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OPENING REMARKS BY THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC,  
CHAIR OF THE SUMMITS PROCESS

*(Ambassador Rubén Silié, Chair of the SIRG)*

On behalf of the Dominican Republic, let me extend to all of you a warm welcome. Thank you for coming. This meeting marks for us a very important milestone in deepening the process for consultations on the priorities of the states and the various stakeholders in the lead-up to the Tenth Summit of the Americas, which we will host in Punta Cana.

Let me express our gratitude to Secretary General Luis Almagro, Mr. James Lambert, Ms. Maria Celina Conte, and all the staff of the OAS Summits Secretariat; and, of course, to my esteemed colleagues at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With the third wave of democratization that we have witnessed since the last century, our region has been, for the world, an inspiring example of peaceful coexistence among states. Since 1994, the objectives of this Summit have been geared towards “the strengthening, effective exercise, and consolidation of democracy” in the Americas.

As it now stands, more than half of the world's population will hold elections in 2024, the first time democracy has reached such a milestone. This translates to some two billion voters in more than 70 countries voting this year.

Even so, democracy as a form of government and as a conceptual framework for the exercise of power is under serious threat in our region. It is against that backdrop that the Summit of the Americas must make its contribution to “preserve and strengthen the democratic community of the Americas.”

Indeed, the functioning of democracy is disrupted by many factors. For example, a growing tendency to legitimize abuse of power for the sake of getting results, regardless of the cost of violating the system of checks and balances, human rights, and even the international obligations of states, all this under the pretext of supposed efficiency, totally distorting the meaning of the term democracy by sacrificing the "demos" for Kratos – that is, power without the people.

The worst part is that, whenever we replace the "demos" with efficiency, the popular legitimacy of political power is completely lost and it only serves individual or group interests, not the interests

of the majority, although effective propaganda and communication strategies over social media might get people to believe the opposite.

Another worrying trend is how things have become highly polarized politically. It is becoming commonplace today to call an opponent "traitor" in a democracy, or to treat an adversary as enemy, while debates between candidates are often distorted with insults and personal attacks.

This tends to be the case with one-person leaderships seeking to convince the population that the transactional nature of democratic politics – in which everyone can participate – inhibits the effort to bring dynamic solutions to social problems. But that would be tantamount to denying history because, for more than a century, the Hemisphere was plagued by dictatorships, authoritarian regimes, and lack of freedom, while the development indicators attained under democracy are incomparable to those of that era.

We must accept, however, that despite the considerable growth achieved, we have not made the progress we ought to have made in ridding ourselves of inequality in society. That kind of backsliding directly fuels elevated levels of violence, which in turn is a breeding ground for the rise of messianic authoritarianism that seeks to convince millions that the solution to their problems will spring from the head of someone predestined rather than from a set of solid institutions with an effective and independent justice system.

Against such a backdrop, what some have called a democratic recession in our region is a cause for concern. According to *Latinobarómetro* data, in 2023 only 48% of the region's population supports democracy, which translates to a 15 percentage point decrease since 2010, when support for democracy stood at 63%.

That erosion is easy to understand if we remember that, in the eyes of the average voter in the third wave of Latin American democratization, 21 heads of state have been convicted of corruption and 20 have not been able to finish the terms of office for which they were elected.

Let's be honest, democracy is in crisis and it is up to all of us to preserve it because with it, as Raúl Alfonsín once reminded us, we not only feed, educate, and heal people, but it is also the main guarantee of individual freedom.

The genesis of the Summits of the Americas Process is closely linked to strengthening the exercise of democracy, as the leaders established in their "Plan of Action" from the inaugural Summit, held in Miami in 1994.

Likewise, the subsequent eight Summits have continued to promote mandates to strengthen the legitimacy of our democratic institutions. Such was the case with the iconic 2018 Lima Summit, which called on governments to tackle corruption – a toxic scourge that undermines the legitimacy of democratic institutions.

We are mindful that on our shoulders rests the job of fighting for that important legacy of the Summits process, a responsibility that we will assume with dedication and care. Under the leadership of President Luis Abinader and Foreign Minister Roberto Alvarez, the Dominican Republic is deeply committed to the preparations for the Tenth Summit of the Americas.

In that connection, I am pleased to inform you that in the weeks ahead we will officially announce a Presidential Committee for the Summit, comprised of ministers and business and civil society representatives, who will lead the challenging efforts to deliver a transformative and inclusive Summit in 2025.

Similarly, the Dominican business sector and the Office of the President are already coordinating closely with the IDB to organize the Business Summit of the Americas and, of course, we are working closely with our colleagues at the OAS Summits Secretariat to organize the civil society forums.

On another note, I am pleased to announce that President Abinader and Minister Alvarez have decided to commemorate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the First Summit of the Americas with an event in which political, private sector, civil society, and thought leaders from across the Hemisphere will review the outcomes of the first nine Summits, reflecting on the past, but looking toward the future. We will have more details on this celebration at the ministerial-level SIRG meeting we will be holding in Asunción, on the sidelines of the OAS General Assembly.

Finally, I cannot conclude my remarks without mentioning that today we will hear presentations from various institutions of the Joint Summit Working Group, as well as from representatives of civil society and stakeholders participating in the Summits process – the private sector and youth among them.

Likewise, the chairs of the last two inter-American ministerial meetings will share with us the outcomes of those ministerial meetings, which dealt with both sustainable development and energy, in an effort to move forward in bringing the ministerial and the Summits processes closer together.

I would like to underscore how important the Dominican Republic finds the contribution of input from the various Summits process stakeholders, especially at this stage of setting priorities at the regional level. Not only does this input feed the dialogue involving the delegations, but it will also help us identify the theme that will bring us together in Punta Cana soon.

Later on, after this morning's presentations, I will share some initial thoughts about the methodology we will propose to better organize the joint work that awaits us between now and November 2025.

Thank you very much!