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REPORT BY THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA ON FOLLOW-UP
AND IMPLEMENTATION OF INITIATIVES ARISING FROM THE SEVENTH SUMMIT

Remarks by Ambassador Jesús Sierra, Permanent Representative of Panama to the OAS

Thank you, Distinguished Chairman.

Ambassador Antonio Garcia Revilla, National Coordinator of Peru;
Ambassador James Lambert, Secretary for Hemispheric Affairs;
Distinguished Ambassadors; Ladies & Gentlemen:

Let me first of all thank the Summits of the Americas Secretariat for its support in staging the workshop for preparation and submission of Panama's national report tracking the initiatives arising from the Seventh Summit of the Americas 2015.

We thank the OAS Office in Panama and the Secretariat for Follow-up as well, for the briefing held on March 30, 2017 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in which members of civil society and other Panamanian social actors took part. Their interest in taking part in the VIII Summit of the Americas in 2018 was demonstrated at this meeting.

As a country committed to the follow-up on and implementation of the initiatives arising from the Seventh Summit, and given their importance, we would now like to talk briefly about the progress made on education, health, migration, security, and citizen participation.

In education, seeking to strengthen public policies and programs to cut by a half, by 2025, the number of young people neither in school nor working, the Government of Panama is working on the renovation of educational infrastructure, under the *Mi Escuela Primero* (My School First) Program and through a project to get rid of "ranch" classrooms, which involve the construction of 15 model schools and more than 2,300 new classrooms nationwide.

Through the National Secretariat for Science and Technology (SENACYT), the Government of Panama trained some 800 teachers in natural sciences, mathematics, and technology skills and worked to incorporate innovative experiences to cater to the needs of individuals with special disabilities, using the Virtual Platform for Educational Cooperation in the Americas.

To support cooperation to teach and learn several of the languages of the Hemisphere, the Government developed the Bilingual Panama program, under which more than 2,500 teachers have been sent abroad for training in English as a second language. Bilingual Panama will hold its first international congress in Panama in May 2017.

In the field of health, the Government of Panama is currently working to guarantee safe and sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation services – consistent with human rights standards – for a population of 3,040,800 residents. The current investment exceeds 1.5 million Balboas.

As regards the environment, hemispheric efforts are ongoing to counteract climate change and its effects. The national government took part in a program to increase resilience to climate change in the Central American dry corridor and arid zones of the Dominican Republic, in collaboration with the pertinent ministries of Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI), pending approval from the Green Climate Fund, for a total estimated cost of \$452 million.

At the domestic level, the Government adopted – and is in the process of implementing – the “National Water Security Plan 2015-2050: Water for Everyone,” which will call for \$11 billion in investments.

To encourage sustainable and productive agriculture under Commitment 3, as part of its comprehensive policies the Ministry of Agricultural Development (MIDA) has promoted a law to create incentives to promote rural agroindustry.

It has defined the concept of Panamanian family farming in domestic laws, in an effort to develop its family farming plan with FAO support. MIDA is also working together with the Ministries of Social Development, Health, and Education, on the drafting and approval of the Panama National Food Security and Nutrition Plan 2017-2021.

In terms of migration, Executive Decree No. 547 was enacted in 2012, aimed at regularizing the status of long-term migrants in the country. Against this backdrop, a “melting pot of races” program was implemented, legalizing 57,652 foreigners – more than 60% of them women. With a new regularization process in place, in 2016 migrants were guaranteed access to social security and health care (Executive Decrees 167 and 168) and children and asylum seekers access to education.

Panama has been strengthening programs to prevent and combat migrant smuggling and human trafficking, especially of women and children, having signed the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Convention) and its Protocols in 2000 and having adopted Law 79 on human trafficking and related activities in 2011.

In the security arena, the national government has stepped up efforts and prioritized action through programs seeking to effectively address violence against women and girls, particularly by promoting initiatives to empower women and implementing effective public policies focused on meeting this goal.

At the national level, we continue our efforts to prevent and combat the smuggling of firearms, ammunition, explosives, and other related materials, with a view to reducing the high rates of crime and violence in the region.

At the international level, at the Second Conference of States Party to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) held in Geneva last year, Panama reaffirmed its commitment to fighting arms smuggling and announced the launch of a “Project to Strengthen Institutional Capacity against the Smuggling of Firearms, Ammunition, and Related Materials,” designed to strengthen the capacity of the Panamanian state in this field.

Regarding citizen participation, Panama continues to promote and support the participation of civil society and other social actors in the dialogue with the states as an ongoing participation and consultation mechanism. In 2013, the national authority for transparency and access to information (ANTAI) was established. Based on the principle of transparency and promotion of that dialogue, the 2015-2017 National Action Plan for Open Government was crafted, with the involvement of 22 public institutions and eighteen 18 representatives chosen by more than 40 civil society organizations.

And lastly, I would like to announce that we will furnish the Summits Secretariat with a more detailed report for inclusion in the Summit of the Americas Follow-up System (SISCA).

Thank you very much.