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PRESENTATION OF THE DRAFT DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT OF PORT OF SPAIN:

"SECURING OUR CITIZENS' FUTURE BY PROMOTING HUMAN PROSPERITY, ENERGY SECURITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY".

(Remarks by Ambassador Luis Alberto Rodriguez, Coordinator of the National Secretariat for the Fifth Summit of the Americas and Special Envoy for the Americas)

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors, National Summit Coordinators, Alternate Designated Representatives of Member States, Representatives of the Joint Summit Working Group, Other Distinguished Delegates.

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, I am pleased to present for your consideration the Draft Declaration of Commitment of Port of Spain. This presentation today is an important milestone for Trinidad and Tobago and, indeed, for all Member States of the OAS, since it marks the starting point of discussions on the document that will be signed by our Heads of State and Government at the Fifth Summit of the Americas, to be held in Port of Spain on April 17-19, 2009.

Distinguished Delegates, since assuming the responsibility of leading the Summit Process, Trinidad and Tobago has stood firm in its belief that the Fifth Summit provides a tremendous opportunity for all of us to re-examine our situations, assess the implications of global developments and take the necessary actions, together, that will put the Americas on a more promising and sustainable path forward.

From the outset, we committed to building consensus, among the 34 Member States of the OAS, for collective action to deal with the most immediate challenges facing our people, while creating the conditions for achieving greater prosperity, peace and security in the Americas. And, we have demonstrated that commitment by consulting widely with Member States, the institutions of the Joint Summit Working Group and with civil society representatives.

The Draft Declaration we place before you today is the outcome of that extensive consultation. It integrates the full range of priority issues facing our countries into a positive, results-oriented agenda consistent with the theme of 'Securing our Citizens' Future by Promoting Human Prosperity, Energy Security and Environmental Sustainability'. This agenda calls for simultaneous action by our governments and our institutions in several fundamental areas.

Distinguished Delegates, we have said on previous occasions that for us, the Fifth Summit must be a Summit of renewal that reconnects with the people of our Hemisphere. It must deepen the integration and cooperation among our countries by focussing on trans-national issues that require trans-national solutions and it must forge a consensus around a viable implementation strategy that focuses on delivering tangible benefits to the people of the Americas.

We have kept faith with that position. This document is essentially a strategy of cooperation that is intimately focused on meeting the needs and fulfilling the aspirations of our people through commitments and actions geared at achieving several specific targets within set timeframes.

We have also opted to depart from the past and to produce one coherent and integrated document – a Declaration of Commitment which combines elements of the two documents produced in previous Summits - a Declaration and a Plan of Action. We believe that this approach will assist all our governments and institutions in focussing on those key areas that will be the basis for sustained progress in the future.

In preparing this document, we have been guided by the need to be pragmatic. As a result, the focus is limited to issues that resonate with the majority of our countries and that can be addressed, to a significant degree, by multilateral action. In addition, several past mandates, and actions and targets agreed to, and being pursued, within the framework of the various Ministerial Meetings and by institutions of the United Nations and the Inter-American System, are re-emphasised.

We have sought to achieve a feasible mix of previous mandates that continue to be relevant with new mandates that are considered essential and which must be achieved to ensure that our development progress is not stymied, as well as new targets which push our development agenda further forward. The document contains 25 mandates and 11 new targets.

Within the mix are targets that will require bold and courageous actions on the part of our governments and a greater, more intensified role for our institutions. In addressing the global issues related to the environment, energy and food security, especially, we in the Americas must take on the challenge of leading the way and doing our part.

This Draft Declaration reflects our solid commitment to democracy and its values and to the legal Inter-American instruments that uphold them. It is presented in six sections, all of which emanate from the hemispheric agenda that we presented in our Concept Paper in April.

The first section, which addresses the core pillar of the theme of the Summit - Human Prosperity - centres on the goals of greater equity, inclusion and social development. Priority is given to reducing poverty through the consolidation of existing policies and programmes. We have also emphasized the importance of creating employment opportunities in line with the Decent Work Agenda, encouraging creativity and innovation, and promoting entrepreneurship in all sectors. Most importantly, creating the conditions for Human Prosperity require that we address some of the critical challenges facing our people – food security, healthcare and education. The section concludes by underscoring the importance of information and communication technology to development and the significant role of culture in our societies. The issue of culture will be further strengthened with the outcomes of the Ministerial Meeting on Culture which will be held in Barbados later this year. In all these areas, we acknowledge that special attention must be given to the most vulnerable groups who are

disproportionately affected by poverty, such as youth, women, afro-descendants and indigenous populations.

The second section of the Draft Declaration is geared towards advancing the programme for energy cooperation that we initiated in the Declaration of Panama made at the General Assembly in 2007. Therefore, the focus is on securing energy supplies, improving energy efficiency, and diversifying our renewable energy sources.

This issue is, of course, integrally linked to the issue of environmental sustainability which is addressed in the third section. We give priority to strengthening the Inter-American Programme on Sustainable Development and endorse the significance of international efforts, especially the Bali Road Map, and the need for us to make meaningful progress on climate change in Copenhagen in 2009.

The next section, section four, is dedicated to strengthening public security. Here, we advance a cooperation programme that takes into account the multidimensional nature of security and the current challenges which include security, the fight against drug trafficking, the growth of organised crime and gang violence, small arms trafficking and the fight against terrorism.

Strengthening democratic governance is at the heart of the penultimate section. Strong democracies, good governance, the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms form the basis of any lasting progress in the Americas, and in the world.

The final section which addresses the issue of summit follow-up and implementation is very important for us and is critical to the success of the Fifth Summit and to the Summits Process overall. If we are to make the Declaration of Commitment move from being mere words and ideas to one that results in tangible progress for the Americas, then we must address the issue of financing and greater co-ordination between the Summit and Ministerial processes. The strategic decisions taken at this Summit must be reflected in measurable actions we take at the Ministerial Meetings and within our national agendas. We simply must garner the resources and take the follow-up action necessary to meet our commitments.

Recognising that some of our countries have limited capacity to implement many of the decisions taken at the Hemispheric level, we have turned to the institutions operating in our region to use their resources, expertise and knowledge to take a leading role in ensuring that the mandates contained in this Draft Declaration are implemented. We also advocate building more meaningful partnerships with civil society, non-governmental organisations and the private sector in this effort.

In addition, we propose that the Summit of the Americas should be held every three years to give our leaders the opportunity to more frequently assess the strategic direction they have chosen and to strengthen their oversight of the process.

We also support building consensus on appropriate indicators that would be used to monitor our progress, annually, in implementing the commitments of the Fifth Summit. We are optimistic that in the process of negotiating this document, with support and advice from the institutions, we can find agreement on this issue.

Distinguished Delegates, when we meet in Trinidad and Tobago in April next year, the region will have several new Heads of State and Government and only some of our currently sitting Leaders

participated in Mar del Plata. The Port of Spain Summit will, therefore, offer a timely opportunity for new ideas, new approaches and the renewal of the Inter-American Agenda, which is framed by the principles of solidarity in cooperation adopted within the framework of the OAS some years ago.

We are confident that given the strong identification of all of our countries with the issues contained in the Draft Declaration of Commitment, the discussions to be held in coming months will allow us to reach positions of consensus that will benefit all our people.

In closing, I would like to say how much we appreciate the support all of you have given to us in the past months. We look forward, during the course of the coming months, to continue the engagement in a process of constructive reflection and dialogue on our challenges and to advance the negotiations on this Declaration. The outcome of these negotiations will help us increase the viability of the development processes to which the countries of the Americas are committed and face the challenges that confront all of us.

On September 18th and 19th, we will convene the Third Regular Meeting of the SIRG for 2008 to begin the process of negotiations. Thereafter, SIRG Meetings will be held every month on October 16th and 17th, November 13th and 14th, and on December 11th and 12th.

Distinguished Delegates, the Summit of the Americas is a powerful force for greater integration and development in our region. The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago looks forward to working with all of you to produce a final document that bears testimony to our commitment to greater solidarity and cooperation in forging greater prosperity, peace and security for all the people of the Inter-American Community.

I thank you.