



SUMMIT IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW GROUP (SIRG)  
Third Regular Meeting of 2008  
September 18-19, 2008  
Bridgetown, Barbados  
(Hilton Barbados Hotel)

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## **REPORT OF THE MEETING**

### **1. PREPARATIONS**

On April 9, 2008, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago presented the Concept Paper and Theme for the Fifth Summit of the Americas; “Securing our citizens’ future through human prosperity, energy security and environmental sustainability”, to a Protocolary Session of the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States. The Joint Summit Working Group (JSWG) which comprises of twelve institutions, as well as members of civil society respectively, prepared papers and convened meetings focused on the themes identified in the concept paper, with a view to contributing to the preparation of the Draft “Declaration of Commitment of Port of Spain”.

On July 24, 2008, the National Secretariat presented the Draft Declaration of Port of Spain for the consideration of OAS Member States at the Second Regular Meeting for 2008 of the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG), in Washington DC, with a view to beginning the negotiations on the document at the Third Regular meeting of the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG) scheduled for September 18-19, 2008, in Barbados.

### **2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

The Chair, Ambassador Luis Alberto Rodriguez, Coordinator of the National Secretariat for the Fifth Summit of the Americas and Special Envoy for the Americas of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, opened the meeting with salutations and thanked in particular the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and International Business of Barbados, the Honourable Donville Inniss, the OAS Assistant Secretary General, Ambassador Albert Ramdin, National Coordinators and members of the Joint Summit Working Group (JSWG) for their presence. He made special mention of the staff of the host country, Barbados, expressing appreciation for the support given to the National Secretariat in preparing for the Third Regular SIRG meeting of 2008. He indicated that the assistance given by Barbados was indicative of its support, like that of the rest of the Caribbean, for the Fifth Summit of the Americas.

Ambassador Rodriguez presented the agenda of the meeting (document GRIC/O.3/doc1/08 rev. 1) for the consideration and approval of the delegations. There being no comments or amendments, the agenda was approved. The Chair then offered the floor to the Honourable Donville Inniss, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and International Business of Barbados.

### 3. OPENING SESSION

#### a) Welcoming Remarks

In his opening remarks, Minister Inniss welcomed participants and invited them to take advantage of their stay to sample what Barbados has to offer. He commended the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for its initiative in undertaking to host the Fifth Summit, congratulated the National Secretariat for the work done in preparing for the Summit, and acknowledged the vital role of OAS Summits of the Americas Secretariat as part of the institutional support to the Summits process.

The Minister noted that the theme of the Fifth Summit reflected a number of priority areas which affect the lives and wellbeing of the people of the Hemisphere. He indicated that the Fifth Summit, which represents a very critical stage in the Hemispheric Summit process, can only be successful if it focuses on effective implementation and results with the goal of achieving tangible and sustainable benefits for the people of the Hemisphere.

Minister Inniss challenged representatives to craft a document which not only takes into account concerns about implementation, but also one which is relevant to the challenges of today yet geared towards the Hemisphere's aspirations for the future.

In closing, the Minister expressed his desire to hear contributions from the representatives of the Inter-American Development Bank, and other development agencies, on how financing and partnerships for the successful implementation of the mandates in the Draft Declaration of Commitment of Port-of-Spain can be achieved.

The complete text of the speech of Minister Inniss can be found at [http://www.summit-americas.org/SIRG/SIRG\\_0908/remarks\\_inniss.doc](http://www.summit-americas.org/SIRG/SIRG_0908/remarks_inniss.doc)

#### b) Remarks by the Assistant Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS)

Ambassador Albert Ramdin, Assistant Secretary General (ASG) of the Organization of American States, opined that the commitment of the Caribbean sub-region to inter-American affairs and to the OAS is clearly demonstrated by the commitment to host the Fifth Summit, as well as the third regular SIRG meeting of 2008, and subsequent SIRG meetings in the Caribbean.

The ASG urged participants to be cognizant of the importance of the present negotiation of the Declaration of Commitment of Port-of-Spain, particularly as the region seems to be facing many old and new social, economic, financial, environmental and political challenges. He further urged delegations to use this opportunity for thinking of new ways to create peace, stability and prosperity in the Hemisphere. He stressed that the Summits' process has become the main vehicle for setting out an agenda for the Hemisphere, and called for this process to be further institutionalized in the architecture of existing inter-American dialogue mechanisms.

In closing, Ambassador Ramdin noted the engagement of the JSWG in refining the Declaration of Commitment, and expressed his eagerness to hear the contributions from the representatives of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO). He affirmed that the contributions of the JSWG can contribute to determining the feasibility of the proposed goals and the commitments contained in the Declaration. He further stressed the importance of an all-inclusive and constructive engagement in the negotiation of the Declaration.

The complete text of the ASG's speech can be found at [http://www.summit-americas.org/SIRG/SIRG\\_0908/remarks\\_ramdin.doc](http://www.summit-americas.org/SIRG/SIRG_0908/remarks_ramdin.doc)

c) Remarks by Ambassador Luis Alberto Rodriguez

Ambassador Rodriguez expressed his appreciation to the Government of Barbados for hosting the Third Regular Meeting of the SIRG of 2008. He affirmed that the fact that Barbados was hosting this SIRG meeting bore testimony to the strong support given to Trinidad and Tobago by its CARICOM partners.

The National Coordinator for Trinidad and Tobago informed those present that they have a collective responsibility to ensure that the Fifth Summit sets not only a focused agenda for the Americas, but one that is practical, implementable, achievable and, very importantly, responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people of the Hemisphere.

Ambassador Rodriguez indicated that the National Secretariat's extensive consultations made it clear that there was a considerable amount of work needed to make the Summit process all that it should or could be. He stressed that the theme of the Fifth Summit presents a solid platform for building consensus on where the Hemisphere should focus its efforts and limited resources. He further stated that national coordinators can give the Summit process the new meaning, direction and impetus that are required by being prepared to engage in new thinking, developing innovative solutions, prioritizing and coordinating responses, as well as aggressively pursuing stronger integration and greater inter- and intra-Hemispheric cooperation.

The Chair stated that a more intensified role for hemispheric institutions is required for the region to move forward. He also indicated that in order to achieve lasting results more meaningful partnerships with civil society, non-governmental organizations and the private sector must be a priority. He informed delegations that the National Secretariat had given the OAS the lead in organizing sub-regional civil society fora so that the views of civil society would be brought to bear on the deliberations of Member States at future negotiating sessions of the SIRG.

Ambassador Rodriguez stressed that the National Secretariat has taken the approach of focusing the Third SIRG of 2008 and future SIRG meetings on the thematic issues identified in the Draft Declaration. He indicated that this approach would give Member States the opportunity to deliberate and dialogue in a very practical and focused manner on the multi-dimensional aspects of all the issues presented.

In closing the Chair stated that the focus of this SIRG meeting would be on “human prosperity”, and the inherent conditions required for human happiness, wellbeing and improved quality of life for people in the Hemisphere. He further indicated that a successful negotiation process would depend on delegates openly sharing ideas, perspectives and working together to develop coherent and effective responses to the many challenges facing the Hemisphere.

The complete text of Ambassador Luis Alberto Rodriguez’s statement can be found at [http://www.summit-americas.org/SIRG/SIRG\\_0908/speech\\_lar\\_en.doc](http://www.summit-americas.org/SIRG/SIRG_0908/speech_lar_en.doc)

#### 4. FIRST PLENARY SESSION

##### a) Presentations on Human Prosperity

In opening the First Plenary Session the Chair indicated that the members of the Joint Summit Working Group (JSWG) play a key role in the Summit process and, in this regard, he had invited three of the institutions to represent their perspectives on Human Prosperity. The Representative of the Inter-American Development Bank was offered the floor to make his presentation.

##### **i. Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)**

Mr. Ian Ho-A-Shu, Social Development Specialist, indicated that his presentation would be focused on three areas:

- (1) Poverty trends in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC);
- (2) Education and health trends in LAC; and
- (3) Labor market trends in LAC.

##### Summary:

Although poverty rates and the number of poor people have declined dramatically world-wide, this may not be the case in Latin America where current poverty rates are not much lower than in 1980. This partly reflects low growth rates and income concentration. With respect to the non-income aspects of development, these are improving slowly.

The food price index in Latin America and the Caribbean may further impact negatively on poverty and human development. In order to stymie that movement, countries should strengthen social safety nets and, in particular, conditional cash transfer programmes in the region.

Education systems in Latin America and the Caribbean have almost all primary age students attending school. However the Hemisphere is faced with two key challenges: the quality of education (teachers and curriculum), and inequality of access to education.

Health trends in Latin America and the Caribbean show outstanding improvements, with infant mortality converging fast to OECD levels. However new challenges – infectious, chronic diseases and violence - have emerged which can only be adequately addressed if countries adopt a number of strategic priorities.

Although labor market trends in Latin America and the Caribbean in recent years give rise to cautious optimism, the problems of unemployment, low wages and employment instability still remain major challenges for the region. The best way to address these challenges is to accelerate the creation of decent jobs and improve growth rates in the region.

The Chair thanked the Representative and offered the floor to the Representative of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture (IICA).

#### **ii. Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture (IICA)**

IICA was represented by Mr. Bernardo Badani,, Director, of follow up to the Summit of the Americas Process, who informed delegations that, on the basis of the UN definition, human prosperity integrates various elements and that it is important for human wellbeing and happiness.

##### Summary:

840 million people world-wide are, and have been for years, in the middle of a major food crisis. Of this total 50 million live in the Americas and the Caribbean. The recent sudden increase in food prices will place more people at risk of falling into extreme poverty.

The rise of commodity prices has its origin in a number of causes, chief among them: unfavorable weather conditions, increased demand for bio-fuels and increased speculative investment on commodities. Heed should be paid to IICA's response to rising food prices, which calls for the update of national and regional technical cooperation agendas in coordination with the member states. Although progress has been made in the reduction of malnutrition, and a number of global, regional and national initiatives have been undertaken, many of the solutions were short-term rather than those which would address long-term food security challenges. He cautioned that food security could not be dealt with in isolation, but rather it requires a multi-dimensional approach. This method has been proposed by IICA in many fora, particularly in recommending the AGRO 2003-2015 Plan for Agriculture and Rural Life in the Americas.

The Chair thanked the representative of IICA and then offered the floor to the PAHO representative.

### iii. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)

The PAHO representative, Dr. Rebecca de los Rios, External Relations Officer, informed the delegations that although life expectancy in the Hemisphere in relation to that in the United States of America has improved, there are still a number of challenges which the countries of the Hemisphere have to address. Chief among them: chronic diseases, obesity among women and children, neonatal and infant mortality, as well as malnutrition and adult diabetes.

#### Summary:

A regional strategy for an integrated approach is required to successfully address these challenges. PAHO has adopted a long term regional strategy and has included a number of agencies, particularly the UN, in adopting and implementing this plan which calls for: universal access to health care by 2015: integrated public policies which improve access to health care, particularly for the poor: and strengthening of health care systems and services based on primary health care.

The trends in public expenditure for health care as a percentage in GDP in the region did not show a significant increase. In 1980 approximately 6% of GDP was spent on health care, in 2005 this increased to only 7%. Latin America and the Caribbean's health care expenditure as a percentage of GDP is only 3.4% on average, as compared to 7% and 7.4% in Canada and the United States respectively. This trend shows that those countries that need more health care were the ones that spend less. PAHO has included in its long term regional strategy the goal for an increase in public expenditure, up to at least 6% of GDP, and the implementation of measures which would allow greater access to health care for the poor as well as improving the impact of public expenditure through health care insurance, and social health protection programs.

#### b) General interventions by Member States

At the end of the presentations made by the three JSWG institutions, the chair opened the floor for comments on the presentations. The delegations of The Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Canada, Brazil, Chile, United States of America, Argentina, Colombia, Bahamas, Mexico and Jamaica each intervened.

In general, delegations:

- Thanked and commended the presenters and indicated that the presentations provided guidelines for negotiations.
- Indicated that given the scope of the problems presented the goals in the Declaration of Commitment were viable and achievable.

- Agreed that factual data was important in addressing the challenges faced by the region.
- Reiterated that the JSWG was important to the delivery of the goals identified in the Declaration.
- Indicated a need to set a limited number of concrete achievable commitments which should be presented in a positive tone.
- Agreed that the Summits of the Americas need to be convened on a regular basis, within a predictable time frame, so that the commitments of the leaders of the Hemisphere could be better monitored.

Having heard the comments from the representatives of the Member States the Chair offered the floor to other members of the Joint Summit Working Group for their comments. The representatives of CABI, ECLAC, CDB, and OAS briefly gave a synopsis of their respective institutions work which dovetailed with some of the goals of the Declaration:

- CABI's Representative indicated, among other things, that the institution had provided and continues to provide financing to businessmen, and that they have also supported programs for biodiversity as well as for micro, small and medium enterprises.
- ECLAC informed that on September 4-5, 2008, the organization held a seminar on the impact of the volatility of food prices and oil on the economies of the region. The report on that seminar is in the process of completion and copies will be distributed to the delegations within one to two weeks.
- The representative of CDB indicated that they were committed to the Summit process and that they had supported a number of projects that dovetailed with some mandates in the Declaration. CDB wishes to do more work in education and with civil society. CDB wants to ensure that civil society is included in the Summit process, and they have some funds which can be used to support consultations with them.
- The OAS representative informed that the organization was involved in preparations for a number of Inter-American Ministerials which will have various sub-themes of the Summit as a main focus for discussion. The output of these meetings is critically important to the overall Summit process.

## 5. SECOND PLENARY SESSION

Presentation of the methodology of the SIRG process:

The Chair indicated that the negotiation of the Draft Declaration of Commitment would begin with the reading of the preamble, followed by the text on Human prosperity (paras 1-29) by Mr. David Morris, Director of the Summit of the Americas Secretariat. After that reading the floor would be open for verbal interventions by delegations, and a written

text of these interventions should be presented to the National Secretariat by Friday September 26, 2008.

The Chair also indicated that all written comments of Member States which were presented during the meeting would be distributed to delegations by Monday September 22, 2008. Delegations were also informed that all written comments received on or before September 26, 2008 will be compiled by the National Secretariat, and a harmonized version of the Draft Declaration would be presented for the consideration of Member States prior to the next SIRG meeting, scheduled for October 16-17, 2008.

On completion of the presentation of the methodology the Chair offered the floor to delegations for comments. Many countries intervened with general and specific observations. A written copy of submissions received by the Secretariat from some Member States prior to and during the SIRG meeting was also distributed. All countries agreed that they would submit their presentations in writing by September 26, as requested by the Chair.

#### 5. THIRD PLENARY SESSION

The Chair reiterated the methodology for receiving submissions from Member States and then opened the floor for the continuation of the verbal presentations by delegations and members of the JSWG who wished to respond to any comments or proposals.

#### 6. CLOSING SESSION

The Chair reminded delegations that the closing date for the presentation of written proposals on the theme of Human Prosperity was September 26, 2008. He reiterated that all comments which were received prior to the SIRG meeting had already been distributed. He informed that at the next SIRG meeting a revised document would be presented for consideration, and the opportunity would be provided for delegations to be discuss paragraph by paragraph until agreement is reached. The Chair further clarified that, following an agreement on the Human Prosperity paragraphs, the next theme (i.e. Energy Security) would be discussed using a similar methodology.

A number of delegations sought clarification on the time factor for the consideration of the amendments proposed by countries. The Chair reassured them that the harmonized version of the Draft Declaration's paragraphs on Human Prosperity would be distributed to Member States prior to the next SIRG so that sufficient time would be available for consultations.

The Chair informed the SIRG that, on July 24, 2008, he had provided the dates for the future SIRG meetings with the understanding that venues would be confirmed at a later date. He stated that he was now pleased to announce the venues for future SIRG meetings:

- October 16-17, 2008, Antigua and Barbuda,
- November 13-14, 2008, at OAS in Washington D.C.
- December 11-12, 2008, El Salvador.

The Chair also advised that at a later date he will be in a better position to give more information on the next steps leading to the Fifth Summit, but emphasized that at this time Trinidad and Tobago's immediate concern is finalizing the Declaration of Commitment.

The Representative of Mexico requested the floor to propose a change in date for the November SIRG meeting. He indicated that the announced dates of Nov. 13-14 presented a conflict with a meeting of the Rio Group Foreign Ministers, in Mexico. In response to a suggested consideration for rescheduling the SIRG for Nov. 6-7, the Representative of the United States indicated that the US elections, on Nov. 4, could also pose a conflict for a SIRG meeting during that week. He recommended that the Chair consult with Member States in order to determine a suitable alternate date in November. It was also noted that the I-A Ministerial on Culture is scheduled for Nov. 20-21 in Barbados. The Chair agreed to address the matter within the next few weeks.

In closing the Chair thanked the delegations for their participation. He provided an outline of the consultation process which resulted in the draft Declaration of Commitment, and expressed the hope of seeing all delegations at the next SIRG in Antigua and Barbuda. He ended by reiterating that since the countries of the Hemisphere shared similar challenges they will have to address them together for effectiveness.

The meeting of the third regular SIRG for 2008 was adjourned at 12:30 p.m. on Friday, September 19, 2008.