



Organization of American States

PC.DEL/999/10
28 October 2010

ENGLISH only

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PERMANENT COUNCIL OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Vienna, Austria, October 28th, 2010

Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov, Chairman of the OSCE Permanent Council,
Ambassadors, OSCE Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honor to be here today representing the Organization of American States, in this important occasion for both of our organizations and the first time the OAS addresses the Permanent Council of the OSCE. It is thus a good moment to share with you information on the priorities and challenges that we face in the Americas, as well as on the work of the Organization of American States. (I am very pleased to be here following on the steps of a technical mission from our Secretariat for Multidimensional Security that spent time with colleagues at the OSCE last week to further deepen our institutional relationship)

Our two regional organizations are unique in their own ways; we in the OAS are proud of having the world's oldest regional organization, dating back to the Pan American Union of 1890, which was then transformed into the OAS in 1948 through the adoption of its Charter, shortly after the establishment of the United Nations. The OSCE is of course the largest regional security organization in the world.

Both of our organizations share several common goals which include the promotion of democracy and the rule of law, the protection and promotion of human rights as well as freedom of expression and of the media; and both address a wide range of security-related concerns, with the main aim to keep our populations safe.

The Organization of American States (OAS) is the Western Hemisphere's principal political multilateral forum for strengthening peace and security, promoting democracy and human rights and fostering greater social and economic development. These are the basic pillars of our Organization and I will refer briefly to our work in each of them.

➤ Peace and Security

Born (or reborn) in 1948, when the Pan American Union was transformed in the Organization of American States, the OAS was for many years an institution in which external security was considered a top priority, under the influence of Cold War policies. The Charter of the Americas

was complemented almost from the beginning by the Inter-American Reciprocal Assistance Treaty, which would be used to justify actions in countries of the region and especially for the Consultation Meetings that accompanied the suspension of Cuba from the OAS in 1962.

In spite of this, the Treaty has not been of much used in recent years. Aside from a couple of small confrontations of short duration, there have been no major wars between countries of the Americas over the past hundred years. The only military conflict was that between Argentina and the United Kingdom in 1982, and OAS members did not reach agreement on any action at that moment. In general terms, we can say that the Americas are a continent of peace and this fundamental value has been rarely threatened.

However, there have been controversies, mainly centered on border issues and the OAS, like the OSCE, has been actively involved in conflict resolution. We are well aware of the important contributions the OSCE has made to both Euro-Atlantic and Euro-Asian security that have enhanced the well-being of the world community. Regional organizations such as the OAS and the OSCE have a critical role to play to help the United Nations in conflict resolution that cannot be filled by others. This role has been highlighted by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in his recent visit to the OSCE. Within the OAS a Peace Fund has been created to receive contributions from the international community in order to support the OAS work on conflict resolution.

Our Member States have supported the peacekeeping operations of the United Nations, including the current UN Peacekeeping Operation in Haiti (MINUSTAH) established in 2004. Following the January 2010 devastating earthquake in Haiti, the OAS led the efforts of an inter-agency Task Force to mobilize international support for relief efforts. A special mission of the OAS in Haiti works to support many aspects of the reconstruction of the country, including judicial reform, civil registry, capacity building and institutional strengthening.

Bilateral conflicts in our region are dealt with through diplomatic channels or submitted to forms of mediation. I will mention only two recent conflicts between states that the OAS has addressed: the border dispute between Belize and Guatemala that has subsisted since Belize's independence and the crisis triggered by Colombia's bombing of Ecuadorian territory in 2008.

In the first case, the two countries – Belize and Guatemala - submitted the matter for mediation to the Secretary General and, after a few years of negotiations, I suggested that the border dispute be brought to the International Court of Justice for adjudication. That suggestion was accepted by both governments, and the Congress of Guatemala has already voted to accept it and to call a referendum on the matter. A similar decision is expected shortly by the Parliament of Belize. In the meantime, the OAS maintains an Adjacency Zone office between the two countries to verify incidents and promote confidence-building efforts.

The second case -- the bombing of Ecuadorean soil by Colombian airplanes in 2008 -- resulted in an international crisis that jeopardized peace and security. The situation was brought to the immediate attention of the OAS where a special meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs reached an agreement that the conflict would not be escalated. The Secretary General was asked to use

good offices to pave the way to settle the dispute and to restore diplomatic relations between the two countries, and I continue to develop initiatives toward that objective.

The Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (CICTE) of the OAS is the lead entity in our region for coordinating efforts to protect our citizens from terrorism by implementing programs on border controls such as port security, aviation security, fraudulent documents, immigration and customs, cyber security, terrorist financing controls, counter-terrorism legislation training and consultations. The CICTE Secretariat partners with more than 30 governmental and private organizations, including the Action against Terrorism Unit (ATU) of the OSCE, where collaboration has been ongoing since 2006, four years after both groups were created. The dedicated work of these two bodies reflects the strong commitment of countries in Europe and the Americas to prevent and combat terrorist acts. The CICTE Secretariat and the OSCE /ATU are both official observers to the Council of Europe's Committee of Experts on Terrorism (CODEXTER).

We regularly exchange information regarding counter- terrorism policies and collaborate on training programs. OAS work on travel document security has been framed largely on the OSCE/ ATU model, while the OSCE has sought input from the OAS for the development of its Cyber Security technical assistance program and has used the OAS Tourism Security Program as a model for its work.

--Public Security

While our region has experienced no recent wars, unfortunately this does not mean that our peoples are not faced with violence. In those areas where armed struggle persists, Colombia for example, it is usually due to the activities of powerful drug cartels or groups associated with them. Although they call themselves political gangs, they are actually the armies of the paramilitaries. Violence is rampant and growing in many countries, in the form of drug trafficking, organized crime, gang violence and human trafficking, et cetera. The homicide rate in some countries of Latin America and the Caribbean is among the highest in the world. The flow of arms trafficking into the region has strengthened this threat and makes the task of the police and the armed forces much harder. Organized crime is posing a threat to democratic governance, with great human, economic and social costs.

Since its inception, the OAS has recognized the importance of inter-governmental cooperation to maintain peace and security in the region, our third pillar of work. Our modern security agenda recognizes new threats and focuses on stemming the tide of international criminal activity, fighting illegal drugs, combating terrorism and improving public safety. Following the adoption of the *Declaration on Security in the Americas* at a special conference in Mexico in 2003, our current approach is based on the understanding that security threats must be addressed through an integrated, coherent organizational approach. Although we operate on difference continents, like the OSCE, we are working to strengthen our Member States' capacity to deal with transnational organized crime, terrorism, drugs trafficking and consumption and trafficking in persons.

Public security is a major challenge today in the Americas. We live in a region with the highest homicides rates per capita in the world and among the highest rates of armed robberies, personal assaults and kidnappings. Given this challenge, I called for a meeting of Public Security ministers and authorities two years ago for the first time in order to put together a common plan to address this threat. A preparatory meeting will be held in Santiago, Chile next month and we would very much welcome the participation of OSCE in this ministerial process.

A vital part of this effort for better public security is the fight against organized crime. The OAS is supporting stepped-up law enforcement and increased implementation of prevention strategies, including creating job opportunities, and more training and educational opportunities for young people. Our work on enhancing public security can be furthered by collaborating with the OSCE on the training of police and by sharing experiences on penitentiary and prison policies for high risk offenders. The OAS has a well developed program in the area of police training.

Drugs continue to be the single largest driver of transnational organized crime. The OAS helps its Member States strengthen their capacity to address the serious challenges to democracy, economic development and the security and health of their citizens posed by the production, trafficking and consumption of illegal substances. Our Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) carries out education, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation programs, trains law enforcement officers, prosecutors and judges, and assists in developing model laws and regulations to address money laundering. CICAD's Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM) monitors the performance of OAS Member States in fighting illicit drugs using a peer-review methodology.

In dealing with other threats to security, we hope to collaborate further with the OSCE to implement the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons. The OSCE *Handbook of Best Practices on Small Arms and Light Weapons* is often referred to but needs to still be implemented in our region. To further cooperation in this area, we will invite the OSCE to our firearms seminar scheduled to take place in San José, Costa Rica on December 1-2, to speak on best practices in this area.

We can also share our experiences with our de-mining action programs with the OSCE where our "Comprehensive Action against Antipersonnel Mines" program has shown results: we are very proud that Central America has become a mine-free zone in 2010 and hope that soon all countries in South America will also be mine-free. Another major concern related to public security is that of human trafficking; several of our citizens end up through clandestine channels in European nations in conditions of modern slavery. We know that the OSCE works to develop and implement anti-trafficking policies in its Participating States and hope to address this crime more effectively in a collaborative manner.

➤ Democracy and Human Rights

The adoption of the Inter-American Democratic Charter in 2001 signaled the unequivocal commitment of OAS Member States to free, fair and transparent elections, adherence to the rule of law, guarantee of the separation of powers, respect for human rights and fundamental liberties, and the highest levels of transparency and citizen participation in the decision-making political process, thus deepening and enriching a culture of democracy.

The Inter-American Democratic Charter reinforces the hemispheric commitment to democracy and provides a very powerful message: *“The Peoples of the Americas have a right to democracy and their governments have an obligation to promote and defend it.”*

The Charter specifies the elements that are considered essential to representative democracy and defines mechanisms for multilateral action and collective guarantees to preserve democratic institutions. Our work in the General Secretariat of the OAS to promote democracy in the region encompasses strengthening the legislative branches of government and the functioning of political parties, working to prevent corruption, and protecting democratic institutions by identifying and analyzing potential or existing risks to democracy. We actively assist our member countries in preventing, managing and resolving crises and in overcoming disruptions in democratic practices.

-- Electoral Observation

An integral part of democracy is the holding of free, fair and transparent elections. Both the OSCE and the OAS are internationally recognized for their excellent work and success in sending electoral observation missions within their respective regions to monitor election preparations, political campaigns, media coverage, voting and the counting of ballots. In the Americas, the OAS regularly observes on average 10 elections each year in its Member States, including referendums and presidential, parliamentary and municipal elections. We at the OAS are also fully engaged in electoral cooperation to our Member States, providing technical support to the Electoral Councils and creating new programs, like the projects related to the quality management system in electoral bodies (ISO).

We actively collaborate with the OSCE in the area of electoral observation. Both of our organizations are signatories to the *Declaration of Principles for International Electoral Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers*, developed by the United Nations in 2005. We both actively participate in annual meetings on this Declaration in different regions of the world and have hosted these meetings. In 2009 in Warsaw, OAS specialists shared information on the promotion of electoral integrity through confidence-building measures for electoral observation missions. At the most recent meeting of the signatories this month in Atlanta, the head of the OAS Electoral Observation Mission in Haiti presented the work of the OAS on electoral issues in Haiti, which poses particular challenges for electoral missions, being the only least developed country in our region.

At the OAS we are working on the design of a methodology for the incorporation of media as well as gender perspectives into our electoral observation missions. In both of these efforts, we are consulting and incorporating the expertise of the OSCE. A recent workshop at the OAS on

the inclusion of gender indicators into media election observation methodology was attended by OSCE specialists. Our institutions are working together as well on a methodology for incorporating aspects of the financing of political campaigns into electoral observation missions and are developing indicators for this. Our Director of the Department of Electoral Observation and Cooperation also visited the OSCE and discussed OAS methodology for the use of technology in electoral missions at the OSCE Seminar on Electronic Voting in Vienna this past September.

--The Inter-American Democratic Charter and conflict prevention

Democratic governments and processes may at times be undermined by internal or external conflicts. Therefore we have also dealt with several crises that have arisen under the Inter-American Democratic Charter. The coup d'état in Honduras in June 2009 was referred immediately to the OAS and the country was suspended a week after diplomatic attempts failed to restore the deposed President. Since that time OAS Member States and I personally have been actively involved in efforts to mediate between the parties in Honduras. I supported the creation of a "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" to examine the conditions surrounding the coup d'état, whose report will be presented to our Member States in March of year. A High-Level Commission that was requested by our Member States at the last General Assembly and that I chair is also looking into how Honduras may be re-integrated into the OAS.

Past conflicts that have been successfully dealt with under the Inter-American Democratic Charter include those in Nicaragua in 2005 and in Bolivia during the past four years. In Nicaragua we were able to avoid problems between the legislative and executive powers that could have resulted in a shortened term for the President. Under Articles 17 and 18 of the Charter, the Nicaraguan Government requested that a special OAS mission be sent to the country, which helped to stabilize the situation and allowed the Government to conclude its term.

In Bolivia, which has been subject to civil confrontation on several occasions during the past few years because of the profound political and economic changes taking place there, the government also decided to resort to the Inter-American Democratic Charter and requested that a mission from the OAS be sent to the country, which remained throughout the drafting of the new constitution, its adoption by referendum and elections at end 2009.

A recent crisis in Ecuador this past September with an attempt to oust the President underscores the importance and relevance of the Inter-American Democratic Charter. The OAS Member States acted immediately and asked the OAS Secretary General to travel to the country to help stabilize the situation. The President was restored to office and the country returned to a democratic path.

The importance of early warning and early action in this critical area of conflict prevention and resolution is very clear to the OAS, and it would be desirable to promote greater cooperation between our two institutions. We would like to learn more from your experiences in dealing with political and territorial conflicts in your Participating States. Our OAS experts participated

in an OSCE seminar last February on this issue; I am sure that we could profit from continued sharing of best practices.

➤ Human Rights

Closely related to democracy is work in human rights, where we also actively collaborate with the OSCE, in the area of protection of freedom of expression. The Inter-American Human Rights System provides recourse to people in the Americas – citizens or residents - who may have suffered violations of their human rights. The twin components of the system are the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), based in Washington D.C., and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, located in San José, Costa Rica.

An important activity of the Commission is the work of the Rapporteurships. Seven special Rapporteurships monitor and report on human rights conditions in particular areas and of especially vulnerable groups. Among these is that of “freedom of expression”, where the OAS Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression and the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media have collaborated over the past decade to promote and defend freedom of expression. Together with their colleagues from the United Nations and more recently with the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, the OAS and OSCE Rapporteurs have issued annual joint declarations regarding the challenges to freedom of expression worldwide. The most recent joint declaration of the Special Rapporteurs, in February 2010, marked the tenth anniversary of such declarations and identified ten key challenges to freedom of expression for the next decade.

➤ Integral development

The violence to which our citizens are exposed on a daily basis in the Americas is of course linked with poverty and exclusion in our societies, which brings me to talk about the fourth pillar in our work, integral development. The challenge for the OAS in this pillar of work is to support its Member States in their efforts to reduce poverty and to achieve greater social and economic development so that democracy and human rights are not undermined. Some of the positive developments in reducing poverty in the Americas, as a result of the high-growth years between 2002 and 2008, have not been generally reversed in spite of the economic and financial crisis. Of course, poverty increased in 2009, but very much below the forecasts made before the crisis, and all indicators point to a reduction in 2010.

A recent report from the United Nations showed important progress for the region in its path to achieve the Millennium goals. It must be said, however, that while the panorama is good on aggregate terms, the gap between countries in the region in terms of poverty and welfare indicators is becoming wider and some may not achieve the Millennium goals. This forces us to concentrate our efforts on those OAS members who are further down the path, in order to ensure that the difference in levels of economic and social development between neighboring countries of the same region is not exacerbated.

The OAS has helped to design innovative programs in the form of Conditional Cash Transfer Schemes to help our Member States reach the UN target of halving, by 2015, the proportion of people whose income is below \$2 a day. One year ago the OAS launched the *Inter-American Social Protection Network* to strengthen the capacity of governments to formulate and implement mechanisms to supplement the incomes of the poorest families so that they can keep their children in school and provide them with health care. These programs have helped to cushion the impact of the economic crisis on the poorest families in our region, and successful programs in Brazil, Chile and Mexico are now being shared with other countries around the world.

We also promote the adoption of best practices and more effective policies among our Member States in other key areas vital to economic development such as tourism, trade and competitiveness, education, culture, science and technology and sustainable development including the protection of biodiversity. Energy security and climate change are two of the recent topics on which we are focusing.

Migration is an issue on which I have placed a high priority over the past three years. In 2008 a Migration and Development Program was launched at the OAS with work focused on both the human rights of migrants and their families, as well as on the economic and social issues connected with the phenomenon of migration. The situation of migrant women occupies particular attention and we are trying to identify programs to support them. We have begun a training program for migration agencies in countries of Central America and the Caribbean to identify, protect and assist victims of human trafficking and better address migration issues from a security perspective. As most countries in Latin America are net migrant sending countries, the need to define a better regulatory framework to govern migration is an urgent policy priority.

➤ Stronger Inter-institutional Cooperation

Having shared with you our main areas of work and ongoing challenges, I want to emphasize that our coming here today reflects the fact that we care about inter-regional collaboration and that we look forward to an ongoing and even stronger cooperative relationship between the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the Organization of American States. Without a doubt, we must continue strengthening the ongoing cooperation and the sharing of best practices between our two organizations in the common challenges posed by the fight against terrorism, narco-traffic, organized crime and the trafficking of persons. We must continue to stand firm to guarantee the integrity of democratic electoral processes and to protect freedom of expression and the human rights of our citizens. Yielding to these threats would mean a weakening of the democratic institutions that we are actively trying to preserve daily and that are the underpinning of the shared values that we hold so dear.

I once again thank Chairman Abdrakhmanov, and the Participating States of the OSCE for the opportunity to address the Permanent Council of this Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe on this occasion.

Thank you.