

# Opening Address

The Opening Address is given by Abraham Stein, Assistant Secretary for Multidimensional Security of the Organization of American States, who provides an introduction to the regional tools of multilateral cooperation available for combating public security concerns in the Americas.

# Latin American Public Security Challenges: Regional Solutions



## **Abraham Stein**

*Assistant Secretary for Multidimensional Security of the Organisation of American States*

It is a pleasure to be here with you in this beautiful country, in one of the world's most stunning cities, Rio de Janeiro. I would like to thank the organisers for the opportunity this Symposium provides to share, explore and propose points of action, alternatives and proposals that address the problem of the links between drugs and public security.

### **Regional public security instruments**

- The Bridgetown Declaration and the Declaration on Security in the Americas

In the Bridgetown Declaration, in Barbados 2002, the member states of the Organization of American States (OAS) recognised that, “security threats, concerns, and other challenges in the hemispheric context are of diverse nature and multidimensional scope, and that the traditional concept and approach should be expanded to encompass new and non-traditional threats, which include political, economic, social, environmental and health aspects.”

Following on from this, in Mexico City in October 2003, OAS member states made the Declaration on Security in the Americas, recognising that, “the states of the Hemisphere face both traditional threats to security and new threats, concerns, and

other challenges that, in view of their complex characteristics, have meant that security is multidimensional in nature.” The states of the hemisphere acknowledged that their “security is affected, in different ways, by the... new threats, concerns and other challenges of a diverse nature”, including “terrorism, transnational organised crime, the global drug problem, corruption, asset laundering, illicit trafficking in weapons, and the connections among them.” The Declaration also refers to the threats of extreme poverty and social exclusion, which affect stability, democracy and social cohesion; natural and manmade disasters; HIV/AIDS; trafficking in persons; attacks to cyber security; and the risk of accidents during the transport of hazardous materials (and in this case, I would reemphasise the dangers of transnational organised crime).

These two important Declarations define a multidimensional concept of public security.

In consideration of the diverse and complex threats to security across the hemisphere, it is increasingly recognised that working in a coordinated manner is imperative. The only way to face and combat security problems, and by extension, the problem of drugs in the hemisphere, is by uniting our efforts; by exchanging ideas and experiences; and by thinking about the future from a regional perspective.

- The Secretariat for Multidimensional Security

In response to both traditional and new regional security problems, the General Secretariat of the OAS created the Secretariat for Multidimensional Security. Its mission is to “coordinate cooperation

among the member states to fight threats to national and citizen security, and to work to mitigate the harmful effects of those threats on the health and well-being of citizens and societies in the member states and to prevent the abuse of psychotropic substances, crime, and violence; capacity-building; legal and legislative assistance; and the promotion of health and education.” The Secretariat is composed of the Executive Secretariat of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), the Secretariat of the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (CICTE), and the Department for the Prevention of Threats against Public Security.

The Secretariat benefits from having one of Brazil’s most distinguished diplomats as the Secretary for Multidimensional Security: Ambassador Alexandre Addor-Neto. Secretary Addor-Neto’s work has not only been to promote and support the mandates, but also to integrate the different areas that make up the Secretariat for Multidimensional Security. There is a deep feeling of shared responsibility between all our member states, but particularly Brazil, and international agencies for the fight against threats to our security, including corruption, the use, abuse, and trafficking of illicit substances, crime and transnational organised crime.

- The Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM)

The Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM) is the most tangible example of the importance of multilateral and regional cooperation for facing the drug problem. The MEM is an instrument to evaluate antidrug measures implemented by the 34

member states of CICAD. The evaluation is done through the drafting of national and hemispheric reports on the evaluation of progress in drug control.

The MEM was created in 1999 through a mandate of the Second Summit of the Americas in Santiago, Chile, that aimed to increase coordination, communication and cooperation between the 34 member states in order to confront the drug problem more effectively. The MEM, in addition to being a diagnostic tool, has evolved into a public knowledge-sharing instrument on the progress of individual and cooperative efforts of OAS member states and their antidrug policies. By systematically collecting information about drugs and exchanging experiences, the countries develop the capacity to define specific requirements and detect weaknesses in their drug control strategies, identifying the areas that require higher levels of cooperation, greater effort and more research. We are working to make the MEM more efficient, more transparent, more useful and more reliable, and I am certain that if we continue to strengthen and consolidate this mechanism of cooperation and communication, it will support the design of public policies and programmes to fight drugs and crime, not only in the region, but across the globe.

Based on the MEM's Third Evaluation Round Hemispheric Report, and since its inception in 1999, national antidrug strategies and plans have been designed and implemented, and central coordinating institutions have been established for antidrug programmes and policies in all CICAD's member states. Accordingly, the MEM's first supportive measure has been to establish a new institutional order to

confront drugs and crime. Within the area of information systems, the MEM has been an essential orientation tool for states in establishing national drug observatories and information processing systems, as well as identifying the progress of such efforts.

### **Regional drug-related problems and solutions**

The region in general would benefit from extending effective drug and crime prevention programmes that target vulnerable populations, such as youth both in school and out of school, as well as prisoners, in order to reduce the increasing levels of tobacco, alcohol and illicit substance consumption at an early age. At the same time, Customs seizures show that the redirection of pharmaceutical products has intensified in recent years, both of stimulants that contain controlled drugs, such as amphetamine- and opioid-based drugs, and pharmaceutical products that are diverted for the production of substances such as methamphetamine.

This situation demands that – with the support of the OAS group of experts and in accordance with International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) directives – states adopt integrated control mechanisms between the health, judicial and police authorities. Effective intervention against these illegal activities demands wide-ranging international cooperation and the political will of all governments, in order to allocate the necessary human and financial resources.

The region has experienced a significant advance in the laws and regulations designed to combat asset laundering from drugs and organised crime. There has been a



marked improvement in the investigations carried out by financial intelligence units. It is worth noting the serious and committed participation in these efforts of Brazil's National Antidrug Secretariat (SENAD), directed by General Uchôa, who recently presided over CICAD for one year. During the Brazilian presidency of CICAD, channels of integration and cooperation were strengthened and new drug-related challenges were confronted by strengthening preventative measures against crime and illicit drug consumption.

I must take this opportunity to recognise Paulina Duarte's work at Brazil's National Anti-Drug Secretariat (SENAD) and other Brazilian policymakers, who have demonstrated Brazil's important commitment in the fight against drugs and crime. Brazil has a solid institutional structure supporting the reduction of the supply and demand of drugs and violent organised crime in all its forms.

With the resurgence of new drugs and forms of distribution, consumption and the changing face of globalisation, it is imperative that international cooperation continues to work towards encouraging shared responsibility, assisting member states in different areas of action and strengthening the cooperative, judicial,

human, institutional and financial capacities of the member states and their institutions in the fight against drugs and the multi-faceted drug-related problems, as well as the different threats to the security of our populations.

According to the World Health Organisation's report on violence, Latin America and the Caribbean is the second most violent region in the world, overtaken only by Sub-Saharan Africa. Drug and alcohol-related violence affects all of society and severely reduces the quality of life of our citizens, who live in constant fear of becoming victims. As well as interpersonal violence and common crime, the majority of countries in the region face organised crime relating to the trafficking of drugs, arms and persons, and asset laundering. This situation directly affects regional economic development. It is not only the economy that is affected. The very integrity of the state and democratic institutions are under serious threat from the growth of the power and influence of this phenomenon.

According to recent data from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the last four years saw significant economic growth in the region, an increase in exports, and a reduction in the inflation rate. There was also a reduction in the number of impoverished youths. The last 25 years have been a period of social change and democratic consolidation, with numerous presidential and governmental elections.

However, citizens in many of these countries, especially the poorest, continue to be victims of different forms of violence as a result of organised criminal activity and

the lack of means and effective action by law enforcement officers and the judicial system. Exclusion and the difficulty that certain social groups have in accessing employment, education and public health services makes them even more vulnerable.

### **Conclusions**

The Organization of American States continues to be the region's the principal defender of security in the Americas. It is committed to providing regional support in the reduction and prevention of the vulnerabilities of its member states.

As recently indicated by our Assistant Secretary General, Ambassador Albert R. Ramdin, we must use all possible efforts to ensure the 21st century is a period of peace and security between states, working towards a reality that is conducive to social, political and economic progress and to security across the Americas.

We must continue to renew the regional security agreement that addresses the new threats outlined in the Declaration on Security in the Americas in Mexico City 2003, and we must continue to promote mutually-reinforcing concepts of democracy, development and security.

Without doubt, ladies and gentlemen, we face a global, dynamic and multifaceted problem. For this reason, we must be committed to multilateral cooperation. I am convinced that renewed and fortified international cooperation is the best strategy for our countries and that we will see concrete results in the regional fight against drugs and crime.