

OAS SECRETARY GENERAL REMARKS

**TRUST FOR THE AMERICAS GALA DINNER FOR HEADS OF STATE,
FIFTH THE SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS**

HONORABLE PRIME MINISTER PATRICK MANNING; PRESIDENTS; PRIME MINISTERS; FOREIGN MINISTERS; HERNAN RINCON, PRESIDENT, MICROSOFT LATIN AMERICA; CONGRESSMAN GREGORY MEEKS; DELEGATES.....

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN –

IT GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE TO BE HERE ON THE EVE OF THIS HISTORIC FIFTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS IN PORT-OF-SPAIN, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO.

THIS DINNER ORGANIZED BY OUR NON PROFIT AFFILIATE, THE TRUST FOR THE AMERICAS, IS AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO CELEBRATE THE ROLE YOUTH PLAYS IN THE FUTURE OF THE AMERICAS

THE DINNER IS ALSO AN OPPORTUNITY TO RECOGNIZE THE STRONG PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE OAS, ITS MEMBER STATES AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR - A PARTNERSHIP THAT IS PRODUCING TANGIBLE IMPACTS IN THE LIVES OF THOUSANDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE.

DURING THE LAST 2 DAYS A NEW GENERATION OF YOUNG LEADERS MET HERE AT A YOUTH FORUM ORGANIZED BY OUR YOUNG AMERICAS BUSINESS TRUST –YABT- TO SHARE EXPERIENCES AND BEST PRACTICES AND PRESENT THEIR THOUGHTS TO THE LEADERS OF THE HEMISPHERE.

AT THE SAME TIME, BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVES FROM SOME OF THE MOST PROMINENT COMPANIES IN THE AMERICAS MET IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR FORUM TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS ON ECONOMIC GROWTH AND TO OFFER THEIR SUPPORT TO OAS EFFORTS IN THE REGION.

AND TONIGHT, WE ARE HERE TO CELEBRATE THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE POETA PROGRAM OF THE TRUST FOR THE AMERICAS, WHICH BRINGS

PRIVATE SECTOR AND GOVERNMENT TOGETHER TO EMPOWER THE HEMISPHERE'S YOUTH.

POETA IS ONE OF THE MAJOR OAS YOUTH INITIATIVES. IT PROVIDES TECHNOLOGY TRAINING, SOCIAL SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT TO LOW INCOME AND DISABLED YOUTH AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN 18 COUNTRIES OF THE AMERICAS.

A PROGRAM LIKE POETA IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT BECAUSE ALMOST TWO-THIRDS OF THE POPULATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN – ALMOST 350 MILLION PEOPLE – ARE UNDER 35 YEARS OLD.

ADDITIONALLY, AT LEAST 90 MILLION PEOPLE IN THE HEMISPHERE ARE DISABLED.

BUT DESPITE ISSUES SUCH AS UNEMPLOYMENT AND VIOLENCE, I ALWAYS FEEL ENCOURAGED WHEN I HEAR TESTIMONIES SUCH AS THE ONE VIDEO WE JUST SAW, IN WHICH YOUNG PEOPLE TALK IN POSITIVE TERMS ABOUT THEIR FUTURE.

THROUGH POETA THE OAS/TRUST OFFERS YOUTH AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES TRAINING, ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES CREATED BY THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

I WOULD LIKE TO ENCOURAGE EVERYONE HERE TONIGHT TO SUPPORT THE POETA INITIATIVE AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE HEMISPHERE AS A WHOLE. WE SHOULD NOT ALLOW THIS DIFFICULT CLIMATE TO PREVENT US FROM EXERCIZING OUR POLITICAL WILL IN SUPPORT OF YOUTH, ESPECIALLY THOSE MOST VULNERABLE AND OFTEN FORGOTTEN.

WE AT THE OAS ARE HAPPY FOR THE SUPPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE SECTOR AGENCIES THAT CONTINUE TO SUPPORT INITIATIVES SUCH AS POETA, WHICH CONTINUE TO REACH THOUSANDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE YEARLY.

WE ARE COMMITTED TO STRENGTHENING OUR EFFORTS IN THIS AREA AND AT THE SAME TIME, CALL ON OUR GOVERNMENTS, THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS COMMUNITIES AND DONOR INSTITUTIONS TO RECOMMIT TO CREATING THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS THAT WILL ENABLE THE NEXT GENERATION TO

THRIVE AND TO EVENTUALLY TAKE ON THE MANTLE OF LEADERSHIP, AS WE ARE EXPECTING THEM TO DO.

IN CLOSING, I WOULD LIKE TO SAY HOW PLEASED I AM WITH THE WORK OF THIS IMPORTANT POETA INITIATIVE IN REACHING THOUSANDS OF VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE HEMISPHERE EACH YEAR.

FINALLY, LET US ALL CONTINUE TO WORK TOGETHER TO ENSURE THAT THE FUTURE OF THE HEMISPHERE'S YOUTH IS A BRIGHT ONE.

IT IS NOW MY PLEASURE TO INTRODUCE TO YOU THE PRIME MINISTER OF THIS BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY, THE HONORABLE PATRICK MANNING. FIRST, I WANT TO THANK THE PRIME MINISTER YOU FOR HIS IMMENSE HOSPITALITY. WE LOOK FORWARD TO A PRODUCTIVE AND ENGAGING SUMMIT THIS WEEKEND.

PRIME MINISTER MANNING HAS BEEN A LONG SERVING PUBLIC SERVANT IN HIS COUNTRY AND THE HEMISPHERE FOR OVER FOUR DECADES. THE PRIME MINISTER IS CURRENTLY SERVING HIS THIRD TERM AS PRIME MINISTER OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO AND IS A RECOGNIZED LEADER IN THE AMERICAS FOR HIS DEDICATION TO ADVANCING DEVELOPMENT IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO AND HELPING TO PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT AMONG FELLOW CARIBBEAN AND LATIN AMERICAN NATIONS. WE AT THE OAS ARE ALSO PROUD TO HAVE HAD HIS SUPPORT FOR MANY OF THOSE YEARS AND HIS CONTRIBUTIONS TO REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN THE WORK WE DO. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, PRIME MINISTER PATRICK MANNING....