



Organization of  
American States

SUMMIT IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW GROUP (SIRG)  
First Regular Meeting of 2011  
April 11, 2011  
Simón Bolívar Room – OAS Headquarters  
Washington, D.C.



OEA/Ser.E  
GRIC/O.1/doc.5/11  
29 April 2011  
Original: Spanish

**SPEECH BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES,  
JOSÉ MIGUEL INSULZA**

Ambassador Jaime Girón, Chair of the SIRG, Coordinator for the Sixth Summit of the Americas; Ambassador Alejandro Borda, Assistant Coordinator for the Sixth Summit; Ambassador Luis Alfonso Hoyos, Chair of the Permanent Council Committee on Inter-American Summits Management and Civil Society Participation (CISC); Mr. Assistant Secretary General; National Coordinators, Deputy National Coordinators, Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives to the OAS; representatives of the multilateral institutions on our Joint Summit Working Group; Secretaries of the OAS, and Executive Secretary of the Summits of the Americas Secretariat of the Organization of American States.

I would like to begin my address, Mr. Ambassador, by extending a very special recognition of the important initiatives that the government of President Santos has been pursuing during this period, many of which we have been able to see directly, and which are clearly giving Colombia a very important role in the development of hemispheric politics.

A few days ago, we were able to see Colombia assume the presidency of the United Nations Security Council, which began with a very important meeting on Haiti that was attended by several of the Hemisphere's foreign ministries and that produced a resolution – or, rather, a declaration by the president, issued by President Santos – that is, in my opinion, an essential document for those of us with an interest in the fate of that dear country.

We also recently received very important information about the unblocking of the free trade agreement with the United States, which is a major priority for Colombia, and one that we hope will yield benefits for our entire region. The assumption of the presidency of the Executive Secretariat of UNASUR, and the recent meeting – about which President Santos was kind enough to inform me, both before and after it took place, with the president of Honduras, Mr. Porfirio Lobo, and the contact with former president Mr. Manuel Zelaya, which we hope will have a positive impact on the presence of Honduras in this Organization.

These actions indicate sound leadership and, additionally, open leadership: a style of leadership based on consultation rather than imposition. And we know that this will also be the style, is already the style, adopted by Colombia for the organization of our Summit of the Americas: based on participation and dialogue, within which we are at a juncture – I would describe it as the first key moment – when we have worked hard on infrastructure considerations, on coordination matters, etc.

But the time has also come – and, Mr. Ambassador, we know that this is the goal of this SIRG – to begin outlining the Summit's theme. We have also spoken about this, and I had the opportunity to speak with President Santos on the matter.

Clearly, times have changed enormously for our region: suffice it to say that over the last decade, the Latin American and Caribbean region grew more than during the previous two decades combined. In other words, during the first decade of this century, our region's economy grew more than it did during the entire 1980s and 1990s, and that is highly significant.

As one of the esteemed Ambassadors here today always says, "Compared to whom?" Compared to ourselves. Compared to China or to India, perhaps it's not so spectacular, but in comparison with the rates of growth this region has reported in the past, there can be no doubt that the situation is promising.

We have emerged from the crisis well. The economic crisis showed, of course the conditions in which it occurred were somewhat better for us. Better because the levels of indebtedness were not

so high. Better because we were experiencing economic growth. Better because we have sounder financial systems. Better because our governments have been doing their jobs better. Finally, the end of the crisis has filled most of our countries with optimism, seeing that we were not the last to emerge from it nor were we the ones most harmed by it; instead, we can look to the future with much greater confidence. And for that reason, international organizations and public and private agencies alike are saying that this will be our region's decade, and our obligation, I believe, and I know this is your goal – I am getting ahead of myself – and for this reason the clear objective of our Summit must necessarily be to define an optimistic, positive line for our region's decade.

I sincerely hope we can attain that goal. I think the conditions for it are there. Our economic and political situation is good. I would like to share the idea that politics was not absent from that development and that the democratic development our region has experienced, with all the difficulties it implies, is positive and helps us look to the future with great optimism.

But optimism, of course, invariably entails difficulties, invariably entails problems. So, what we want to know is how to make this decade as promising in reality as it looks to be today. And I know that our Summit, on April 14 and 15 next year, is the best opportunity for determining that. I think the topics are on the table. Many were raised recently during the visit of the President of the United States to a number of Latin America and Caribbean countries and, consequently, we are at an auspicious juncture for beginning the work of the Summit. I believe that this meeting of our countries' representatives is awaited with interest and with expectation. And, Mr. Ambassador, we are looking forward to the presentation you are to give about the lines this group is following and exploring in its work to set the goals of the Sixth Summit of the Americas. So, I thank you for being here today, and we eagerly await what you have to say.

Thank you very much.