



SUMMIT IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW GROUP (SIRG)
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REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY LUIS ALBERTO RODRIGUEZ,
NATIONAL COORDINATOR FOR THE FIFTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS
AND SPECIAL ENVOY TO THE AMERICAS

The Honourable Donville Inniss, Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados

OAS Assistant Secretary General Ambassador Albert Ramdin

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Ambassadors and National Coordinators,

Officials of the OAS Summits of the Americas Secretariat,

Representatives of the Joint Summit Working Group,

Distinguished Delegates,

Let me begin first of all by reiterating my sincere appreciation to the Government of Barbados for hosting this Third Regular Meeting of the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG) for 2008. It has been an honor and a pleasure to work with the National Coordinator of Barbados and her excellent team of professionals from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade in the arrangements for this Meeting.

The fact that this Meeting is taking place in Barbados is evidence of the strong support that Trinidad and Tobago has received, and continues to receive from our CARICOM partners in the preparations for the Fifth Summit of the Americas. It also underscores our commitment, and especially that of Prime Minister Manning, to make the Fifth Summit a truly Caribbean effort that provides the opportunity for all Member States of our sub-region to come to the forefront of this renewed engagement with the other countries of our Hemisphere in a spirit of solidarity and cooperation.

Today, we begin the very important phase of negotiations on the Draft Declaration of Commitment of Port of Spain which was presented by Trinidad and Tobago to Member States of the OAS on July 24. Our objective is to produce a final document for adoption by our Heads of State and Government on April 19, 2009. But, producing just any document will not suffice. We have a collective responsibility to ensure that the Fifth Summit sets a

focussed agenda for the Americas, one that is practical, implementable and achievable and, very importantly, responsive to the needs and aspirations of all our people.

This is a responsibility that we cannot take lightly. The citizens of our Hemisphere whom we represent here today are depending on us to work on their behalf and to keep their interests at the forefront of our deliberations and decisions on the way forward.

In our extensive consultations, it was clear to us that Member States and institutions alike share, in large measure, these views. We listened very carefully to all the views shared with us. It is evident that there is a pervasive sense that the Summit Process is not all that it should or could be.

I believe that we now have a solid platform for building consensus on where we should focus our efforts and limited resources. The theme for the Fifth Summit 'Securing our Citizens' Future by Promoting Human Prosperity, Energy Security and Environmental Sustainability' has resonated positively with the priorities of many national agendas.

And, the priority we have placed on implementation and achieving tangible, measurable results has received wide endorsement.

Starting today, we must begin the process of outlining, together, an innovative cooperation strategy to advance the process of hemispheric integration. We must set clear objectives and focus on achieving tangible results within set timelines.

The importance of the Fifth Summit must be seen against the achievements and the challenges of the past and the vision of where we see the Americas a decade from now.

Trinidad and Tobago sees in this Summit a tremendous opportunity to refocus our development priorities and shape as far as is possible a shared vision for our Region. It is an opportunity to set the course for a more dynamic Americas in the global community and to create a strategic pathway for all our nations to advance toward greater peace, security and prosperity.

As National Coordinators, we can give the Summit Process the new meaning, direction and impetus that are required at this time. To do that, we must be prepared to engage in new thinking, develop innovative solutions, prioritise and coordinate our responses, and aggressively pursue stronger integration and greater cooperation among and within nations.

Inter-American cooperation must be challenged to become more meaningful and more focused. Governments and institutions must commit together to increased engagement and collaboration. As a region, we must pool our resources, our ideas and efforts and, as I said last week in Washington, D.C. we must get serious about implementing viable solutions.

I also said that where bold steps are necessary, we must be prepared to break with the status quo and do just that. At the same time though we must be realistic as to what is achievable and what is not.

Moving from the agreements signed by our leaders toward implementation and results is by no means easy for many of our countries. We must keep that fact in focus as we deliberate between commitments that are desirable and those that are achievable.

The Draft Declaration of Commitment of Port of Spain focuses on measurable, implementable targets with institutions identified to take specific actions within set timeframes. We believe that this approach will assist all our Governments and institutions in focussing and coordinating their efforts in those key areas that will be the basis for sustained progress in the future.

In 14 years of the Summit Process, while Governments and institutions have taken some action to respond to Summit mandates, there have been significant shortfalls in implementation. Trinidad and Tobago is proposing only 25 mandates, with 11 clear, measurable, time-bound targets.

In several instances we recast previous mandates with a view toward focused implementation. New mandates have been introduced only where essential and to ensure that our development progress is not stymied. To reinforce this mix, commitments that are already being pursued within the framework of the various Ministerial fora and by institutions of the United Nations and the Inter-American System are renewed.

We believe that moving forward will require a greater, more intensified role for our institutions. They must be called on to use their resources, expertise and knowledge to take a leading role in implementation. Trinidad and Tobago continues to advocate that our multilateral development institutions, in particular, must take more than a passing interest in the Summit Process.

In order to achieve lasting results we must also continue to build more meaningful partnerships with civil society, non-governmental organisations and the private sector. We have, therefore, called on the OAS to take the lead in organising sub-regional civil society fora so that the views of civil society may be brought to bear on the deliberations of Member States at future negotiating sessions of the SIRG.

Distinguished Delegates, we have taken the approach of focusing this and future SIRG Meetings on thematic issues identified in the Draft Declaration of Commitment. We believe that this approach will give Member States the opportunity to deliberate and dialogue in a very practical and focused manner on the multidimensional aspects of all the issues presented. We also think that it is important for our institutions and experts in the various fields to bring their perspectives to the table for the benefit of all Member States.

Over the course of this SIRG Meeting, we will focus on ‘Human Prosperity’. The concept of **human prosperity** integrates the conditions required for human happiness, well-being and an improved quality of life for all the people of the Americas. These conditions include:

Quality education. Without quality education, most people have limited prospects and narrow horizons. Education is essential in ensuring that our children are active participants in the development process and can see the potential in themselves and in others. It promotes social inclusion and encourages innovation and creativity.

Decent work. We get much of our self-respect from a feeling that our work is valued. Decent employment and a decent wage give everyone the chance to contribute to society, and to feel valued as human beings.

Democracy, good governance, freedom and respect for human rights. People want to live in peace and freedom from want, fear and oppression. They want the opportunity to participate in the cultural, economic and social development of their countries.

Low levels of poverty, inequality and crime. No society can prosper if the lives of many of its citizens are diminished and destroyed by poverty, by inequality and by the scourge of crime and violence.

Good health and adequate nutrition. Without good health and nutrition, our children are severely disadvantaged. Good health care and affordable food are necessary for productive, stable societies.

In order to effectively promote the conditions of human prosperity, we must achieve higher, sustained levels of economic growth with equity. We must also take into consideration the nexus between human prosperity and energy security and environmental sustainability.

The achievement of human prosperity is facilitated through the implementation of an integrated, sustainable and mutually-reinforcing mix of social, economic and environmental policies. At the core of human prosperity, is the premise that people must always be at the heart of our development initiatives.

Distinguished Delegates, I look forward over the next two days and in the upcoming months to a successful negotiation in which we openly share ideas, perspectives and work together to develop coherent and effective responses to the many challenges facing our Hemisphere.

I thank you.