



SUMMIT IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW GROUP (SIRG)
Fourth Regular Meeting of 2008
October 15-17, 2008
St John's, Antigua and Barbuda
(Grand Royal Antiguan Beach Resort)

OEA/Ser.E
GRIC/O.4/doc.5/08
14 November 2008
Original: Textual

REPORT OF THE MEETING

1. PREPARATIONS

At the Third Regular meeting of the SIRG for 2008, the Chair, Ambassador Luis Alberto Rodriguez, Coordinator of the National Secretariat for the 5th Summit of the Americas and special Envoy for the Americas, of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, had requested member states to submit their written comments on paragraphs 1-29 of the Declaration of Commitment of Port of Spain, to the National Secretariat by September 26, 2008, so that they could be compiled and a modified version could be presented to member states, based on these submission, for their consideration prior to the Fourth SIRG meeting, scheduled for October 16-17, 2008.

On September 22, a compendium of the comments from the member states was circulated. An Addendum to the compendium with additional comments was circulated on October 3, and on October 9, 2008, a modified version of the Declaration was distributed. These were to be considered by the delegations, prior to the fourth SIRG, with a view to discussing and approving Paragraphs 1-29 in St John's Antigua.

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 staff of the host country, Antigua and Barbuda. He expressed appreciation for the support given to the National Secretariat in preparing for the Fourth Regular SIRG meeting of 2008. He indicated that this meeting will be taking the delegates one step further to the Summit. In presenting the agenda Ambassador Rodriguez explained that the Assistant Secretary General, Ambassador Albert Ramdin, would address the delegates the following day and that the President of the Inter American Commission for Women (CIM), Honorable Jacqui Quinn-Leandro, Minister of Labour, Public Administration and Empowerment of Antigua and Barbuda would address member states at the beginning of the second Plenary Session.

Ambassador Rodriguez presented the agenda of the meeting (document GRIC/O.4/doc1/08 rev. 2) 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 Harold Lovell, Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation of Antigua and Barbuda for his presentation.

3. OPENING SESSION

a) Welcoming Remarks

In his opening remarks, Minister Lovell welcomed participants and extended warm greetings on behalf of the Prime Minister, Hon. Baldwin Spencer, and the Government of Antigua and Barbuda. He invited the delegates to take advantage of their stay to sample what Antigua and Barbuda has to offer with a view to revisiting its shores. He placed on record his Government's commendation of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for its initiative, and leadership demonstrated, in undertaking to host the Fifth Summit. He also, congratulated the National Secretariat's team for the work done in preparing for the Summit and indicated that the broad based consultations undertaken by the team bode well for the negotiations and the Summits process as a whole.

The Minister stated 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 as well as providing direction for confronting some of the current critical hemispheric issues. He indicated that Antigua and Barbuda welcomed the opportunity to collaborate with other member states in an effort to build a stronger and more progressive hemisphere. He opined that through the joint efforts of member states, hemispheric threats and challenges could be overcome. Minister Lovell indicated that his country shared the vision of Trinidad and Tobago for a Summit which focused on tangible mandates and on realistic targets. He also stated that Antigua and Barbuda share the position of other member states that new mandates should not place an undue financial burden on the already overstretched public resources.

Minister Lovell stated that the fifth Summit must respond to the question of the relevance of Summits by the hemispheric populace, by delivering strong collective responses to hemispheric challenges. He reminded delegations of the current financial crisis in the international markets and their possible impact on hemispheric economies as well as the devastation caused by recent storms which have not heightened awareness but also sobered the thoughts of the region. He recommended that the delegations promote a people centered development agenda.

In closing, the Minister urged delegations to make use of the unique opportunity presented by the Fifth Summit, to write a significant chapter on Human Development in the annals of the Americas.

The complete text of the speech of Minister Lovell can be found at http://www.summit-americas.org/SIRG/SIRG_1008/remarks_lovell.doc

b) Remarks by Ambassador Luis Alberto Rodriguez

Ambassador Rodriguez expressed his appreciation to the Government of Antigua and Barbuda for hosting the Fourth Regular Meeting of the SIRG of 2008. He affirmed that Antigua and Barbuda was hosting this SIRG meeting in solidarity with Trinidad and Tobago and in keeping with the strong support demonstrated by the Caribbean member states.

The National Coordinator for Trinidad and Tobago also informed those present that Trinidad and Tobago was very appreciative of the strong support of CARICOM and that it fitted with the vision of Prime Minister Manning who sees the Fifth Summit as a CARICOM event that provides an opportunity for the sub region to lead the process of shaping a new agenda for the Hemisphere. Ambassador Rodriguez also placed on record the appreciation of the National Secretariat of Trinidad and Tobago for the constructive comments on the Declaration provided by Member states. He opined that the varied perspectives presented demonstrated intent by all to serve the interests of the Hemisphere in meaningful and tangible ways. Ambassador Rodriguez expressed the hope that this intent would continue to drive the spirit of compromise and consensus building exhibited during the negotiations.

He indicated that the goal of the SIRG during the negotiations should be to build consensus on feasible commitments, taking into account the circumstances in each of the member states. He further informed that Trinidad and Tobago, in drafting the Declaration which was presented to member states on July 24, 2008 was driven by the need to deliver tangible and measurable outcomes for the citizens of the Hemisphere.

Ambassador Rodriguez also informed that member states have demonstrated a pervasive sense of support for the integrated strategy approach and he encouraged delegates to maintain that focus. He cautioned that if delegations do not make use of the opportunity created by the Summit to have a meaningful impact on the well being of the people of the Americas, they will also lose the opportunity to restore credibility in the Process.

In closing, Ambassador Rodriguez reiterated that the National Secretariat is committed to working with all member states and institutions in ensuring the success of the summit process. He also reiterated their belief in the importance of the contributions from Civil Society and other Summit actors and promised that he will endeavor to present, for the consideration of the member states, the perspectives of these stake holders.

The complete text of Ambassador Luis Alberto Rodriguez's statement can be found at http://www.summit-americas.org/SIRG/SIRG_1008/remarks_lar.doc

4. FIRST PLENARY SESSION

a) Overview of the methodology of the SIRG

In opening the First Plenary Session, the Chair reiterated the outline of the methodology proposed by the National Secretariat for the deliberations. He informed that in keeping with the proposed format the delegations had read the text and commented on it at the Third SIRG meeting. He acknowledged that written proposals were submitted to the National Secretariat which made a compendium of the proposed amendments and circulated it on September 22, 2008. Ambassador Rodriguez indicated that on October 3, 2008 an addendum to the compendium was also distributed to the member states. This process, he indicated, culminated in a modified version of the Declaration of Port of Spain, developed by the National Secretariat and circulated to the member states on October 9, 2008. The Chair also indicated that he was submitting the revised version paragraph by paragraph for the consideration of the delegations. The Chair requested the Director of the Summit Secretariat,

Mr. David Morris, to read the original paragraphs 1-29 under the sub theme of Human Prosperity, followed by the revised version GRIC/DC-V/doc.1/08 rev. 1 for consideration.

b) Negotiations on the draft Declaration of Commitment of Port of Spain

On presentation of the revised version of paragraphs 1-29 of the sub theme Human Prosperity, the member states requested the floor to present their amendments for discussion. The results of the discussions are presented in document GRIC/O.4/doc.3/08

5. SECOND PLENARY SESSION

Remarks by Hon. Jacqui Quinn-Leandro:

The Chair introduced The President of the Inter American Commission for Women, Dr. the honorable Jacqui Quinn-Leandro, Minister of Labour, Public administration and Empowerment who was offered the floor to address the member states.

The President observed that this was the first time that a President of CIM was invited to address the SIRG meeting and expressed her appreciation for the work being done by the National Secretariat in conjunction with the national coordinators in the different member states. President Quinn-Leandro also noted the symbiosis which existed between the National Secretariat and the Summit of the Americas Secretariat. Dr Quinn- Leandro informed that this year the CIM was celebrating its 80th year of existence and that she was pleased to indicate that as the premier inter governmental entity created for the specific purposed of winning recognition of women's civil and political rights, it has amplified its work to address all forms of discrimination against women. The President of CIM further informed that CIM has been involved with the Summit process from the inauguration of the Summits of the Americas in 1994.

She posited that during the previous four Summits, the member states recognized the importance of the CIM and acknowledged that, given that women are more than half of the citizens of the world, CIM's role of promoting gender equality and equity was fundamental to the reduction of poverty, the promotion of economic and social prosperity and for people-centered sustainable development. President Quinn-Leandro also indicated that she recognized the tremendous importance of the Fifth Summit particularly for the Caribbean since it will be the first time that a Summit will be held in a CARICOM country. She noted that there was a departure from the customary Declarations of Summits past , with the introduction of a hybrid document which not only contains a collaborative and collective response to the challenges of the Hemisphere, but also aims at a more focused, integrated and results oriented approach to addressing these challenges. She urged and challenged member states to craft a document which is fully engendered and one which, in an tangible and deliverable way, highlights a genuine commitment to gender equilibrium

In closing, the President of CIM reiterated CIM's strong belief in the relevancy and value of the Summit process in providing the necessary architectural plan for the Americas for the next few years. She posited that the governments will use that plan to refurbish and even rebuild the existing social, cultural, economic and political structures of the hemisphere. Honorable Quinn-Leandro

finally reminded delegations that the Third meeting of Ministers and Highest ranking Authorities Responsible for the Advancement of Women in the Member States (REMIM) will take place in Santiago Chile on November 13, 2008 immediately following the 34th Assembly of delegates of the Commission. She also informed that the main item on the agenda will be the consideration of the draft Declaration of Commitment of Port of Spain with a view to incorporating a gender perspective into the document.

The chair thanked the President of CIM for taking the time off to address the delegations on the Declaration and the role of the citizens

The complete text of the presentation of Dr. the honorable Jacqui Quinn-Leandro can be found at http://www.summit-americas.org/SIRG/SIRG_1008/remarks_cim.doc

Negotiations on the draft Declaration of commitment of Port of Spain (paras 1-29)

The Chair reconvened the session and requested further comments from the delegations. During the discussions on Paragraph 7 the delegations indicated that the paragraph did not sufficiently address their concerns or reflect their proposed amendments. The Chair then created a working group to discuss the paragraph. Barbados, Jamaica, United States, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela, Chile, Belize, El Salvador, and Colombia indicated an interest in participating in the working group. A meeting of the group was convened for 6.30- 10.p.m. The Chair informed that the group would meet under the Joint chairmanship of Dr Anthony Clayton and Mr. Arthur Grey of the National Secretariat and would report the results at the Third plenary.

6. THIRD PLENARY SESSION

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

Due to the issuance of a hurricane warning for the Island of Antigua by the government of Antigua and Barbuda, and the subsequent closure of the airport, Ambassador Albert Ramdin, Assistant Secretary General of the OAS was not able to attend the meeting.

b) Negotiations on the Draft Declaration of Commitment of Port of Spain paragraphs 1-29

This session began at 6.00 p.m. because of the power outage caused by the onslaught of Hurricane Omar on the twin island state of Antigua and Barbuda at the break of dawn. In opening the session the Chair thanked the delegates for their patience and dedication. He informed that the deliberations will continue until 10.00 p.m. and that during this time the working group which had continued to meet informally from 10.00 a.m.-12.30 p.m. and 2.00p.m. -4.00 p.m. would present to the plenary the results of the discussions on paragraph 7.

7. FOURTH PLENARY SESSION

a) Negotiations on the Draft Declaration of Commitment of Port of Spain, Paragraphs 1-29.

Prior to the continuation of the negotiations, the Ambassador of Antigua and Barbuda to the United States and the Permanent Representative to the OAS, Deborah-Mae Lovell, expressed, on behalf of her government, regret at the inconvenience experienced by delegations as a result of the power outage after the hurricane. Delegates reassured the representative that they had received quality service and attention by the government of Antigua and Barbuda as well as the staff of the hotel. They also indicated that the storm served as a reminder of the vulnerability of some countries in the Hemisphere and that it also provided them with an opportunity to request for a review of the paragraphs on natural disasters contained in the Declaration of Commitment of Port of Spain

The Chair informed that given the short work period for the day and the fact that a number of delegates were scheduled to be on the airport within a few hours he would ask a member of the National Secretariat to indicate the approved and pending paragraphs and this will be followed by closing remarks and then adjournment.

A member of the National Secretariat reported that to date six paragraphs out of the fifteen discussed were approved and they are 1, 4, 6, 9, 9bis, and 12.

8. CLOSING SESSION

In closing the Chair thanked the participants and interpreters for overcoming the weather challenges in getting to Antigua. He indicated that in light of the time lost as a result of the storm and in order to address all the pending issues the meeting scheduled for Washington D.C. will be for three days, from November 17-19, 2008. The Chair also requested the delegations to present their comments on "Energy Security" (paragraphs 30-38) on or before October 31, 2008 so that the National Secretariat could begin to prepare on the issues.

Ambassador Rodriguez also proposed a three day meeting for the Sixth SIRG which is scheduled for December 10-12, 2008 in El Salvador. The Chair also informed that Colombia and Belize have offered to host a SIRG meeting during the early part of 2009. He expressed his gratitude to these two states and indicated that this was the spirit envisioned by Trinidad and Tobago in proposing that the preparations for the Summit be shared among all the member states.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.10 p.m.