



Organization of  
American States



**REMARKS DELIVERED BY**  
**Sherry Tross**  
**Executive Secretary, Summits of the Americas Secretariat**

**MEETING OF THE FORUM OF MINISTERIAL DELEGATES OF AGRICULTURE**

October 18-19, 2011

San José, Costa Rica

Dr. Víctor Villalobos, Director General, IICA  
Mrs. Marta Villegas, Ministerial Delegate, Costa Rica  
Distinguished Delegates  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

First let me start by saying how delighted I am to be taking part in this Forum of Ministerial Delegates of Agriculture. Tomorrow, we will be joined by Secretary General Insulza who will participate in the inauguration ceremony. I believe the OAS presence at this meeting is a strong indicator of the valued partnership between our two institutions. It is also a recognition that our complementary efforts in our different areas of competency together play a vital role in advancing development in the Americas.

It is a particular honor for me to address this Forum of ministerial delegates of Agriculture to speak about the upcoming Sixth Summit of the Americas. On April 14-15 next year, three years after the Port of Spain Summit, the Hemisphere's 34 Presidents and Prime Ministers will meet in Cartagena, Colombia to address issues of priority, and lay out their vision for an inter-American agenda of partnership and cooperation.

It is too early for any of us to predict what may be happening in the Hemisphere or on the global stage when the Heads meet. However, the thematic focus, as laid out by the host country and endorsed by all 34 Member States, is clear. The Summit will revolve around the central theme, "Connecting the Americas: Partners for Prosperity." Under this umbrella are six thematic areas that are currently being considered and negotiated. They are natural disasters, poverty and inequality, access to technology, citizen security, physical integration and regional cooperation. These six sub-themes each treat issues of hemispheric priority and each of these themes, in some way, reflect the importance of partnership in confronting the challenges of the hemisphere and for capitalizing on opportunities for progress.

Ministerial meetings, like this one, play an integral role in the preparation of the Summit. At the front end, Ministerial-level recommendations often find resonance in the decisions adopted by Heads. Post-Summit, Ministerial processes are critical for the follow up and implementation of Summit mandates and initiatives.

Starting at the Third Summit of the Americas in Quebec City in 2001, our Heads of State and Government have explicitly committed to forging greater linkages between the Ministerial and Summit processes. That remains a work in progress. We, in the Summits Secretariat, are making a

concerted effort to work with partner institutions, such as IICA, and sectoral areas within the OAS to begin to consolidate a Summit architecture that clarifies and reinforces the relationship between the various inter-American processes and the Summit.

Currently, the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG), which is comprised of the 34 Member States and represents the negotiating body for the Summit is meeting every few weeks to negotiate the documents that Heads will sign in Cartagena. Today, I am pleased to share with you that the SIRG unanimously agreed to invite the Chair of this Ministerial (and others occurring in the coming months) to engage that negotiating body directly. Ministerial Chairs are therefore being invited to report to the SIRG on recommendations that may emerge from these meetings that relate to the thematic areas of the Summit so that they may be duly considered during negotiations. As such, we look forward to receiving the pertinent recommendations from this Ministerial at the next meeting of the SIRG in November.

Indeed, the timing of the IICA Ministerial will greatly facilitate your ability to contribute to the process. When Member States meet in negotiating session in November, it will be to consider two themes -- natural disasters and poverty and inequality. These are areas in which IICA has significant capacity and experience, and can offer much to the substantive consideration of the topics. The same holds true for other themes that will be addressed later.

It is important to recall that in April 2009 our leaders called on agriculture ministers “to develop activities aimed at addressing issues affecting access to and availability of food in order to combat chronic malnutrition and to promote adequate nutritional policies for our populations.” They also made a call to “support the promotion of investment in agriculture, as well as the strengthening of our States’ institutional capacity, with a view to increasing and intensifying productive activities, particularly in the countries most affected by hunger.” IICA has followed through on much of this. At the Summits Secretariat, we have been pleased to help publicize IICA’s successes and the impact of its initiatives on the lives of the people of the Hemisphere. We look forward to learning more about the current approach which is encapsulated in this meeting’s theme, “Sowing Innovation to Harvest Prosperity.”

Before closing, I’d like to take this opportunity to share some additional information and issue a broad appeal. In order to make the Summit process as inclusive as possible, the Summits Secretariat has been working with Member States to broaden and deepen direct engagement with the general public in our 34 countries. To this end, we have organized and activated a range of mechanisms to provide opportunities to listen to the voices of the peoples of the Americas. I will briefly mention two of these.

The first is what we have called Summit Talk, an online forum and discussion group that is hosted on the Summits Virtual Community. The online forum is moderated by thematic experts who help to guide the discussions, draw out ideas and develop substantive recommendations based on the range of inputs. I would invite you to join the Summits Virtual Community and be a contributor to the discussions or, if you prefer, just to hear the rich diversity of ideas that come from all parts of the hemisphere, from individuals of different socio-economic, political and disciplinary backgrounds and age groups.

Secondly, the Summits Secretariat is organizing monthly Experts Roundtables, an open forum in which subject experts can present and debate their perspectives on individual Summit

themes, and respond to questions from both onsite and virtual audiences. I wish to take this opportunity to invite and encourage those here present to contribute their knowledge, expertise and experience, and to be a part of these discussions.

We believe that these consultations play an important role. They generate ideas and recommendations for consideration by Member States, they help to raise awareness among the publics of our countries regarding the Summit issues and they give the citizens of the Americas a stake in the process by providing a space for participation. Our slogan on the Summits Virtual Community is “Be a part of the process, be heard.” I hope that you will accompany us throughout the process and encourage others to do so as well.

Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Villalobos and the IICA team for their outstanding collaboration. IICA is one of the twelve international and inter-American institutions that comprise the Joint Summit Working Group (JSWG) and support the Summit process at all stages. IICA’s technical support and participation in the preparatory process for the upcoming Summit has been invaluable, and I look forward to our continued collaboration in this regard.

Thank you.