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**YOUTH DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT TO
HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF THE AMERICAS**

Presented at:

Dialogue between Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Social Actors
Fifth Summit of the Americas
April 17, 2009, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

Adopted April 16, 2009 at the:
YOUTH FORUM OF THE AMERICAS
Building an Alliance for 21st Century Youth

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Preamble

We, the participants from across the Americas have met from April 15-16, 2009 in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago at the first Youth Forum on the eve of the Fifth Summit of the Americas.

Having participated in a series of consultative dialogues in Trinidad and Tobago, Mexico, Paraguay, the Dominican Republic and Washington, DC, U.S.A., we are confident that this Youth Forum will allow us to express the thoughts, concerns and inputs of our peers throughout the hemisphere.

In welcoming the 5th Summit Heads of State, we would like to take this unique opportunity to pledge our cooperation and collaboration throughout the hemisphere for identifying solutions to the challenges that we all face.

We also salute the decision to host such an inaugural Youth Forum and request the further commitment from Heads to make this an integral part of the Summit process.

We believe that the youth should play a contributory role in policy development and implementation. Embracing the fact that our communities are a reflection of the contributions made by each of its members, we are committed to finding new ways to engage our peers in making a significant impact on the social, cultural, educational, environmental and economic development of our societies.

We are therefore committed to excellence in every realm and refuse to settle for inaction as we resolve to strengthen and combine our efforts to ensure the following:

Human Prosperity

As the youth of the Americas, we recognize and embrace the need for the pursuit of opportunities for personal growth and development for the enhancement of human prosperity, bearing in mind the undeniable link between human prosperity and standard of living. We acknowledge that this must be in conjunction with innovative learning environments that are both practical and realistic for the youth of today. We understand that we possess the necessary skills to lead entrepreneurial ventures that can assist in health promotion, wealth creation and deliver value and purpose to our communities and societies.

We therefore:

1. Call upon governments to reform education systems to better equip students and educators for the realities and demands of life and the global marketplace by developing relevant learning approaches and activities. However, these reform efforts should be tailored to the needs, culture and developmental objectives of the country;
2. Request that governments work more strenuously towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, with special attention paid to goals 2, 4 and 6, which refer to achieving universal education, reducing child mortality and combating HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases, respectively;
3. Urge the enhancement of existing community skills-based programs with a focus on improving social skills and facilities to develop and nurture the creativity of youth, thereby creating employment opportunities for young people in marginalized communities;
4. Insist on the involvement of young people in all decision making and policy formation processes, particularly on matters related to regional and national development, by consulting diverse youth entities and representatives;
5. Request further indiscretionary support for youth-led social development programs;
6. Commit to regular assessments of labour and business markets to identify youth employment opportunities and entrepreneurial initiatives to fill market gaps;
7. Request the development of an entrepreneurship policy which supports social and cultural industries among youth, women and families and encourages entrepreneurship by establishing:
 - a. An accessible venture capital fund and access to alternative financial support
 - b. A mentorship program
 - c. An effective business incubation program which accelerates access to lucrative markets for goods and services;
8. Encourage stakeholder investment in communities by engaging youth through internships, career counseling, scholarships and opportunities for quality employment;

9. Urge a specific focus on grassroots programs as a way to highlight non-traditional industries such as sport and culture, the tourism industry, the expansion of employment opportunities and crime reduction;
10. Call on governments to bridge the digital divide existing in our countries by facilitating greater access to information and communication technology and training programs;
11. Demand that governments address deficiencies in the access to and delivery of healthcare with respect to lifestyle and communicable diseases within the Americas;
12. Commit to volunteer our time and energy in productive efforts to strengthen our communities and assist others.

Energy Security

We recognize our need to ensure clean energy availability to satisfy the demands of our hemisphere. Our societies rely heavily on non-renewable sources of energy. Our increasing consumption poses a threat to our energy security and clear-cut solutions are needed.

We therefore:

1. Recommend that an agreement is created for and by the Americas addressing our specific needs, particularly after recognizing that the Kyoto Protocol was not entirely applicable to us, as seen by the lack of its ratification by several countries within our hemisphere;
2. Urge the organization of small independent summits or meetings so that the young men and women of the Americas can engage in discussions to provide specific solutions to emerging issues;
3. Commit ourselves to becoming involved in energy awareness campaigns geared toward sensitizing our peers about the importance of energy conservation and clean forms of energy;
4. Urge governments to lead by example by utilizing renewable energy sources within governmental agencies;
5. Propose that governments provide incentives and develop policies to encourage efficient use of available resources and that they also invest in research and development regarding alternative energy sources such as solar and wind power;
6. Recommend that governments regulate the production of bio-fuels so as to mitigate pollution, forest degradation and food insecurity;
7. Propose that governments engage the private sector to provide opportunities for local inhabitants to become adept with skills required for work within the energy field;

8. Recommend that countries within our hemisphere whose economies depend on oil exports begin or intensify the process of diversifying their revenue stream to protect themselves against a decrease in demand for oil as a result of the implementation of alternate technologies in oil consuming countries.

Environmental Sustainability

Young people are inheritors of the world in which we live. Therefore, we must lead the way in supporting environmentally sustainable products, infrastructure and services. We understand that it is the responsibility of individuals, governments, and all other relevant stakeholders to implement, execute and monitor joint action plans to address environmental challenges and their impact on sustainable development on a local, regional and global level.

Therefore, we:

1. Call on our governments to include environmental sustainability learning programmes into the teaching institutions' curricula, starting at the earliest possible level. Additionally, we require governments to implement ongoing environmental campaigns and public awareness programmes on a national level;
2. Urge the design and implementation of policies and legislation on recycling, waste management and pollution prevention, as well as the provision of the necessary infrastructure for effective implementation of said policies.
 - a. Particular emphasis should be placed on green house gas emission reduction programmes;
3. Ask for the enforcement of environmental protection programmes throughout our region, particularly in areas that suffer rapid deforestation and pollution to natural habitats;
4. Recommend that governments offer incentives to individuals, private sector and public sector agencies that adopt environmentally sound practices and invest in green technology.
5. Suggest that governments recognize and support organizations that engage in corporate social responsibility;
6. Demand that stricter policies be implemented in the agricultural sector geared towards the elimination of the use of chemical products and methods that have an adverse effect on the environment;
7. Call for the establishment and monitoring of certification programmes that enable consumers to easily identify goods that have been produced using environmentally sustainable methods;
8. Urge governments to design and implement development policies that support sustainable environmental practices.