

---

---

# Working with Our Diplomatic Partners in the Western Hemisphere

By

**Ambassador John F. Maisto**

**United States Permanent Representative to the Organization of American States**

[The following are excerpts of the remarks presented to the Institute for National Strategic Studies at the National Defense University, Washington, D.C., December 1, 2006.]

Thank you for allowing me to join you today to share with you my experiences and perspectives on the subject of “Working with our Democratic Partners in the Western Hemisphere.” In the area of security, the Hemisphere over the past several years has undergone an active and intense period of transformation that I am excited to share with you.

This year, approximately 89,000 students from our Hemisphere will come to study at American universities. People throughout the region will take about 66 million flights to visit one another, both for business and for pleasure. And, in just one year, hard-working men and women here in the United States will send more than \$40 billion in remittances to their friends and families across the Americas. The peoples of the Americas are united by ties of language, of culture, and mostly importantly, by our common aspirations, which are perhaps best expressed in the founding charter of the Organization of American States (OAS). The Charter states the following:

The historic mission of America is to offer man a land of liberty and a favorable environment for the development of his personality and the realization of his just aspirations.

This is the fundamental cornerstone that must be defended for the benefit of all of the citizens of the Americas.

Just as we are addressing the challenges of democracy and prosperity in the Hemisphere, a broadening regional security agenda is demanding collective action by all the states of the Hemisphere as it should be. The dangers of the Cold War have now faded. New and prominent threats in the Hemisphere have emerged, requiring coordinated, cooperative, and multilateral responses.

Our collective response to transnational threats such as to bind the states of the Western Hemisphere together.

- Terrorism
- Criminal gangs
- Cross-border criminal networks
- Trafficking in persons
- Arms and drugs

Together as neighbors and allies around the new, central security issue - no longer an issue of state-to-state or military-to-military security, it is really how you face non-traditional threats how to:

- Address organized crime
- Address terrorist

- 
- 
- Address gangs
  - Address natural disasters and pandemics

Our leaders understand this and have addressed these concepts. As Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Thomas Shannon recently stated:

It was a clearly laid out marching order to foreign ministers, defense ministers, and ministerial staffs throughout the Hemisphere to take this common agenda, to take a consensus built around democracy and prosperity and to begin to make it real.

**What then is the new security mission, the new challenge?**

The new challenge, simply put, is to make find ways to ensure that the nations of this Hemisphere will be democratic, that they will have the institutions, tools and resources to be prosperous, that they will be able to provide their citizens with the capacity and the ability to take advantage of economic opportunity and that they be able to ensure a secure environment in which their citizens can go about their daily lives, and that their societies can go about their economic business, i.e., to make a living and have equality of opportunity, in a climate free of fear.

For us to be able to successfully pursue this security agenda, regional cooperation and collaboration are essential. I am pleased to report not only do the seeds of that cooperation and collaboration exist in the Western Hemisphere, but they have taken root firmly and begun to grow over the past several years in the Hemisphere and at the OAS.

The Western Hemisphere stands apart from the rest of the world with its impressive array of security mechanisms, sub-regional arrangements, and agreements, including the OAS Charter and Rio Treaty that have all evolved and adapted to the changing security realities in the Americas over time.

The Hemisphere's experience since the tragic terrorist events of September 11, 2001 has demonstrated the ability of the Western Hemisphere's security architecture to respond to the changing security needs in the region.

In 2003, at the Special Conference on Security held in Mexico City, the governments of the Western Hemisphere resolved to strengthen and revitalize its security institutions, recognizing that traditional notions of defense and security have evolved into a multidimensional concept with various military, political, economic, social, and geographic components. In Mexico City, the Western Hemisphere gathered together to consider the threats, concerns and challenges to security in the Western Hemisphere and the common approach we shall take to address the threats of the 21st century.

The "Declaration on Security in the Americas" agreed upon in Mexico City complemented the already dynamic security architecture in the Western Hemisphere. It provides a practical guide for resolving interstate border tensions, lowering pressure for arms spending, promoting democratic norms, and fostering a climate of confidence, trust, transparency, and cooperation in the Hemisphere. The Declaration also offers a practical action plan to address the danger posed by disruptions to democracy, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, transnational organized crime, illicit arms trafficking, narcotrafficking, money laundering, natural disasters, health concerns, and poverty.

Recognizing that the international and regional system has changed substantially, the Western Hemisphere has redefined the collective goals of the nations in the Hemisphere. A genuinely stable and

---

---

secure environment cannot be created by solving our national defense problems alone. For example, we recognize that threats to our security can stem from conflicts within states as well as from conflicts between states. As new threats and security challenges have evolved and emerged, the states of the Americas have stepped up to meet them.

Obsolete or surplus small arms are an increasing threat to public safety in the region. The 2006 OAS General Assembly unanimously adopted a U.S. proposal to create a new fund to assist countries with collecting, managing and destroying stockpiles of small arms. An initial U.S. contribution of \$50,000 is being used to leverage further support from other donors for programs in Central America.

Landmines pose a threat to people's safety, as well as to economic prosperity. The United States pledged \$1.5 million to OAS humanitarian de-mining programs in 2006. In addition to landmine removal in Central and South America, the OAS, with strong U.S. support, has assisted more than 900 landmine victims, principally in Nicaragua, with medical treatment, prostheses, counseling, and vocational training, among other support.

In 1995, the OAS pursuant to a U.S. proposal created a Permanent Committee of the OAS dedicated to fostering hemispheric security. Since its creation, the Committee on Hemispheric Security has focused on a myriad of issues ranging from traditional security concerns to new and emerging threats such as natural disasters. As a result, the OAS has built an impressive record of achievement on matters of security to the Hemisphere. Over 150 resolutions on regional arms control, terrorism, transnational organized crime, illicit trafficking in persons, arms, and drugs, humanitarian de-mining, nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, confidence and security building measures (CSBMs) and other aspects of defense and security policy have been adopted by consensus. In addition, the specialized committees and commissions of the OAS have been successful in fostering multilateral cooperation to address the many of these transnational threats that confront us. Today, ongoing work is transpiring on trafficking in persons, confidence and security building measures, transnational organized crime, natural disasters, preparing for and responding to pandemics, such as avian influenza.

In addition, the Inter-American community has authored three Inter-American Conventions concerning illicit trafficking in firearms, transparency, and terrorism. These conventions are on their way to becoming universal standards for the Hemisphere. By actions and deeds, not mere words, the OAS body of work defines hemispheric security cooperation, as we know it today.

The OAS has as well served as the catalyst for hemispheric cooperation and a broader "inter-American system of hemispheric security," which now includes the Pan American Health Organization, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, the Inter-American Defense Board, and meetings such as the Defense Ministerial of the Americas and Conferences of the American Armed Forces.

Because today's security concerns encompass far more than just internal and external military conflicts, the region has taken specific steps to address these threats in the region. In the war against terrorism, the Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism (CICTE) was established in October 1999 to coordinate Member States' activities against terrorism, including special training and facilitating exchanges of information. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 have driven hemispheric actions to address terrorism in a comprehensive manner. CICTE, meeting annually, has worked diligently at strengthening inter-American cooperation to prevent, combat, and eliminate terrorism in the Hemisphere.

Created in 1999 and reinvigorated after the September 11, 2001 attacks, CICTE is a model for regional cooperation on counterterrorism matters, according to the United Nations. With an ongoing

---

---

emphasis on airport, seaport, border and cyber-security, CICTE is currently active in helping smaller Caribbean nations bolster security for the 2007 Cricket World Cup. The United States has provided \$250,000 for CICTE operational activities, and \$1.2 million to CICTE overall for Cricket World Cup preparations.

Moreover, the OAS adopted at the June 2002 General Assembly in Barbados an Inter-American Convention Against Terrorism that expands our legal obligations to work together to both prevent and respond to terrorism. (Notice the time frame here: Terrorist attacks occur on September 11, 2001 and less than nine months later, the OAS is ready with a convention. This rapid response by the OAS was unequaled by any other international organization.) Today over twelve states, including the US, are states parties to the Convention. CICTE's activities, along with the Inter-American Convention Against Terrorism, constitute a strong institutional base for the hemispheric fight against terrorism.

In the fight against illegal narcotics, OAS member states have developed a drug abuse control program (CICAD), launched in 1987 which has developed model legislation and fostered cooperation across the broad range of narcotics issues. CICAD is the leading drug control entity within the Western Hemisphere.

The United States works with CICAD to build multilateral support to strengthen efforts against the consumption, production, and trafficking of illegal drugs. To date the United States has provided more than \$30 million - including \$4.1 million in 2006 - to support and enhance on-going anti-drug programs in the Hemisphere.

In 1996, the OAS negotiated the Anti-Drug Strategy for the Hemisphere, providing the policy context for the multilateral evaluation mechanism. Through this evaluation mechanism, OAS Member States designate government experts to produce evaluation reports on individual countries based on those countries responses to questions aimed at fifty-one indicators.

This evaluation process identifies the strengths, weaknesses, progress, and setbacks in each member state and of the hemisphere, in order to help orientate policies and programs to confront more effectively the drug problem. It aims to assist countries in generating internal support to fight the drug problem and stimulating change and development of the systems in drug control. It also offers countries the opportunity to request technical or financial assistance and training to implement assigned recommendations. Fifty-five such projects throughout the hemisphere have already been supported under the mutual evaluation mechanism. CICAD has also fostered work on tackling the illicit trafficking of arms associated with drug trafficking by generating model legislation.

In the effort to prepare for and respond to natural disasters, the OAS created the Inter-American Committee on Natural Disaster Reduction to mitigate or prevent the effects of natural calamities that befall the Americas. This mechanism has assisted in identifying and preventing problems dealing with preparedness. It will also take hemispheric action to respond to natural disasters. Just last June, the 36th OAS General Assembly strengthened this body and its approach to natural disasters.

In the campaign to strengthen democracy and the rule of law, the OAS has worked to support democratic institutions and governments, developing election observation missions and assisting member states in political reconciliation. In 1997, the Washington Protocol took effect, amending the OAS Charter to permit, as a last resort, the suspension of a member state whose democratically constituted government is overthrown by force. On September 11, 2001, the OAS further strengthened democracy by the historic adoption of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, which commits us to defend and promote democracy through preventive measures to head-off ruptures in the democratic or constitutional order.

---

---

Acting under the Inter-American Democratic Charter, or in the spirit of the Charter, the OAS is helping those member states where democratic practices or institutions are challenged, including Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Venezuela.

Of particular note was the OAS' important role in Haiti, including voter registration and distribution of over 3.4 million ID cards that was so essential for that country to make the transition to a functioning democracy and the elections last February.

After Ecuador's change of government in April 2005, at the invitation of the government of Ecuador, the OAS sent a series of high-level missions, from legal experts to assist Congress on the issue of selecting a new Supreme Court to the Secretary General himself. And just last Sunday, the OAS mounted an effective electoral observation mission for the run-off election in which the people of Ecuador elected a new president.

The OAS has also been heavily engaged in Nicaragua for quite some time, helping to foster dialogue and help safeguard democracy, and mounted a sizeable mission to observe the recent presidential election in which Nicaraguans exercised their hard earned right to democracy.

In Bolivia, throughout the past year of crises, the OAS and its missions have consistently urged that country's government forward on the path of stable, constitutional democracy and respect for the rule of law.

The OAS also plays a critical role in Colombia through its mission on the ground for demobilization of illegal armed groups, which is helping the Colombian government work to achieve a transparent, internationally-monitored peace process.

In Venezuela, the OAS has made a commitment to help maintain democratic institutions. This included an electoral observation mission for the December 2005 legislative elections, and will now also observe the presidential election on December 2005. Has Venezuela's political polarization faded away due to these OAS efforts? Certainly not. Political tensions still fester, human rights concerns still abound, and the increasing concentration and exercise of power by the duly-elected Executive branch remains worrisome. But OAS member states remain engaged and the Inter-American Human Rights Commission remains vigilant.

Finally, economic development and prosperity are important underpinnings of democracy and security in the region. A great challenge facing the world today is how to raise the living standards of the world's poor and integrate them into the global economic system.

The Summit of the Americas has identified this challenge and our Governments' have concluded that the primary engines for economic advancement are trade, foreign investment, and a healthy private sector. We can all agree that our security depends on the pillars of democracy, prosperity and the ability to bolster peace and security.

Let me end with a quote:

The new situation in the world makes more imperative than ever the union and solidarity of the American peoples, for the defense of their rights and the maintenance of international peace.

When this was collectively proclaimed by the states of the Western Hemisphere in 1945, no one could have predicted the prophetic nature of their wisdom.

---

---

This bold assertion was the product of the Inter-American Conference on Problems of War and Peace, held in Mexico City, and is just as relevant today as it was then, as it describes the new and dynamic security environment with which we are confronted in the 21st century.

I firmly believe that the growing interdependence across the Hemisphere, at least in the security realm, will continue to require hemispheric cooperation and provides the basis for more collaborative policies in other areas.