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Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago

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REMARKS BY THE OAS SECRETARY GENERAL, JOSÉ MIGUEL INSULZA
MEETING WITH U.S. CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION
AT THE FIFTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS

(April 18, 2009 - Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago)

**Meeting with U.S. Congressional Delegation
At the Fifth Summit of the Americas
Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago
Saturday April 18th, 2009**

I would say that this Summit is probably a little bit more politically loaded than the others and less controversial than previous Summits. There was some controversy at the IV Summit in Mar del Plata which President Fernandez explained was in two ways, and I would say that that's true. The only real controversy at Mar del Plata was the matter of trade, and let me say something: I predicted that that was going to happen. I told the President not to discuss trade because there would be no agreement on trade because the MERCOSUR countries would not agree, not President Chavez. The MERCOSUR countries were not willing to discuss trade unless the matters of agricultural subsidies and intellectual properties were discussed. Those have to be discussed at the WTO and they were not willing to talk.

Some others decided to bring forward some foreign agreements on trade. But the other part was also true, because it was something that never happened before and only happened in one of our previous Summits in Canada. It was a very big part of the show in which some very important presidents participated, and some natural leaders, I would call, from Soccer players to Evo Morales, who wasn't President at that time, and that of course created some image of rebellion against the Summit, which is traditional of other meetings but not of the Summit of the Americas.

This time the issues are different, I would say stronger. As you all heard yesterday from President Ortega, the tone of the meetings of Presidents participating in the Summit is going to see to that. In this meeting you never know; they might end up all fighting about the document. It's very usual for them to say something and then change their minds. There is a high possibility that from the 34 countries present, four or five, as many as 6 but no more, have said that they are not going to support the document that was negotiated with all the countries for the past twelve months. The reason is very simple and it happens all the time. The negotiators of the document agree among themselves and then they present it to the leaders, and then the leaders say "we don't like it." They actually withdraw; there are some footnotes objecting to different paragraphs but they prefer to withdraw from all of them. In the document, you can see that we have one footnote from Bolivia on an issue dealing with bio-fuels. Bolivia is the other country that will probably withdraw the footnote and do the same as the others, but they withdraw all of the footnotes in general because they say they don't agree with the document in general and I would say that President Ortega was very précised yesterday with the reason. First the response to the crisis is not the way they would like to have it and second, their support to the Cuba issue.

So, I don't think that they will be talking about these things today but probably the three meetings will focus on the global crisis and with the problems of the region, about how to fight the big problems we have in the region. As you know for some countries, it was in the news today, that the IMF approved yesterday establishing some vial agreement for Mexico of 7 billion dollars, which is money that is not going to be spent by Mexican individuals on themselves, but it is a way of saying that this country has support and actually the effect of the Mexican peso---. Those countries are the big ones that have the problems. And most of the small countries also have a lot of economic problems because they can't borrow money. They have moved to healthy economic policies but tourism has declined, remittances have declined, exports have declined and the growth of Latin America in the past 7 years has been basically export- led. So they are going

to dedicate a long time to that. And probably by the end of the afternoon and tomorrow's morning section, they are going to see what they are going to do with the document.

I just want to say two things. I think you are very much right to be proud of the speech of President Obama yesterday. Not only because it didn't fall; there are many drafts, and everybody tells you that you have been so bad but you are not responsible of everything that falls in those drafts.

More than that, he spoke about the issues that concern the majority of people in Latin America and the Caribbean. If you look at the polls all over the region, you will find poverty and jobs, and/or crime as number one and number two issues. A couple of years ago, it was crime and poverty and jobs because the region was growing, but we had a lot of crime and now its jobs and poverty and crime is number 2. That's because we are in a crisis. So we chose to speak about the issues that people wanted to hear about, and that's a fact. I mean the others are all important, but the important thing I want to say here is that we have almost never before had a common agenda, and that is very important. Because sometimes, the US wants to talk about trade and Latin America and the Caribbean want to talk about poverty. Sometimes the United States wants to talk about security and the other ones want to talk about development. This time the issues that have appeared these days have to do with poverty and inequality, to do with crime and especially in Latin America, when you talk about crime, you talk about drugs. I've been in that area for some time. Let me tell you that what people fear most is drug trafficking, the drug lords and the gangs. Poverty, growth, drugs, immigration is also an issue, energy has become an issue, and global warming is going on in the Caribbean every year so it has to be there. And if we manage to get an agenda working on those issues, we will certainly improve a lot of problems in Latin America and the Caribbean which are essential for democratic governments. We have good governments, we have democratic governments, but as fragile democratic governments they are not going to be able to tackle those problems.

This is the most unequal region in the world. Not the poorest because it has higher per capita income than many others and several better indicators, but it is the most unequal. Inequality among people and also among countries is very high. We are not talking about the same countries when we talk about Latin America. There was a report just published and delivered today because it will be on the draft on crime in the region. And let me tell you that the differences are incredible in terms of crime from one country to the other. We have countries with about sixty homicides per 100,000 inhabitants which is really awful, in the US it's 1.6, 1.7; in Chile I should say it's 1.3 and in some others its over 60 and over 70 percent. So we have a lot of differences and countries are becoming to be different. There was something Ortega said yesterday which I want to remember, because that is very important. There are five or six countries in Latin America and the Caribbean that are lagging behind and if in those countries you don't make the effort- Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Guyana and Bolivia, and probably a couple more- they are going to be lagging more behind.

So we have an agenda, a common agenda at the OAS which is very dedicated to work on that agenda by the way and we expect to work a lot with you. We expect to work a lot with the Committee, with our Caucuses and reach our needs, but also in the cause to represent the Latinos. Latinos is like another nation in Latin American nations. Let me tell you that when some of them were talking, everybody had a different opinion of where they came from, which tends to prove that you are a US-Latino which is coming from a different group than the Argentineans, or the Peruvians, or the Mexicans...--- or we want to talk to the blacks and have better relations. We

also expect to have good relations with our friends from Puerto Rico and the Virgin islands. We have always done that, the problem is that we don't want to raise issues that have never been raised. What President Ortega said yesterday was something that has been---- for four years in the OAS . It has never been said. No one raises their hand and says we should discuss the status of Puerto Rico; there is never a discussion about that. This is an organization formed by 35 independent countries of the Americas but we want to have the best relations possible with all the others, with all the other friends in the region and I hope that we can do that. I am looking forward to having a better relationship with you. Linda would want me to talk about more concrete things but I prefer to talk about these things.

As in every organization we would do much more if we had more resources. As I said before, we are in a crunch now for a very crazy reason. As you know, in the UN they have a system of automatic raises for the people that work there, what they call the cost of living allowances that go up every year and the contributions go up. So when you get the budget from the UN it's been increased in the size of the contributions. We have the same system, we have costs of living allowances but our contributions don't go up. So every year -- but we are very happy to say that this year the costs of living allowances is going to raise the budget by 1.23 percent, but it has been much more in other years . So I don't want to talk about those problems now, I want to talk basically about the politics.

Let me say that there was a poll yesterday, I don't remember the organization that does the poll but it does it regularly on the Presidents of Latin America. Usually the marks are not very high- all of Colombians loves President Uribe, he gets 70% in the Colombian part of the poll but surely he would get 20% in the Ecuadorian part of the poll, and in some others. So usually they don't get very high marks. But the number one President in Latin America is President Obama, he has 70%. Then President Lula is about 44%-55%, which is very high, and then you have the Chilean, Bachelet, is very popular. That's an opportunity we can't miss; the most popular guy in the Hemisphere today is the US President and that has not happened for a long time and we have to take advantage of it. It's important because he is not only listening but also because he is talking about the things that people want to hear; they want to see the organizations dedicated to that. So I'm very grateful for this opportunity and hope to see you around during the rest of the day and very much in Washington.

Thanks