



Organization of
American States



REMARKS DELIVERED BY
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The Meeting of Ministers of Culture
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Minister Susan Baca de la Colina, Minister of Culture of Peru and Meeting Chair
Esteemed Ministers and High Authorities of Culture
Distinguished Permanent Representatives
Ambassador Jaime Girón, National Coordinator of the Sixth Summit of the Americas
Representatives of International Organizations
OAS Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In less than six months (155 days to be exact), the Heads of State and Government of the Americas will gather in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia at the Sixth Summit of the Americas. This will be the first meeting of the Presidents and Prime Ministers in the Americas since the April 2009 Summit in Trinidad & Tobago, and as such is a critical moment in shaping the Inter-American agenda for the foreseeable future.

In my role as the Executive Secretary of the Summits Secretariat, the area of the OAS entrusted with the role of institutional memory and technical secretariat of the Summits process, I will focus my remarks on the Summits of the Americas as a process and on the important role that ministerial processes can play as partners in implementation of Summit commitments.

To do so, I would first like to emphasize what we mean when we talk about the Summit of the Americas as a process. Whenever 34 Heads of State meet, inevitably a great deal of emphasis and attention will be given to the meeting. That is as it should be. But, for the process to work and the Summit to be truly successful, the requisite attention and commitment must continue long after these signature meetings adjourn and the last presidential plane departs.

Indeed, the Summits process entails an ongoing cycle of mutually reinforcing activities that requires the coordinated participation of a variety of stakeholders, including governments, institutions, and social actors both in the preparatory phase of the Summit and in the subsequent phase of implementation to actualize the decisions and initiatives approved by Heads.

This is particularly important this year. The host country has indicated that this Summit will have a strong emphasis on commitments that are concrete and that can count with the

necessary technical and financial support for implementation. That support will come not only from governments, but also from institutions, particularly those of the Joint Summit Working Group, and the array of social actors that participate in and support the Summits process, including civil society, the private sector, youth, workers, indigenous peoples, afro-descendants, and women, among others. To that end, the host country and the Summits Secretariat are engaging the various stakeholders, receiving input and encouraging buy-in during this preparatory stage. We hope this will translate into a real commitment to post-Summit implementation.

Likewise, Ministerial meetings, like this one, play an integral role in the preparation of the Summit. In the preparatory stage, at the front end, Ministerial-level recommendations often find resonance in the decisions adopted by Heads. In the implementation stage post-Summit, Ministerial processes form part of the critical infrastructure for the follow up and implementation of Summit mandates and initiatives.

Starting at the Third Summit of the Americas in Quebec City in 2001, our Heads of State and Government have explicitly committed to forging greater linkages between the Ministerial and Summit processes. That remains a work in progress. However, I believe that the inclusion of both the host country and the Summits Secretariat in this Culture Ministerial serves as an indicator that we are moving in the right direction to consolidate a Summit architecture that both clarifies and reinforces the relationship between the various inter-American processes and the Summit.

The issue of culture and cultural heritage, while not an explicit sub-theme of the Sixth Summit, is clearly, an important cross-cutting theme that touches on many of the priority areas for the Sixth Summit. Indeed, during the negotiations on the theme of Natural Disasters earlier this week, language was introduced to the Summit document that made note of the importance of the effect of natural disasters on cultural heritage. This is clearly recognition of the need to integrate culture into these discussions.

In this regard, I would like to use this opportunity to mention a few specific proposals as to how the ministerial process in Culture can continue to support the preparatory and implementation phases of the Sixth Summit.

First, the Chair of this Ministerial will be invited to an upcoming meeting of the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG) to share ideas and recommendations from this meeting that are related to the Summit themes so that they can be duly considered. In mentioning this opportunity, I would wish to share that a new approach has been adopted for negotiating the documents for consideration by Heads of State and Government. With the intention of having succinct, focused documents, the SIRG may incorporate ideas, concepts and proposals that are presented so that they are reflected in a manner that is consistent with the objective of elaborating text that is brief and focused.

Second, I would invite you to be a part of the process of broad-based consultations that will continue through April of next year, much of it on the Summits Virtual Community with a broad range of stakeholders. We believe that these consultations play an important role. They generate ideas and recommendations for consideration by Member States, they help to raise awareness among the publics of our countries regarding the Summit issues and they give the citizens of the Americas a stake in the process by providing a space for participation. Our slogan on the Summits Virtual Community is “Be part of the dialogue, be heard” and we are hearing from the people of the Americas.

Third, we would encourage an ongoing dialogue in your countries related to the Summit themes and their relationship to culture.

Fourth, with regard to implementation, it is important to continue to seek to have coherence among the actions proposed at the ministerial level with those agreed to at the Summit level. The Summits Secretariat is committed to working in close coordination with the Office of Education and Culture and the Inter-American Committee on Culture to share pertinent, timely information on the specific results of the preparatory and immediate follow-up processes of the Sixth Summit. Such sharing of information will include the particular initiatives and any relevant implementation plans that may result from the Summit in April 2012, so that they may be considered in the planning and implementation of ministerial and sectoral commitments related to culture going forward.

Fifth (and to reinforce the previous point), we would recommend, as mandated in the Fifth Summit declaration, that “technical secretariats of all inter-American Ministerial Meetings...inform their Ministers and high level authorities of the mandates arising from (the) Summit and to initiate strategic actions...to facilitate the implementation of our commitments.”

Lastly, the central theme of the Sixth Summit, “Connecting the Americas: Partners for Prosperity,” represents, among other things, a call to work together and to coordinate activities to more effectively implement the high-level political commitments emanating from the Summit.

We hope to continue forging such synergies between the Summit and ministerial processes and among the varied stakeholders as we move forward to advance the spirit of partnership in Cartagena and beyond.

Thank you.