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**REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE
INTER-AMERICAN COMMITTEE AGAINST TERRORISM,
DR. ELÍAS BLUTH, UNDER-SECRETARY FOR NATIONAL DEFENSE OF URUGUAY**

(Presented at the Opening Session on February 16, 2005)

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Esteemed delegates and members of the CICTE Secretariat, who this afternoon I feel able to refer to as work colleagues. And I say this not as gratuitous hyperbole but as something I genuinely feel because you are all men and women dedicated to this committee and the cause that is its reason for being.

Consequently, I take the floor less as Chair Pro Tempore of this body than as just another work colleague.

I confess I am going to begin this final activity report with a worn-out cliché: how the year has flown. It feels as if the plenary meeting in Montevideo more than a year ago was held only yesterday; I still have a vivid recollection of its smallest details. And everything that came after Montevideo seems to have flashed by. This impression was probably strengthened by the fact that there was no let-up in the activities of CICTE, even for an instant.

A plenary meeting does not interrupt anything; it is certainly an extremely important event but, ultimately, it remains just another event in the never-ending process of CICTE's work. Nothing is erased and there is no starting over. We do not permit ourselves the luxury of a clean-slate approach because there is never any pause or quarter in our work. Our task, as the great Lope de Vega said, is to "persevere, persevere, and persevere"; "not until death", but until life, until we prevail and triumph, until we can leave our peoples a safer world, where everyone can live in peace without the threat of terrorism undermining the most basic, inalienable human right: to live without fear.

For that to materialize, other conditions must be satisfied, such as working tirelessly and focusing almost obsessively on avoiding and preventing the worst scenario; in addition to being – unfortunately, because that is also part of CICTE's job – as best prepared as we can be for the worst scenario.

We in CICTE have devoted ourselves to this task to the very best of our abilities, making ourselves more receptive to joining forces with others: often an advisable and necessary course of action. You will see in the course of my report how this approach has led to joint projects between CICTE and other agencies in activities sponsored, organized and very often generously financed by members of our Committee. We have participated in meetings at every forum and level devoted to combating terrorism, in order not only to learn, but also to contribute and transmit knowledge. I have to say – and we should all take great pride in this – that despite its shortcomings, despite all the improvements needed – and this is the result of several years of perseverance– CICTE has become a model for other regional organizations engaged in counter-terrorism programs. This is due to the hard work and staunch commitment permanently displayed by all the CICTE member countries and, in particular, by the technical and executive team led by Mr. Steven Monblatt, which, through

unstinting effort, has turned CICTE into an organization that not only “tries,” but actually “does” and “executes.” The following were the main accomplishments of the 2004-2005 period.

Before I begin, I should make a small clarification. My account is not in descending order, starting with what might seem to be the most important. Here, order has no bearing on the outcome. Everything is important; everything helps to build up the institution and operation that we have set out to construct. I would like to illustrate this comment with an example: a single, well-trained technician can avert an imminent tragedy through timely action. Let us keep that always in mind. I repeat, a single customs official, well trained and conscious of his responsibilities, who discovers a shipment of weapons or some lethal substance, can prevent many deaths, either in his own country or in another far away.

Let us, then, review our progress this year as well as our activities in recent months in preparation for the necessary tasks that await in the year ahead.

In the first place, I would like to mention that in 2004, Panama, Venezuela, Chile, Dominican Republic, Paraguay, and Honduras have ratified the Inter-American Convention against Terrorism. There are now 12 member states that have deposited their instruments of ratification. The General Secretariat of the OAS is shortly to convene the first meeting of consultation with the ratifying states. It is an extremely significant event because the Convention gives rise to specific obligations and duties, and that meeting of consultation will undoubtedly open up a new area of work for CICTE. I sincerely hope that by the sixth plenary meeting many more member states will have deposited their instruments of ratification, thereby showing that, as in other areas, the inter-American system is capable of turning undertakings adopted in signed treaties into concrete measures following their ratification.

No matter how often it is repeated, it is always extremely important to bear in mind, particularly on this occasion, that cooperation comprises the core essence of our organization. Nothing is imposed by others. The term “coercion” is not part of our lexicon; not should it be.

The governments of our countries should feel that CICTE is there to serve them in at least two ways: i) to provide them any assistance that makes them safer from a terrorist attack in their territories; and, ii) to help them to join a community of nations that, just as they demand it of themselves, require others to adopt policies and “good practices” that help to prevent terrorism in any country in that community. One of the objectives of the cooperation that CICTE offers, therefore, is to help states to strengthen relations with nations that have adopted policies and implemented programs and measures that increase security for all.

CICTE helps to avoid isolation; in fact, it promotes integration of all member states in the new international system of prevention, repression, and eradication of terrorism.

Thus, in the context of that “integration process”, training was provided to 215 officials on implementation of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) ISPS Code in the area of port security. Furthermore, a project has been initiated that includes sending groups of experts to perform an independent evaluation of their level of preparedness ahead of the audits to determine compliance with the ISPS Code.

Training was provided to 98 airport officials to assist them in the compliance process for the new ICAO security standards. I would like to take this opportunity to draw attention to the hard work and effort that goes into the organization of this modality of training, as well as the funds from domestic and other sources that are needed to ensure it is carried out effectively.

A training program was initiated for customs officials. The first such workshop, held in Asuncion, Paraguay in June 2004, with the assistance of the US Customs Service, will be followed in 2005 by additional workshops throughout the region.

In response to the UN General Assembly mandate taken up by the OAS, serious work commenced on the development of a regional network of Cyber-Security Alert Centers. A meeting was held in Ottawa in March 2004, which received the very valuable contribution of Canada and Carnegie-Mellon University and paved the way for future work in that field.

CICTE sponsored a visit to the Port of Vancouver so that officials from all our countries might observe how operational efficiency can and must be combined with security. Similarly, with the collaboration of the customs and immigration services of Mexico and the United States, a visit was organized to the border between the two countries for officials from Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay, which also have to deal with delicate situations in the border regions that join them.

The first anti-terrorism policy planning exercise was held in Barbados and attended by 22 observers from other countries in the Caribbean. This exercise was carried out in the framework of the requirement identified by the island states of the Caribbean – and unreservedly supported by the General Assembly – to address the special security needs imposed by their geographic configuration. This exercise took into account the World Cricket Championship to be held in Barbados in 2007.

The Secretariat has sent all the member states a report on the participation of each in activities of the type I have mentioned, so that they can see the concrete and identifiable benefits of those activities for them. The Secretariat also keeps an up-to-date computer database on all activities completed and in progress, as well as their respective participants and the nature of that participation (recipients, sponsors, contributors, etc.).

Particularly worth mentioning is the Symposium sponsored by the Government of Canada on Border Management: a Dialogue on Cross-Border Cooperation and Border Integrity, in which the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) played a pivotal role and the United States provided special cooperation. The Symposium brought together the high-ranking government officials from member countries with direct responsibility in this area. The Chair would like to congratulate and thank the Government of Canada for the technical assistance provided through the Symposium to the fellow countries that comprise this body.

I have probably omitted a number of activities of equal or greater importance than those expressly mentioned, but I wish to avoid taxing your patience with an exhaustive list of them.

In the final part of my last act as Chair of this body, I should like to mention a number of issues on whose resolution the future of CICTE and its capacity to accomplish its core purpose in good measure depend.

Before I come to them, I would like to mention the tireless efforts permanently made by Mr. Steven Monblatt and his small team to strengthen ties to other public and private organizations at the national and international level, in order to carry out projects jointly and thus avoid, or at least reduce, needless and duplicated efforts. Needless efforts are not only a complete waste of resources, but also weaken expected outcomes. Activities carried out jointly benefit from the experience brought by each organization taking part, enrich their content and, in that way, improve outcomes and benefits in each case. Joint activities entail perseverance, exhausting journeys to every corner of the globe, and the patience of Job. It is a task in which the art of persuasion is tested to the fullest extent imaginable.

CICTE's possible scope of action depends on another dimension that has to do directly with one of the very sensitive issues I said I would mention: that of the funds essential to carry out its work plan with even a modicum of effectiveness and success.

The Secretariat, the executive team of CICTE, is composed of six people; no more. While it has the premises provided by the OAS, as well as its valuable administrative support, in certain instances that number of functionaries is clearly insufficient. I urge you to consider what this means in terms of workload: planning, coordination, financing, contracting and recruitment of human resources, curriculum preparation, organization of meetings and other activities that comprise its duties. It is essential, therefore, to increase the size of the CICTE permanent technical staff.

This issue is linked to another situation that needs to be resolved in the not-too-distant future: that of budget. At present, the compensation received by the officials that comprise the technical team is funded by the country that assigns them to each task. It is an uncertain system in the long run. It is essential in my opinion to find a permanent solution to the problem of the budget of CICTE and its Technical Secretariat. What is required is continuity and high professionalism, which is accomplished, as in almost every sphere of human activity, by having people who are talented and well trained, but also experienced. CICTE cannot afford the luxury of relying on staff secondments to perform its operations, since they are assigned essential tasks that relate to the purpose and objectives of the organization. It is essential, therefore, to provide it with an adequate structure and funding, notwithstanding the austerity that should always be a feature of the activities of institutions such as CICTE.

And now I would like to refer to an issue purely on a personal note. In my activities as a member of one of the working groups for the "Summit on Democracy, Terrorism and Security" convened by the Madrid Club for this coming March, I have encountered an area of concern shared by highly distinguished scholars and political experts from the most varied backgrounds: the shortcomings of classical international law for meeting the requirements of the anti-terrorism struggle, and the pressing and inevitable need to update it and adapt it to the needs of our time. It is crucial to take note of the foregoing and bear in mind the probability that in the near future draft treaties and conventions will emerge that propose codes of conduct to govern the activities of states and ensure basic guarantees for persons investigated for and charged with terrorism; however, they will also offer greater margins of action to combat this scourge. Perhaps sooner than we think we shall see emerge a multilateral anti-terrorism treaty among certain states that echoes some of the ideas put forward here.

In conclusion: it is for you to judge if we have discharged the responsibility entrusted to us. We have sought always to meet the standards expected of us.

For myself, I would like to apologize if I have been overly zealous in seeking to ensure adherence to the time limits assigned for each delegation's intervention and ensure the results that would enable us to reach this stage with everything in place to make this Fifth Plenary Meeting a new milestone in the history of CICTE and in the struggle against terrorism.

I bid you farewell and wish the country that takes up the Chair and the person who takes over my functions the best of luck and success in their efforts. And I would again like to thank all those who made my task easier.

May fate bring us the success that all the peoples of the world deserve.