



SUMMIT IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW GROUP (SIRG)  
Second Regular Meeting of 2009  
February 9-13, 2009  
Rubén Dario Room  
1889 F Street NW, DC 20006  
Washington, DC

OEA/Ser.E  
GRIC/O.2/doc.3/09  
9 February 2009  
Original: English

### **Opening remarks of the OAS Secretary General, Mr. José Miguel Insulza Second Regular Meeting of the Summit Implementation Review Group**

Good morning. Welcome to the OAS for the Second Regular Meeting of the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG).

This SIRG meeting is quite important. It is expected that we finish the first reading of the draft Declaration of Port of Spain, less than seventy days away from the Fifth Summit. During the negotiation process, which started in September 2008, SIRG meetings have provided a venue to address a variety of themes that are relevant for the hemisphere. Human prosperity was addressed in its social dimension in education, labor, health care, justice, and reducing inequality. Environmental sustainability was the main topic address during the last meeting of SIRG and discussions included the role of science and technology for this particular issue. Today, we are gathered to review topics that are dear to me –security, democracy and follow-up on commitments.

In Mexico City, in October 2003, Latin American and Caribbean leaders declared a new concept of hemisphere security that is “multi-dimensional in scope, includes *traditional* and *new threats, concerns, and other challenges* to the security of the states of the hemisphere, incorporates the priorities of each state, contributes to the consolidation of peace, integral development, and social justice, and is based on democratic values, respect for and promotion and defense of human rights, solidarity, cooperation, and respect for national sovereignty”. A year later, at the Special Summit of the Americas in Monterrey, Mexico, they reiterated that “the basis and purpose of security is the protection of human beings”.

The consensus reached in Mexico was the result of long discussions over the preceding decade. The issues of security reflected in the declaration range from traditional threats from other States, insurgencies, and weapons of mass destruction, to concerns about natural disasters and environmental accidents involving hazardous materials. The full range of transnational criminal activities from drug trafficking to money laundering, arms trafficking and terrorism are at the center of the security agenda.

According to the World Health Organization’s World Report on Violence, in 2002 the homicide rate in Latin America and the Caribbean was already 22.9 per 100,000 inhabitants, which duplicated the world average. This situation is even more serious in a considerable number of large cities, where homicide rates range from 40 to 120 per 100,000 inhabitants. This picture is even worse among our youths. Young people tend to be the main victims of violence. In fact, violence is the leading cause of death throughout the region among youths aged between 15 and 29, with a rate of

83.2, and the rate is even higher for young people in the middle and low social strata, with over 100 cases per 100,000 inhabitants.

Not only does the region suffer from extreme violence due to homicides, caused in large part by other criminal activities and mainly by drug trafficking, it also suffers from numerous other day-to-day common criminal acts, such as robbery, kidnapping, sexual abuse, criminal youth gangs, and domestic violence.

Despite the differences between our countries, the globalization of crime and violence is the overarching feature. Moreover, this form of globalization allows criminal activity to increase the use of technology, its organizational capacity, and its level of violence. This is the principal characteristic of such activities as drug and arms trafficking, trafficking in persons, and transnational criminal networks that organize this illicit trade.

Although poverty in itself is not the explanation, there is indeed a very clear correlation with crime when poverty is combined with other factors, such as inequality, marginalization, and exclusion endured by a very large segment of the population.

Crime and violence impose a heavy economic price for our societies. Combating crime is a major component of government expenditure. In addition, people in all social strata feel obliged to spend part of the family budget on supplementary security measures. There are also clear indications that generalized insecurity impairs financial decisions and investment opportunities, which have a direct impact on the region's development. According to the Inter-American Development Bank's estimates, the economic costs of violence could total the equivalent of 14 percentage points of GDP in Latin America and the Caribbean.

We have to acknowledge that the enormous demand for effective actions to address citizen insecurity is entirely justified. Security is a core part of human rights and when it is impaired other fundamental rights can no longer be fully exercised.

This SIRG will also address the paragraphs on strengthening democratic governance included in the draft Declaration of Port of Spain. As a matter of fact, democracy has always been a central theme in the Summits despite the heterogeneity of Summit themes. It has been addressed according to the needs and concerns of the moment, including the construction of a democratic hemispheric community (Miami), the preservation and strengthening of the democratic system (Santiago), good governance (Québec), and the inter-relationship between democracy and socio-economic issues (Mar del Plata).

Good democratic governance paves the way to democratic legitimacy by building people's faith in democracy over all other forms of government and ensuring their acceptance of the way democracy works in their country. The region is showing the world a face with attractive new features: more stability and greater pragmatism in policy and institutional reform are now the norm in the region rather than the exception. However, the challenges that the region faces today are no less impressive. Continuing high levels of poverty and inequality are at the top of the list. Together with policies to sustain growth, these challenges call for less regressive and more efficient social and public expenditures that help build democratic legitimacy.

We can rightfully say today that Latin America has successfully concluded the transition to democracy and is heading towards the consolidation of democratic governance. In this regard, the ratification of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, as a direct result of the Third Summit of the Americas in 2001, has provided us with agreed upon principles, values and standards which enable us to collectively promote and consolidate democracy.

The promotion of democracy has to be understood today in the promotion of concrete and real benefits for the population at large. Democracy has to generate benefits for everyone. The challenge is how we can all reap the benefits of democracy. The participation of citizens in the realm of democratic, accountable governance is reflected in their desire for improvement in their quality of life and in the generation of sustainable development and social welfare. Economic growth, employment, poverty reduction, tackling socio-economic inequities, environmental sustainability, energy security, discrimination and crime are all issues that can be addressed with the democratic adoption and implementation of effective and efficient public policies.

The Summit Process is looking for a multidimensional way to strengthen democracy and governance, helping to reduce poverty and increase opportunities in the Americas. The multiple aspects of the draft Declaration of Port of Spain show quite clearly that a multidimensional approach to the challenges we face in order to achieve integral development, peace and prosperity is a diverse and complex goal to strive for.

An inclusive society is not necessarily entirely devoid of poverty and social ills, rather it is a society where the color of one's skin or the wealth of one's parent are not key determinants of whether one is poor, or receives a quality education or proper medical care, or has access to justice and to the information technologies of today. Equal opportunities, increasingly representative political systems and processes of democratic governance, and enhanced social mobility are characteristics of inclusive societies. From this perspective, inclusion is an essential factor of effective democratic power, and greater way to deepen and sustain democracy. In this context, the Summits of the Americas make an essential contribution.

The Summits of the Americas have evolved over the last fifteen years. The line between "foreign" and "domestic" policy is being increasingly blurred. Climate Change, the drug problem, terrorism are big issues in our nations' politics of today. It can be beaten only by global action. What happens today in the Southern hemisphere matters on the streets of the North (and vice-versa).

During the months of negotiations in the SIRG, we have attempted to construct the broadest possible agenda that is capable of unifying all the Member States of the OAS and is, overtly, values-based. That is why action on poverty, on the environment, on security matters and inclusion all matter beyond the obvious importance for each individual issue. They are indicative of an attitude of responsibility to others, an acceptance that international politics should not be simply a game of interests but also of principles, things we stand for and fight for.

As global prosperity has accelerated in the past century, each generation has been called upon to meet new challenges in extending the possibilities of human well-being. Reducing the inequality gap is the great opportunity of our time, a commitment that would not only relieve massive suffering and spread economic well-being, but that would also promote and reinforce objectives of democracy and good governance, security, health and education as well as of decent work and greater social justice.

The leaders of the region are working tirelessly with their economic teams to move forward and navigate successfully through these troubled economic/financial times. But we have to be able to make the case, for the people of the Americas who are worried about not being able to make their payments, for our sons and daughters who worry that the employment opportunities are no longer available, for our friends who are worried that their jobs are going to disappear. We need to be able to make the case that what we do here for the Americas today is not only important, but essential, even in these tough times.

I strongly believe that we can make that case. But it cannot be just a speech from me. It has to be the accumulated efforts of every one of you that will enable us to make the case, not just to our Presidents and not just to our Ministries, but to the citizens of the Americas as a whole.

Once again, I welcome you to the OAS and I wish you a good speed in your deliberations.