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REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY LUIS ALBERTO RODRIGUEZ
NATIONAL COORDINATOR FOR THE FIFTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS AND
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The Honourable Eduardo Calix, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of El Salvador

Distinguished Delegates

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, I want to sincerely thank the Government of El Salvador for hosting this Sixth Regular Meeting of the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG) for 2008. The National Secretariat has received tremendous support from officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of El Salvador in the planning of this event. It has been an honour to collaborate with you and your efforts and hard work are greatly appreciated by this Chair.

I also want to take the opportunity to express our gratitude to El Salvador for the strong support the National Secretariat continues to receive in these negotiations. We value your efforts to forge consensus and advance the process.

Today, we continue deliberations on the Draft Declaration of Commitment of Port of Spain. At our last meeting in Washington we completed a review of all the text related to the Human Prosperity pillar of the Draft Declaration, approving 15 paragraphs out of 39, with 24 still pending. As you are aware, we started out with only 29 paragraphs in total for the Preamble and Human Prosperity, which were expanded to 39 paragraphs in the process of our deliberations.

At this meeting, we will begin a review of the Energy Security Pillar, and continue the discourse on pending paragraphs from the Human Prosperity section. It should be our intent to complete and finalise these two sections by the time we adjourn on Friday evening.

When we leave Sonsonate at the end of this Meeting, we will be approximately 125 days away from April 17, 2009. This chair is confident that the spirit of cooperation and consensus building that already permeates these negotiations will continue to produce a document that not only meets all our expectations but, more importantly, the expectations of the citizens of our Hemisphere.

We recognise the need for deliberation and we know that the diversity of opinion among our nations means that we have different views on development and the approaches to many of the issues. But, the outcome we all work toward is the same. Therefore, it is incumbent on all of us to find the common ground and forge consensus on defining the priorities for our collective action.

During this meeting you will hear the views of civil society and the private sector on the Draft Declaration. Our leaders at past Summits have stated that the views of civil society should be considered and factored into policy and decision-making. Individual civil society and private sector groups may represent one particular group of people, or one viewpoint, or one industry, but collectively they can represent the majority of people. Their presentations tomorrow morning comes on the heels of recently concluded sub-regional fora, which were organised in collaboration with the OAS.

As we engage in a discussion on Energy Security in our Hemisphere, the National Secretariat has also invited representatives of key institutions - the IDB, the World Bank and UNECLAC to share their views on current, new and emerging Energy Security issues in our Hemisphere.

In Panama last year, we acknowledged the importance of energy as an “essential resource” for improving the lives of the people of the Americas and realising our economic potential. Promoting Energy Security is therefore a critical element of the strategy to reduce the vulnerability of our people and our economies.

The needs of the different countries of our region, with different levels of development and energy resources vary widely. Some of our nations are net energy exporters, including my own country, Trinidad and Tobago. The rest of our countries depend on imports for their energy needs. The recent sharp decline in crude oil prices has been good news for energy importers, not only in terms of the cost of energy itself, but its effect on transportation costs, the cost of food and airline travel for tourism dependent economies. However, energy exporters will now have to look at their national budgets again, cuts may have to be made, and projects affected, including social programmes.

But energy is not only about fossil fuel, alternatives are already in use and there are others in development that are close to being ready for market. These alternatives not only impact on energy security but also on our third pillar “Environmental Sustainability”.

Current production and consumption patterns of energy are not sustainable. Secretary General Insulza speaking at the Fourth Annual Western Hemisphere Energy Security and Cooperation Forum at the IDB on September 9, 2008, renewed the call for a new energy order to achieve energy security.

Achieving Energy Security requires a multi-prong approach that involves a long-term sustained effort on the part of our Governments, a review of our energy policies, strengthening of cooperation among our countries and the development of mechanisms for regional implementation of actions, and the execution of policies at all levels of society to engage our citizens.

The strategies we employ must be guided by the need to make urgent and, in several instances, simultaneous advancements in terms of the following:

- diversification of our energy sources;
- the production and use of clean, low carbon and environmentally sustainable energy;
- the promotion of energy efficiency from generation to final use;
- increasing access to modern, affordable energy services especially for the poor;
- development and deployment of new technologies with substantially lower carbon emissions through sustained support for research and development;
- improvement of energy infrastructure;
- the generation and strengthening of regional energy markets for the use of cleaner and renewable energy; and
- encouraging new forms of public-private partnerships.

In the past couple of years, our knowledge and understanding of climate change and other environmental issues have grown considerably, leading us to a new grasp of the need for urgent and coordinated action to lower carbon emissions and minimize manmade climate impacts. The link between energy, environment and people is now of more consequence than ever.

Distinguished Delegates, I look forward over the next three days and in the upcoming months to a productive negotiation in which we openly discuss the issues before us and work together to find the consensus that is the first step toward effective implementation in the years ahead.

I thank you.