



SUMMIT IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW GROUP (SIRG)
First Regular Meeting of 2009
January 12-16, 2009 (Working Group Sessions)
January 14-16, 2009 (Plenary Sessions)
Padilha Vidal Room– 1889 F Street NW, DC 20006
Washington, D.C

OEA/Ser.E
GRIC/O.1/doc.11/09
27 January 2009
Original: English

**REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY AMBASSADOR LUIS ALBERTO RODRIGUEZ,
NATIONAL COORDINATOR FOR THE FIFTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS AND
SPECIAL ENVOY TO THE AMERICAS AT THE FIRST SUMMIT IMPLEMENTATION
REVIEW GROUP MEETING FOR 2009**

(Remarks delivered on January 14, 2009)

**REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY AMBASSADOR LUIS ALBERTO RODRIGUEZ,
NATIONAL COORDINATOR FOR THE FIFTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS AND
SPECIAL ENVOY TO THE AMERICAS AT THE FIRST SUMMIT IMPLEMENTATION
REVIEW GROUP MEETING FOR 2009**

WASHINGTON D.C. JANUARY 2008

Distinguished representatives to the Summit Implementation Review Group,

We no longer have the luxury of saying that the Fifth Summit is *next* year, this illusion of time is gone. We have in fact less than one hundred days until April 17th. It is now time to increase the pace of our negotiations, and to make sure that we make significant progress on the Draft Declaration of Commitment of Port of Spain.

To date progress has been made at these meetings. Let me remind you what we have accomplished so far:

Under the Preamble and Human Prosperity:

- We have approved 21 paragraphs.
- We have five paragraphs in the Working Group.
- We have nine paragraphs on hold pending consultations among countries
- We have one paragraph has been reformulated by the National Secretariat
- We have to paragraphs which were brought back to plenary at the last SIRG with brackets.

And at our last meeting in El Salvador, we began consultations on Energy Security, to date we have:

- Five paragraphs approved
- Four paragraphs in Working Groups
- Two paragraphs reformulated by the National Secretariat
- Four paragraphs pending consultations by Member States

We will begin consideration of the third pillar of the Declaration, Environmental Sustainability, at this meeting, paragraphs 39 to 47. We will also revisit pending paragraphs with the view of approving the text and moving forward to a final and approved Declaration of Commitment of Port of

Spain in subsequent meetings. As I have already indicated, it is the intention of this Chair to have a final text by the end of March.

As we now turn our attention to Environmental Sustainability, it is important to note that the term Environmental Sustainability is not a new term, it is on the lips of policymakers, academics, civil society and governments and the international community and has been for some time. The Fifth Summit provides an opportunity to ensure that the peoples of the Americas know that their leaders are concerned about the environment in the context of sustainable development and that the relationship between human development and the environment has now moved from being one of tradeoffs to one that necessitates balance.

We face an enormously difficult task, and we must realise that mere words are not sufficient. But words are an expression of commitment. Commitment can lead to action, and action is what is now urgently required.

As we look at our economies and peoples, the environmental conditions in the Americas are diverse. We have temperate, tropical, sub-tropical and even desert climates. We have some of the largest countries in the world and some of the smallest. So the impacts of climate change will be just as diverse. The reality is that some of us are more vulnerable, due to physical size, geography and the strength of our economies. Low lying coastal areas and small island states are particularly at risk.

Since the last Summit, our knowledge and understanding of environmental issues has grown considerably, there is now a consensus among scientists and policymakers on the general issues of climate change. Details on how to address climate change, and who pays for it may be contentious, but the need for governments to act as soon as possible is not.

Recently, when energy prices were very high, the search for alternative low-carbon energy sources gathered momentum as government policies on greenhouse gas emissions tightened and the economic attractiveness of non-fossil fuel energy sources increased. But with the current global climate of financial uncertainty and much lower fossil fuel prices, this impetus is weakening and environmentally conscious energy initiatives are in danger of moving down in our list of priorities, as lower energy prices make investment into alternative energy sources less attractive.

However, we must remember that costs are more than dollar values; there are costs to inaction as well.

Very significantly, the Summit precedes upcoming Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change scheduled for the end of the year in Copenhagen. The Summit provides the opportunity for our Heads to signal a collective approach to climate change and make a strong statement on the way forward towards a new global agreement on emission reduction. We cannot afford to let this opportunity pass us by.

In closing, let me thank you, distinguished delegates, for being here today and for your work in past meetings, in working groups and via your written comments, as we move forward, in accomplishing our mission at these meetings.

Thank You.