



SUMMIT IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW GROUP (SIRG)
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PRESENTATION BY AMBASSADOR ALBERT R. RAMDIN
ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES

Hon. Donville Inness, Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and International Business,

Ambassador Luis Alberto Rodriguez, National Coordinator and Special Envoy to the Americas of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago,

Ambassador Glenda Moreann-Phillips, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to the Organization of American States,

Distinguished Heads of Delegation,

National Coordinators for the Summit of the AMERICAS,

Mr. David Morris, Director of the Summits Secretariat of the Organization of American States,

Representatives of the Joint Summit Working Group institutions,

Distinguished Delegates,

Colleagues from the OAS,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a pleasure to represent the Organization of American States at this very important third regular meeting of the Summit Implementation Review Group in 2008.

I want to thank the Government of Barbados for hosting this meeting and for the excellent arrangements that will no doubt facilitate a successful meeting. The commitment of Trinidad and Tobago, the host country of the next Summit as well as the commitment of Barbados, the host of this SIRG meeting and future hosts in the Caribbean are clear demonstrations of this sub-region's consistent support for the Organization of American States and the inter-American system. The leadership which is exercised through these activities will go a long way toward influencing the political and economic future of the Western Hemisphere.

The Organization of American States Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza and I remain steadfast in our pledge to assist with efforts to make this encounter of the leaders of the Western

Hemisphere next year April a successful and meaningful engagement in which 34 democratically elected leaders can together address, in concrete ways, the range of challenges confronting many of our member states.

Recent developments in some of our member states are cause for concern and call for urgent action if order, peace and stability are to be maintained in those communities. Many of the social, economic, financial, environmental and political challenges – old and new – that face our hemisphere will require the political will and commitment of all involved to reach agreement on the way forward, including:

- Changing inter-state dynamics in the Western Hemisphere and potential implications and consequences for multilateralism and on integration processes;
- The devastating impact of natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods, and mudslides on communities, infrastructure, production capacity, overall economic development and social stability;
- Unacceptable levels of poverty, social exclusion and discrimination; and
- Domestic security concerns with cross border implications such as illegal trafficking in drugs and fire arms, HIV/AIDS, among other issues.

So, as we gather here today to initiate the multilateral negotiation of the proposed Declaration of Commitment for the Fifth Summit of the Americas, we have to be cognizant of the importance of this exercise.

Our discussions today and tomorrow will have to include new ways of thinking about creating peace, stability and prosperity in our societies. The fifth Summit provides a new opportunity to strengthen unity and solidarity in the Western Hemisphere. This important dialogue process has become the main vehicle for setting out an agenda for the hemisphere. In this regard, member states may want to include in their subsequent deliberations the appropriate methodology to further institutionalize this process within the architecture of existing inter-American dialogue mechanisms.

The draft Declaration of Commitment, as proposed by the next host of the Summit of the Americas, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, is an excellent base document.

Ambassador Rodriguez indicated to me very early in the preparatory process that his idea was to combine a Declaration and Plan of Action into a more target-oriented document with concrete commitments, a document with mandates which could be implemented, not excessively optimistic, but realistic. I congratulate Ambassador Rodriguez with what has been presented as a first draft. I also look forward to listening to the substantive comments, creative suggestions and other inputs from member states and supporting institutions on the preambular chapter and the chapter on Human Prosperity.

Many technical ministerial meetings have already taken place and many others will take place in the coming months. During these high level meetings, policy decisions have been made and concrete targets set in several areas. I believe that, to maintain consistency in policymaking, it is

important to incorporate these decisions and targets in the discussions on the final document for the Summit.

This morning, I chaired an informal meeting of the Joint Summit Working Group. On their behalf, I once again reaffirm their full commitment to the Summit of the Americas process in general, and in particular to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in the preparatory process towards the fifth Summit.

I am also pleased to note the inclusion of the Joint Summit Working Group in the further refinement of the Declaration of Commitment and I look forward to the statements from the representatives of the Inter-American Development Bank, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture and the Pan-American Health Organization. I believe that this contribution is important. An early engagement of these 12 institutions can contribute to determining the feasibility of the proposed goals and the commitments as it will be these institutions that will be required to incorporate these commitments into their policies and work programs.

I believe that it will be critical to the Summit process to discuss implementation, coordination and financing mechanisms so that member states can be supported in their commitment to realize the agreed targets. To me, it is clear that (i) special financing windows will be required, (ii) national development plans should incorporate the Summit mandates, and (iii) coordination among Summit supporting institutions on who does what, when and where will be of critical importance if the benefits of this Summit process are to be delivered to the people of the Americas.

I also believe that to facilitate coordination, implementation and delivery, it will be necessary to convene immediately after the Summit in Trinidad and Tobago a tripartite meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Ministers of Finance and Heads of the Joint Summit Working Group institutions.

In closing, I urge an all-inclusive process and constructive engagement from all involved. Again, we welcome the commitment from the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. The OAS stands ready to continue its assistance and to host another SIRG meeting at our headquarters should the National Secretariat so desire.

I thank you for your attention and wish you all the very best in the deliberations today and tomorrow.