

Discurso de Clausura del Sexto Período Ordinario de Sesiones del Comité Inter-Americano contra el Terrorismo

**Pronunciado por el Sr. Steven Monblatt, Secretario Ejecutivo del CICTE,
a nombre del Secretario General de la OEA**

In the eight years since CICTE's founding, our understanding of security issues in the western hemisphere, and of the role of counter-terrorism policies and practices in combating them, has evolved and deepened. Indeed, the threat of terrorism itself has evolved. It is sometimes forgotten in the wake of today's headlines that the first UN Counter-terrorism conventions, against aircraft piracy, attacks on diplomats, and hostage-taking, were negotiated and ratified in response to terrorism issues that first appeared in our hemisphere. Our countries have paid a heavy price for being unwilling pioneers in the era of modern terrorism and, to be frank, for the repressive measures taken in some quarters to suppress it. We have learned much about the nature of terrorist violence and the forces that sustain it, but also about how the seeds of terrorism wither where respect for human rights and the rule of law flourish.

Daily, we read about terrorist act in other parts of the world, in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, south-east Asia. We can be grateful that Latin America and the Caribbean are largely absent from these headlines. But it would be feckless to assume that what has happened here in the past and continues to happen today around the world, cannot recur in our hemisphere. What is the essential difference between the entertainment district in Bali and the entertainment district in Cancun? Or the Sheraton Hotel in Taba and the Sheraton in Barbados? Or the airport runway in Mombasa and virtually all of our airport runways? The fact that there have been no large scale terrorist attacks in the western hemisphere since 9/11 does not mean that it cannot – or will not – happen here. To believe otherwise is to impute to Latin America and the Caribbean an immunity unique in the world.

Yet even events in distant places can have immediate and devastating effects close to home. For example, the attacks of September 11, 2001 killed over 160 victims from Latin America and the Caribbean. Those same attacks also had a devastating impact on the tourist industry in the region. According to the World Bank, the Caribbean economies were among the most severely affected in the world by the 9/11 attacks - after Afghanistan and its immediate neighbors. Officials of the Dominican Republic alone reported \$450 million in lost tourism revenues from September 11, 2001, through December 2002.

Other activities do not threaten us directly, but instead other members of the international community. Money raised in the western hemisphere, whether intentionally or not, goes to finance terrorism as far away as Sri Lanka. As members of the international community, we cannot in good faith avert our gaze, and indeed, the OAS Member States have been assiduous and increasingly effective in dealing with this problem.

The CICTE program is an essential element in an international effort to improve the security of the world's transportation, financial, and cyber networks, the sinews and nervous systems of the modern age. Based on the best international practices as defined by recognized authorities such as the International Maritime Organization, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the Financial Action Task Force, the UN office of Drugs and Crime, and a host of others, the CICTE work plan is a pragmatic, results-oriented program. It is sensitive to the sovereign requirements of the OAS Member States, and helps them improve their security, while remaining mindful of the need for democratic societies to act with the full respect for the rights of their citizens.

Because our concept of hemispheric security has changed radically, our countries have agreed to work collectively to address the real threats to our democracies, knowing that an adequate response requires the combined wisdom, commitment, and effort of all the governments in the region. They have also agreed that a multidisciplinary approach is required. These problems are too complex and too big for one dimensional responses. For this reason, we have created within the General Secretariat the Sub-Secretariat for Multidimensional Security, SMS. SMS encompasses CICTE, CICAD, the humanitarian de-mining program, and a new department on threats to public security, which includes organized criminal gangs, the illicit trade in small arms, the special security problems of small island states, and human trafficking.

The nature of these problems and the practical question of how best to organize the pragmatic results-oriented programs which CICTE – and the rest of the Sub-Secretariat - manage, make close cooperation and coordination essential, and I am pleased to see that you have taken note of this in the draft Declaration of San Carlos. Again and again in international fora, the CICTE program has been recognized as a model for emulation by other regional organizations, and I am pleased to learn of the links that the Secretariat has established with APEC, with OSCE, and indeed, with relevant elements of the UN system.

The CICTE program represents an insurance policy against the terrorist violence which afflicts other parts of the world, and with which we have had ample experience – that we will not repeat. But every insurance policy carries a premium. CICTE is funded and staffed almost entirely by voluntary contributions from the Member States. The amounts involved are modest, when compared both to the needs we have identified and the results we have obtained. I urge you to look for ways to increase your material support for the CICTE program. For our part, persistent financial problems have limited the support which the Organization has been able to provide to CICTE. I hope that, over the next few years, as the Organization's finances improve, we will be able to increase the Regular Fund support to CICTE, to provide the Secretariat with the stability which is essential to continuing this successful program.

I want to say a few words about our host country. No country in our hemisphere has a longer or more arduous experience with terrorism than has Colombia. Colombia has learned hard lessons about terrorism, the ways in which terrorist groups sustain themselves and about the corrosive effects that terrorist and their supporters can have on a society. People of good faith may disagree about the origins of terrorism in Colombia, but no one can disagree that the murder of school teachers and farmers and mayors, or the slaughter of 26 innocents at a club not far from where we sit, is, as the Permanent Council determined at the time, “a despicable terrorist act...” In no country is the multi-dimensional character of our security problems more evident than in Colombia, and I am proud of the support that the Organization has given and continues to give to Colombia, as she tackles these problems.

Your discussion over the past two days has helped illuminate the nature of the terrorist threat in the Americas, its relationship to other threats we face, and what practical measures we can take to deal with them. Not every criminal act or criminal group is a terrorist act or terrorist group. But I know of no terrorist group in our hemisphere that does not resort to criminal activities to sustain itself. The more clearly we understand the nature of terrorist activities and how they relate to the other security problems we face such as drugs, and arms smuggling, money laundering and trafficking in people, the better will our people be able to defend our nations against all these threats to our security.

Terrorism in the western hemisphere is a real problem, if often hidden from view, but one for which our nations have paid a high price, and one with the potential to profoundly disrupt national aspirations to create peaceful, democratic, just, and prosperous societies. The goals of the CICTE program are to help Member States make potential targets in our region less attractive, make financial and logistical support for terrorist groups more risky, and so make an actual attack less likely, whether here or farther afield. At the same time, advances in securing Member States against the threats posed by terrorism can be equally effective in securing them against other transnational threats such as drug trafficking and organized crime.

There can be no fool-proof guarantee of safety against determined terrorist groups. However, the modest but efficient CICTE program will help Member States play their part in the international campaign against terrorism, and most important, make the lives of their citizens more secure. Our efforts represent a growing, increasingly effective hemisphere-wide deterrent to a scourge with which the OAS Member States have had ample experience, and which they are determined not to repeat.