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**ADDRESS BY THE CHAIR OF THE MEETING, H.E. THE MINISTER OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF COLOMBIA, MARÍA ÁNGELA
HOLGUÍN CUÉLLAR**

Distinguished Foreign Ministers,
Esteemed Secretary General of the Organization of American States,
Distinguished Ambassadors, Permanent Representatives to the Organization of American States,
Madame Executive Secretary of the Summits of the Americas Process,
Esteemed Representatives of the Institutions that make up the Joint Summit Working Group (JSWG),
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am honored and pleased to be addressing you and to welcome you to this high-level meeting of the Summit Implementation Review Group. For Colombia, your personal and timely participation is essential in the preparations for this event that once again will bring together our Heads of State and Government, this time in April 2012, in Cartagena de Indias.

Colombia places the highest importance on the Summits of the Americas Process: it identifies in full with the objectives that gave rise to it, particularly that of forging a “partnership for prosperity” based on democratic practice and the strengthening of democratic institutions. A partnership at the highest political level for dialogue on the Hemisphere’s most urgent problems and the best way to resolve them. A partnership of the nations of the Americas and of their efforts to improve levels of equality and the standards of living of our peoples.

Colombia has set itself the task of organizing a Summit with results, one that will reflect the image of a united Hemisphere that is resolved to overcome its difficulties through partnerships for cooperation and the promotion and development of its infrastructure. We want a Summit that will portray the Hemisphere as a territory of opportunities, to which the international community can look as a strategic partner for resolving the greatest challenges of humankind. At Cartagena, we wish to reclaim and make use of our status as a ranking global player.

We are driven by the conviction that the American Hemisphere has great strengths: its human capital, which is young, qualified, and expanding; its natural resources; its solid economic growth; the considerable size of its population, capable of creating and modifying patterns of production and consumption; its political stability.

This in no way disregards the continued presence of the great problems we face and which we also have set ourselves the task of addressing through effective solutions. In conjunction with your governments, we have decided to place before our Heads of State and Government, at their gathering in Cartagena, the following problems: the need to reduce poverty

and inequality in the Hemisphere; the insecurity that affects our citizens and the threat that transnational organized crime poses to the stability of our governments and of democratic institutions; the devastating effects of natural disasters; and, finally, the urgent need to access and make better use of existing technologies to satisfy the education and health needs of our people who live in rural communities and remote areas.

Distinguished Foreign Ministers,

Your representatives to the Summits process have reacted favorably to the theme proposed by Colombia, and to the idea of setting it down in a brief declaration with far-reaching political contents and indicating specific mandates that are attainable and measurable, with funding to ensure they are executed appropriately and follow-up and monitoring mechanisms to guarantee that the goals we set are attained.

Today, after numerous consultations and a great amount of thought, I would like to announce to you the slogan that Colombia has chosen for the Sixth Summit: **“Connecting the Americas: Partners for Prosperity.”**

This slogan comprehensively reflects the objectives of unity and integration that drive us toward the further development of our infrastructure and toward the implementation in full of partnerships for cooperation. It is worded in line with the progress of modernity that characterizes the 21st century, and it gives an image of our region as an array of nations ready to expand and strengthen their ties and their interactions, and to reap the benefits of greater access to and better use of technologies and information.

Our next step is to prepare the draft final documents that we are to begin negotiating next September. For that, and with the aim of providing a frame of reference to guide and define the scope of our discussions, we have availed ourselves of the experience and professionalism of the agencies represented on the Joint Summit Working Group, in order to obtain technical support documents from them on each of the Cartagena Summit’s thematic areas. I would like to make public note of the Colombian government’s acknowledgement of the generous and disinterested way in which the JSWG has responded to our request.

Similarly, and in line with the inclusive nature of the Summits process, we have invited other interested social stakeholders (think tanks, civil society organizations, business owners, young people, academics, etc.) to submit their contributions, suggestions, and recommendations, and these will doubtless enrich our studies and our conclusions.

All these documents will be published on the Sixth Summit’s web page, which the Government of Colombia will have online toward the middle of July. It will be accessible directly or through links that will be placed on the web pages of the OAS General Secretariat and of the excellent tool we already have, the Summits Virtual Community.

The contributions received from the Summits Process member states, from the Joint Summit Working Group agencies, and from the social stakeholders will assist Colombia’s Sixth Summit team in preparing the draft documents that are to be negotiated.

And at this point, I would like to seek the distinguished foreign ministers’ consent to introduce a number of changes to the format of the final documents of the Sixth Summit of the Americas. First of all, to reflect our governments’ consensus on the need for brief, specific, and action-oriented documents; and, second, in accordance with what we decide, to proceed with the preparation of the draft texts.

On the understanding that the contents of the texts will be determined by our negotiations, the format I am proposing is as follows:

For the Declaration: a brief document, at the most a page and a half, with a clear and concise message and a far-reaching political content reflecting our vision for the Hemisphere and for our interactions with the rest of the world.

As for the mandates, which have traditionally been set out in a lengthy document, we would like to include them in separate documents dealing with each of the thematic axes we have defined for the Sixth Summit. Those documents, which will also be very short, will contain two clearly identifiable elements: first, a presentation of the topic and of the current status of its consideration by the hemispheric community, together with the objectives sought; then, the actions, strategies, and policies we suggest for attaining the goals, which will be the mandates that our Heads of State and Government will hand down in Cartagena.

As you are aware, a few weeks ago the Colombian government conducted broad consultations regarding this proposal, and from the reactions we received I can see there is an equally broad consensus regarding the usefulness of this step. All that remains is to hear your opinions and, if possible, to receive your endorsement. I am certain that this will smooth our way forward for producing documents that truly target executable, executive actions.

The document that has been distributed regarding this agenda item contains two additional proposals that have also been discussed by your representatives in Washington: one dealing with the methodology for the intergovernmental negotiation of the final documents, and the other regarding the participation of social stakeholders in the negotiation process itself.

On this second point, I would like to emphasize the Colombian government's interest in ensuring the inclusive nature of the Sixth Summit. And, of course, in addition to the proposals that our consultations have covered, any other suggestions from the member states regarding the participation of social stakeholders will be more than welcome. The Chair will be pleased to receive them and will assess them properly and promptly.

The next step will be an exchange of opinions about the process that we face going forward to the Summit in Cartagena de Indias. I am certain that your input will help us attain the noble objectives we have set ourselves. Your acceptance of the Summit's slogan and of the new format for the final documents will enable us to continue working and to begin negotiations promptly. And, as ever, your support and solidarity will be determining factors in the success of the Sixth Summit of the Americas.

Thank you very much.