



# ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES

Inter-American Council for Integral Development  
(CIDI)



## **SECOND MEETING OF THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON CULTURE**

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Washington, D.C.

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**REMARKS BY AMBASSADOR ALBERT R. RAMDIN  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL, ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES**

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Washington D.C., August 25, 2005

President of the Inter-American Committee on Culture and Delegate of Mexico, Jaime Nualart  
Deputy US Permanent Representative to the OAS, Ambassador Timothy Dunn  
Director of Folk and Traditional Arts, National Endowment for the Arts, Mr. Barry Bergey  
Director of the OAS Office of Education, Science and Technology, Dr. Alice Abreu  
Ladies and Gentlemen

The Second Meeting of the Inter-American Committee on Culture (CIC), for which we are gathered here today, is a clear indication that the Organization of American States is focused on implementing the priorities and goals established at the II Meeting of Ministers of Culture. In my view, it is also an expression of the organization's ongoing commitment to the shaping of cultural initiatives. Moreover, it confirms our conviction that culture and development go hand in hand.

I would like to thank Mr. Jaime Nualart, the distinguished delegate from Mexico and President of the CIC, for his leadership. Through his guidance and that of the other CIC Authorities - Canada, Chile and Argentina – we have been able to advance a hemispheric agenda on culture. With the work that you continue today, you will give shape to this agenda and our future work together on this important topic.

You will agree with me that culture is at the core of our identity and lives. It defines who we are as individuals and nations. It influences the ways in which we live, work, communicate, connect and socialize with each other.

It is indeed fitting that we open the CIC Meeting here at the National Museum of the American Indian. As we entered this magnificent building, which greets visitors in 150 native languages, we experienced for a moment the richness and diversity of the native people of the Americas. I would like to thank Maggie Burtin and Shannon Quist, museum representatives, for their efforts in supporting this event.

In my inaugural speech, I noted that the “OAS, as the premier forum in the Western Hemisphere for political dialogue and cooperation, needs to underline its relevance by developing a forward-looking agenda that responds to changing political, social, economic and security realities in the various sub-regions of the Americas and the world.”

I remain fully committed to ensuring that as we seek to resolve differences and pursue shared goals of promoting democracy, respect for the rule of law, social justice and economic development, that we incorporate culture as an essential ingredient in these efforts.

As many of you know, Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza has indicated that the promotion of democracy, development and security will be central elements of his Administration. To fulfill that vision and realize the important mandates of this organization, the OAS will continue to facilitate and promote dialogue between nations, peoples and cultures to find peaceful and negotiated solutions for existing

political crises and territorial conflicts. In absence of these, security will remain a challenge, democracy will continue to be under attack and development objectives will be difficult to achieve.

The OAS will continue its efforts in this regard. Despite the often competing national interests of 34 Member States, the OAS, in my view, continues to demonstrate leadership in achieving consensus on a range of development and political issues.

I would suggest that this success in cross-cultural communication, consensus-building and joint action is yet another way in which the OAS leads by example.

## **Culture and Development**

At the Third Summit of the Americas in Quebec City in 2001, countries agreed on the importance of promoting respect for cultural diversity by highlighting its contribution to social and economic vitality and to the promotion of fundamental principles such as good governance, social cohesion, human rights and peaceful coexistence in the Hemisphere.

Ladies and Gentlemen, you play a key role in designing policies that support these objectives. The CIC has the responsibility to follow up on Ministerial mandates and set in place a Work Plan that translates commitments into priorities and actions.

We fully understand that in order to reduce poverty and achieve lasting development, we must take into account the role of culture. The OAS has had remarkable success in executing projects that take into account these laudable objectives. However, we know that much more can be accomplished when there is buy-in from the constituencies that we serve and when we receive the support of individuals and organizations that have a common interest in promoting culture as a key component of peace and development.

In Mexico City last year, your Ministers and High Authorities of Culture examined the relationship between economic growth with equity aimed at reducing poverty, strengthening culture, and promoting respect for cultural diversity. They recognized the need to establish a closer bond between cultural policies and economic, trade, social and fiscal policies.

The OAS and many of our partners in the inter-American system have adopted measures that recognize the importance of culture in creating an environment that is conducive to development. Dr. Enrique Iglesias, the departing President of the Inter-American Development Bank leaves us with a great amount of wisdom and very pointed expressions. He once remarked that *“spending on culture is not an expense but an investment.”*<sup>1</sup> That statement is both succinct and accurate, and should be a guiding principle for our intentions and efforts. Indeed, through the CIC, we intend to identify and support opportunities for such investments.

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<sup>1</sup> Iglesias, Enrique. Development and Culture Forum at the Fortieth Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Inter-American Development Bank and Fourteenth Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Inter-American Investment Corporation, March 1999.

[http://www.iadb.org/news/display/prprint.cfm?pr\\_num=60\\_99&language=english](http://www.iadb.org/news/display/prprint.cfm?pr_num=60_99&language=english)

## **Cooperative Partnerships**

This Administration is committed to strengthening partnerships with multilateral institutions such as the Inter-American Development Bank, government agencies, non-government organizations and international financial institutions. We also intend to identify increased opportunities to work with socially responsible corporate partners.

A few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to speak at an international conference organized by the World Academy of Arts and Culture. Present at that meeting were scholars, artists and poets from the Middle East, Europe, the Caribbean, Latin America, Canada and the United States. Among other areas, this distinguished group, which included poet laureates, was grappling with ways to utilize cultural modes of expression to facilitate peace.

I spoke on the issue of cultural communication as the key to development and peace. I firmly believe that to understand and mitigate conflict, we first have to analyze and understand it from the perspectives of those who create, experience, interpret and manage it. By the very nature of this organization, the OAS has been at the forefront of promoting inter-cultural communication and, in so doing, we have successfully created a community of nations that is united in its support for the rule of law and the safeguarding of democracy, and the protection of human rights.

In July, Secretary General Insulza and I attended the Sixth High-Level Meeting between the United Nations and Regional and Intergovernmental organizations in New York. At that meeting, which was chaired by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, participants representing a variety of global and regional organizations unanimously adopted a statement on a "Partnership among Civilizations" that seeks to bring greater recognition to the role of diversity as a force for growth, stability and development.

I applaud this Committee's collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). This ability to partner creates the environment for advancing cultural policies and programs that reassert the fundamental value of culture as a building block for development.

## **Going Forward**

The General Secretariat and particularly the Office of Education, Science and Technology, as the Technical Secretariat of the Inter-American Committee on Culture, stands ready to work with you to facilitate your dialogue, provide technical support, and enhance horizontal cooperation among members.

As the inter-American community prepares for the IV Summit of the Americas which will focus on "Creating Jobs to Fight Poverty and Strengthen Democratic Governance," the time is right to reiterate the importance of culture as a powerful force for social cohesion with positive implications for job creation, community participation and economic development.

I look forward to the results of your deliberations. You have an important and historic task ahead of you. In executing that responsibility, I wish you every success.

Thank you.