big difference in times marked by the dislocations of globalization and terrorism. Yes, we still have racism and gender discrimination, and poverty to fight, but the ideological obstacles created by the Cold War are largely dissipated and we have more reasons than ever to pull together in a

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[XXXV Ordinary Period of Sessions of the General Assembly with the OAS. - Official Photo of the Heads of Delegation with the U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice.](#)

[Inaugural Session of the XXXV OAS General Assembly.](#)

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Secretary General, José Miguel Insulza

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democratic framework of mutual respect.

My third source of optimism is the OAS itself. I have already mentioned the expansion of its membership with the independence of the Caribbean and Canada's welcome commitment to the Western Hemisphere. This Assembly finds this unique inter-American institution at mid-passage. The last General Assembly directed the Secretary General to reorganize the Secretariat and present a revised budget to put the reorganization into effect. After a year filled with travail, and leadership changes at all levels, I can report that my seven and a half months as Acting Secretary General were facilitated by support from both the member states and the staff of the Secretariat, and that we have put in place a new Cabinet-coordinated structure that facilitates internal communication and coherence in executing mandates.

Mr. Secretary General, If you will allow me to repeat the nautical image I used when you took office last week, I was proud to hand over to you this OAS, this great ship of the Americas, with its hull and masts newly refitted to facilitate democratic solidarity, security, and regional integration. You will make further changes as you take the helm and implement your vision and that of the member states, but the craft is seaworthy.

Unfortunately, though our structure is renewed, our finances are still in disrepair. It is as though our great ship had no maintenance for its engines and nothing more for sails than patchwork rags fit for an aging small sailboat. This General Assembly will I hope set the stage for the critical changes needed in the quota system.

Putting these points together - the region's democratization, its growing integration, and the reform and renewal of the OAS itself - I believe that we are on the brink of a breakthrough. The member states last month elected a new Secretary General capable of fresh leadership; this General Assembly is demonstrating the renewed commitment of the United States; next November Presidents and Heads of Government from all the Americas will meet in Argentina. And, I would add, the presence and contributions of so many observer states from Europe, Asia and Africa makes clear that the strengthened regionalism that lies ahead will be open, taking advantage of the strengths of the New World, and not recoiling in fear or weakness.

Jose Miguel Insulza has the stature and the skills to show the way. But he cannot do it alone. We must all help him. Only a genuine multilateralism will make reality of our opportunity to make the New World a strategic bastion of democratic achievement and stability.

Thank you.

#### STATES

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

REMARKS BY SECRETARY OF STATE CONDOLEEZZA RICE TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES

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