

Hemisphere Preparing for Next Summit of the Americas

Organization of American States
Press Release

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PANAMA CITY, Panama—Opening a ministerial-level meeting of the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG), Secretary General José Miguel Insulza of the Organization of American States (OAS) urged the countries of the hemisphere, as they prepare for the Fifth Summit of the Americas, to continue making progress on the major issues that affect the region “without regard for borders and that demand coherent responses.”

Insulza said four major challenges face the region: how to take advantage of the current economic growth; reduce inequality and improve quality of life; tackle crime in Latin America and the Caribbean; and shore up democratic governance through effective and efficient public policies. According to Insulza, the Summit of the Americas process helps countries address their problems together, as they seek to “shape a new agenda for the future of our hemisphere, placing people at the center of our concerns.”

The SIRG meeting—held Tuesday as part of the 37th OAS General Assembly—was chaired by Arnold Piggott, Foreign Affairs Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, which will host the Fifth Summit of the Americas in early 2009.

Insulza launched a publication entitled *Towards the Fifth Summit of the Americas: Regional Challenges*, which presents an institutional perspective on major challenges facing the region. Prepared by the OAS Summits Secretariat, the publication highlights the contributions made by the 12 inter-American institutions that form the Joint Summit Working Group.

Praising the Trinidad and Tobago government for its commitment to the process and for its advance work for the next gathering of the hemisphere’s leaders, Insulza recalled that the Fourth Summit—held in Mar del Plata, Argentina—had sent a clear message about the commitment to solve the hemisphere’s main problems. He expressed optimism that the next Summit would be held “in an atmosphere of unity and solidarity to ensure that the prosperity and security we all deserve is achieved.”

“The Summits reflect not only the importance of governance in the region, against the backdrop of globalization, but also the need to find collective responses to the challenges and problems facing us,” the Secretary General said. He added that “within the framework of the Summits process, the Heads of State and Government along with the institutions of the inter-American system have sought to coordinate efforts in order to build a modern state within a global economy, to meet the needs and aspirations of the citizens of the Americas.”

He underscored the role of the Joint Summit Working Group in helping member states implement mandates received from the region’s leaders. “This Working Group brings considerable experience and technical capacity to both the Summit of the Americas process and to the inter-American system. The Working

Group still has enormous potential that should be tapped, however, to give it an even more active role,” the Secretary General remarked.

Insulza added that the OAS continues devising national and multilateral mechanisms to follow up on commitments undertaken, as well as exploring the options to fund the mandates for each.

Outlining the economic, political and social vision for his country, the Trinidad and Tobago Foreign Minister suggested that the Port-of-Spain Summit should serve as a catalyst for delivery of concrete benefits of development to the peoples of the Americas. He said the time has come for those gains to be consolidated, and to reexamine the hemisphere's priorities towards sustainable development.

Piggott said hosting the Fifth Summit of the Americas will be an excellent opportunity not only for his nation but also for all small states, especially those in the Caribbean, to demonstrate leadership in the inter-American system—one that is more strategic.

The Heads of Delegation of Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Dominica, Guatemala, Guyana, Mexico, United States and Venezuela also spoke, underscoring the various items on the hemispheric agenda they believe should be considered at the Fifth Summit in Trinidad and Tobago.