

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Dominican Republic wishes to convey its pleasure and pride at having you here on Caribbean soil to begin the activities of the Thirty-Seventh Regular Session of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD). Santo Domingo, its capital, which lies in the very path of the sun, as our national poet, Pedro Mir, once said, bows to you in reverence and respect.

We are convinced that over the coming four days of this meeting we shall adopt the soundest possible decisions in the framework of CICAD; determinations that will bring future benefits in the struggle in which those of us who live in this part of the world are permanently embroiled.

Only with an iron will and the commitment of all our countries to these aims will we successfully confront this common enemy, with enormous resources at its disposal and extraordinary influence, who unscrupulously and shamelessly stoop to any available means as they continue to undermine the morality of the world.

I should like to take the opportunity in these welcoming remarks to say with great pride that in the Dominican Republic we have been receiving extraordinary support from the government of President Leonel Fernández to wage an unflinching and resolute war on drug abuse and drug trafficking. Thanks to this support, recently we have dealt telling blows against those who, under cover of the shadows, would turn our nation into a playground

for their illicit activities, and we can categorically say that in the case of the Dominican Republic they are mistaken.

There is no question that CICAD, following its thirty-sixth session, held from December 7 to 9 last year into Washington, D.C., has continued its onward progress.

I should like to tell you about the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD). As the current President of CICAD and a police officer, I have had the opportunity to see the magnitude of the drug problem and to assess the strenuous, multidisciplinary efforts undertaken in the framework of the inter-American system to tackle it in all its complexity.

CICAD is the result of a significant leap taken by the members of the Organization of American States (OAS) upon recognizing that the problem was not simply one of supply and demand; that to deal with the complexity and sheer scale of the problem required the efforts of the entire region, and that one country's success was the success of all.

Things have come a long way since then. Thanks in part to the activities of the Commission, today the hemisphere has a forum where the member states can come together as equals to examine the drug threat on all levels and formulate policies to confront it. It also has the technical capacity to deal with some of our countries' most pressing priorities in this struggle.

CICAD had a busy year in 2004. The Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism created in _____ continues to mature and conducts objective reviews of

the drug situation in each country. The reports of the Third Evaluation Round, 2003-2004, will be presented at this meeting.

The Demand Reduction Unit is responding to what recent studies have identified as an increase in drug abuse in many member states; to the appearance of new drugs, and combinations of drugs in areas previously unscathed. Last year, the Unit centered its efforts on school-based drug abuse prevention programs.

The mission of the Supply Reduction section is to help members to strengthen their control capacity of illicit drugs and related smuggling activities. In 2004, the section provided technical assistance and training in the areas of intelligence, community-based policing, maritime drug trafficking, control of chemical substances and pharmaceutical products, transnational organized crime, and special investigative techniques and law enforcement, including witness protection, undercover operations, controlled delivery, customs procedures, and interception of communications. It also provided technical support to the various groups of experts.

The Legal Development Unit engaged in activities aimed to prevent, combat, and eradicate the illicit traffic and manufacture of firearms, as well as providing advisory services to other units of CICAD.

In 2004 the Anti-Money Laundering Unit provided technical assistance and training to member states in judicial and financial measures and also to law enforcement bodies. It also acted as secretariat of CICAD's Experts Group

to Control Money Laundering, which introduced reforms to the Model Regulations as regards criminal classification of money laundering and special techniques for investigating such crimes.

The purpose of the training activities was to provide judges and prosecutors with tools for hearing and prosecuting money laundering cases. A large part of these activities was carried out in concert with, and with the support of, the Inter-American Development Bank.

The Observatory continued its efforts to build up an increasingly solid scientific foundation for the activities of member states in the international community, provide them with instruments for information analysis, and use that information to design policies.

The Institutional Development unit, the purpose of which is to strengthen the plans of national anti-drug councils and provide assistance to member states in the preparation of drug control strategies, collaborated with the Andean Community of Nations (CAN) in implementing programs contained in the Andean Cooperation Plan to Combat Legal Substance Abuse and Related Crimes. It also provided technical assistance to help El Salvador and Guyana design and prepare their national strategies.

As you can see, there is a great deal of activity underway. CICAD has several challenges in store. It needs to strengthen linkage and communication among the persons in charge of anti-drug efforts and other

government agencies. The drug problem has to be addressed in connection with social, economic, development, and governance issues.

Furthermore, CICAD must continue to try to balance efforts in the areas of supply and demand because it will be to the advantage of the criminals if both fronts are not tackled. It must contribute to the organization of a hemispheric security policy that takes into account the concerns of all the subregions and states in the framework of the new Department of Multidimensional Security. It needs to work more closely with other areas of the OAS concerned with threats against democracy.

The war on drugs must be a part of our very essence as peoples. And we are firmly convinced, ladies and gentlemen, that through the work of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission, of which we are all proud members, we will continue to write the pages of future history that will see us triumph in this sometimes seemingly uneven struggle because we are all united in the effort.

I should not like to conclude without expressing my appreciation to the United States Embassy, CICAD, the Canadian Royal Mounted Police, the OAS representatives in the country, Dr. Bertha Santoscoy, the Business Council for Crime Prevention (CONAPREC), the National Council on Private Enterprise (CONEP), His Eminence, Monsignor Nicolás de Jesús Cardenal López Rodríguez, and Monsignor Agripino Núñez Collado, for their support in implementing the Community-Based Policing Project in the

Colonial Zone. I would also like to announce that thanks to the support of the President of the Republic, Leonel Fernández, and of the whole national community..... the National Anti-Drug Council is poised to submit an anti-doping bill to Parliament, which, when passed, will be a major contribution to drug abuse prevention.

I welcome you all to the Dominican Republic and hope that your stay will be every bit as fruitful as we expect.

Thank you very much.