



SUMMIT IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW GROUP (SIRG)

MEETING AT THE MINISTERIAL LEVEL (2008)

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**Opening Remarks by José Miguel Insulza,
Secretary General of the Organization of American States**

The theme selected by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for the Fifth Summit of the Americas, to be held from April 17 to 19, 2009, in Port of Spain is “Securing Our Citizens’ Future by Promoting Human Prosperity, Energy Security, and Environmental Sustainability.” The three concepts embodied in this theme will be at the heart of the discussions of our Heads of State at an extremely crucial time for inter-American relations.

The Summits of the Americas process—now 14 years old—has been able, through four Summits, two Special Summits, and intense preparatory and follow-up work, to join forces with all entities of the inter-American system to face the challenges posed at the hemispheric level by new global realities. The Summits demonstrate the importance of good regional governance in the context of globalization and the need to seek joint solutions to problems that are truly transnational and hemispheric in nature—problems to which all of us can and must help find solutions. Economic growth, elimination of poverty, a better distribution of wealth, a common energy policy, efforts against drug trafficking and organized crime, and preservation of our shared environment in the Americas clearly constitute this type of problem.

We are well advised to raise this wide range of issues because never before have the Americas needed a broad dialogue in an attempt to forge a common agenda. At the outset of the Fifth Summit, the 34 governments represented here will have resulted from democratic elections held in the previous four years. The new United States administration will be only three months old. It is an excellent time to take stock of our realities and our projects, in order to consolidate them into a sweeping proposal for cooperation. The topics are already well known. But an agenda is much more than a list of topics. A hemispheric agenda also entails fundamental consensus agreements on the contents of each topic and a set of program proposals for common action.

Accordingly, the preparatory work we are doing with our countries, our hosts, and the organizations of the inter-American system is fundamental to ensure genuinely productive dialogue among our leaders on that historic occasion.

We must do our utmost to ensure the success of this Summit, the first to be held in the Caribbean region. The previous Summits were held in the three countries of North America and in three countries of South America. The Summit is now moving to the center of our region, toward a

distinct reality. We are certain that our countries in the Caribbean and Central America will join those in North and South America to make this event a true success, not only for the region but for the entire world.

Preparing for this Summit is a matter of priority for the OAS and for all institutions of the inter-American system. Its outcomes, especially if they are converted into clear policies and concrete goals, will guide the work of our organizations in the years ahead. The results of the Summits of the Americas have gradually assumed the role of steering the work of the organizations of the system. This status acquired by the Summits obliges us to produce mandates and other guidelines for action that are relevant, realistic, specific, and measurable within a specific time frame.

It is therefore desirable that the work carried out by our hosts from Trinidad and Tobago and CARICOM and by all governments of the Hemisphere and the international institutions members of the Joint Summit Working Group be increasingly unified and integrated, in which each party contributes its utmost. It would also be desirable to take maximum advantage of the current Summit preparation system, reinforcing ties between the Summit itself and the ministerial meetings and inter-American committees. Beginning with the Summit on Social Development, to be held in Santiago, Chile, next June, we should begin to glean from our ministerial and technical meeting priority proposals for sectoral action to enrich our contributions.

Our work will become more intense when, in a few weeks, we begin deliberations on the Final Declaration of the Summit, the first draft of which is to be presented by our host and in whose formulation we must all play a part. Discussion of that text and of the Plan of Action of the Fifth Summit in various meetings of this SIRG will make it possible to incorporate those inputs more completely and beneficially.

The Organization of American States, as coordinator of the Joint Summit Working Group, Permanent Secretariat of the process, and the entity that brings together all states participating in the Summit, has as one of its main priorities the responsibility of ensuring the success of the Summit. Once again, I wish to reiterate our readiness to contribute in any way we can within our purview or as requested by our host, our member countries, and the institutions of the system. We are more than ever before aware that this success depends on our collective efforts.

I believe that we have made significant strides thus far. In particular, I should acknowledge and commend the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for its work in the design and planning of the concept paper, in its drafting, in consultations on it, and in its recent submission. It has been well received by all countries. I would also like to recognize and express appreciation for the work of the member countries that submitted their views and of the institutions of the Joint Summit Working Group. Their task was an important one and its results are already starting to be apparent. I believe that, on the basis of that work, the Fifth Summit will be successful, and we will be able to obtain anticipated results from it as we move toward realizing a future for the citizens of the Hemisphere in which they can enjoy the benefits of development, peace, and democracy.