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“THE INTER-AMERICAN SYSTEM HAS REACHED A CROSSROADS”, SAYS OAS ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL RAMDIN

Port of Spain. The Assistant Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS), Ambassador Albert Ramdin, called upon the countries of the Hemisphere to “respond more strategically and collectively” and “build synergies” to face the problems and opportunities that the current global political and economic situation provides.

“We need sustained and meaningful collaboration, on the basis of mutual respect and understanding, shared values and benefits,” said Ambassador Ramdin. “The Inter-American system has reached a crossroads,” he added.

OAS Assistant Secretary General Ramdin spoke on Wednesday at the Institute of International Relations of the University of the West Indies, in Trinidad and Tobago, in a colloquium co-organized by the Inter-American Studies Centre at Laval University, Quebec, and the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) of Waterloo. The event took place in the run up to the Fifth Summit of the Americas, April 17-19 in Port of Spain.

Ambassador Ramdin highlighted that the Summit takes place at “a critical time”. “This moment could well symbolize the end of one era and the beginning of a new one, as our leaders recognize the urgency of finding appropriate, collective responses” to the impact of the current crises, he said.

The OAS Assistant Secretary General stressed that the Summit will be unique because it is the first time that it is being hosted by a Caribbean nation; it will be the first hemispheric meeting for most of the 34 Heads of State and Government attending; the “ideological shifts and simmering socio-political tensions in Latin America, especially in the Andean sub-region”; and because many citizens across the Americas expect a “new direction of US foreign policy towards Latin America and the Caribbean” from new US President Barack Obama.

Ambassador Ramdin also said that “the OAS, as the premier hemispheric forum for political dialogue and consensus building, is ideally positioned to act as the lead institution” of the Summit, “in support of the social and economic aspirations of our member states and towards a strengthened and more united hemisphere.”

“We are committed to playing our part beyond the Fifth Summit of the Americas,” said Ambassador Ramdin.

During the Summit, however, it will be necessary for the 34 leaders meeting in Port of Spain to “seize the moment”. In that regard, the OAS Assistant Secretary General noted that the economic crisis will be surely addressed, but other issues should be considered: Structural peace building; Hemispheric security; next-generation measures to strengthen and deepen democracy; building and strengthening partnerships for shared responsibility; real integral development; education for peace and development; and youth.

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“Whatever the decisions, whatever the pronouncements, we look forward to a revitalization of the inter-American system and of a genuine cooperation as the bedrock of hemispheric integration and development,” he said.
