

TWENTY-FOURTH REGULAR SESSION
October 26-30,1998
Tegucigalpa, Honduras

OEA/Ser.L/XIV.2.24
CICAD/doc.1000/98
28 October 1998
Original: English

STATEMENT BY MRS. ELAINE BAKER,
PRINCIPAL REPRESENTATIVE OF JAMAICA TO THE
24 TH REGULAR SESSION OF THE INTER-AMERICAN
DRUG ABUSE CONTROL COMMISSION
(CICAD)

STATEMENT BY MRS. ELAINE BAKER, PRINCIPAL REPRESENTATIVE OF
JAMAICA TO THE 24TH REGULAR SESSION OF THE INTER-AMERICAN DRUG
ABUSE CONTROL COMMISSION (CICAD)
TEGUCIGALPA, HONDURAS - OCTOBER 26 - 30, 1998

Mr. Chairman, the Jamaican delegation wishes to congratulate you on your appointment to chair this meeting. The delegation wishes also, to congratulate the Government of Honduras on its decision to host this the 24th Regular Session of the CICAD. Since my arrival yesterday, I have been struck by the beauty of Tegucigalpa and look forward to seeing some of the interesting places of this picturesque city.

Mr. Chairman, the problems associated with drug abuse and drug trafficking have intensified significantly over the last decade. In my country we have not escaped the ill effects of the increase in the use of marijuana and hard drugs as we have seen increased pressure on the health services, breakdown in family life, deterioration of the social fabric and overcrowding in the prisons.

Clearly, these ill effects have demonstrated that the problem of drug abuse is no longer restricted to the industrialized countries where the majority of illegal drugs are consumed but one that cuts across national boundaries, ethnic, religious, class and gender lines. A recent TJNDPC publication refers to drug addiction as "no longer a rich man's problem, but a poor man's affliction".

Concomitant with the increase in drug abuse has been an increase in drug trafficking. Despite the various law enforcement measures, the Jamaican society continues to be plagued by violent crimes perpetrated by the use of guns, most of which have been obtained through illegal drug activities. The drug trafficking phenomenon also demonstrates its ugly nature by way of contamination of export cargo especially those involving apparel, agricultural produce and ban xite, thereby causing exporting entities to take a number of preventative actions before arranging to ship their produce and forcing government to review measures designed to protect the integrity of the shipments and the shipping lines.

The drug trends are not slowing down. No country, however remote, however robust is its democracy, is immune to the adverse consequences of drug abuse and drug trafficking although countries whose social and institutional fabric are weak are particularly vulnerable. Paradoxically, though, this crisis has served as an impetus for nations to join forces to address this multi-faceted problem.

The impetus for nations to work together to fight the drug scourge is solidly coordinated by the United Nations and the CICAD. However, notwithstanding the successes achieved through multi-lateral instruments and the work of multilateral agencies, bilateral cooperation between states has brought forth a great deal of success in suppressing the scourge. Jamaica has entered bilateral agreements with a number of regional states inclusive of the United States of America, Argentina, Cuba and Chile.

Only last week, the Cabinet gave approval for the signing of an agreement with the Government of Colombia and it is expected that other agreements will be concluded shortly.

Perhaps, the most significant of bilateral cooperation agreements has been that on the suppression of maritime drug trafficking with the United States of America. The joint activities of the US Coast Guard and other Coast Guards in the region have enabled the Jamaican authorities to seize a number of boats involved in drug trafficking.

Mr. Chairman, Jamaica has placed high priority on its antidrug programmes and is making every effort to conform with the three United Nations Conventions and the various instruments coming out of the United Nations, CICAD and other multi-lateral agencies. In relation to the 1988 Convention, you will be pleased to know that the only outstanding legislation required is that for the control of precursor chemicals. This particular piece of legislation is far advanced having seen two drafts and passage in Parliament is expected before the end of this year.

The Government of Jamaica is highly impressed with the work of the CICAD Expert Groups. Particularly, we are impressed with the work of the Expert Group on the Control of Money Laundering especially as it relates to the changes to the model regulations and the inclusion of "serious offences". Jamaica is currently amending its National Drug Money Laundering Act to include "suspicious or unusual transactions" and hopes to include "serious offences" in another year or so.

We await with great anticipation, the training on money laundering to be offered by the CICAD, the plan for which was approved by the Expert Group in April in Washington.

Preparations are now underway for the country to be mutually evaluated by the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF) on Money Laundering in March 1999 as part of the region's on going assessment and evaluation.

Cognizance has been taken of the work of the other Expert Groups. Jamaican delegates to the Expert Group Meetings on Alternative Development, the Control of Precursor Chemicals and Demand Reduction have all submitted glowing reports on the work of these groups. The Government of Jamaica is delighted that so much work is being done by the Expert Group on Demand Reduction as there has been a tendency for some administrations to pay greater attention to the law enforcement approach to drug control. Simply put, there has to be a balance between demand and supply reduction initiatives.

As my country's representative on the Working Group on the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism I must express satisfaction with the direction the mechanism has taken so far and would hope that, in time it will become the single evaluation mechanism in the hemisphere.

Mr. Chairman, I had the honour to represent Jamaica at the twentieth special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to Drugs which was held in New York in June this year. The Political Declaration coming out of that session has set different target dates ending with the year 2008 to eliminate or significantly reduce drug abuse, drug cultivation, production and trafficking and associated illicit activities.

There are those who consider these targets to be extremely optimistic. However it is the intention of my Government to work with the CICAD, the United Nations, other multilateral agencies, major industrialized countries and regional states to make those designs into realities- realities whereby there will be no user and no supplier.