



OAS MISSION HEADS TO VENEZUELA ON APRIL 15

April 14, 2002

The Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS), César Gaviria, will head a delegation traveling to Caracas to meet with state authorities, evaluate the latest developments and explore how the OAS can support Venezuela in its efforts to strengthen democracy.

Gaviria will report on the results of his fact-finding mission during a special session of the OAS General Assembly scheduled for Thursday, April 18, in Washington. Ambassador Margarita Escobar of El Salvador, who chairs the OAS Permanent Council, will be among those traveling with the Secretary General to Caracas.

"In the last few days, the situation in Venezuela has been of great concern to all democratic countries of the Americas," Gaviria said. "It is important for the OAS to evaluate the situation carefully and determine how we can best support Venezuela in its efforts to consolidate democracy in these difficult times."

The Permanent Council called for the mission and the General Assembly session after a daylong meeting Saturday to consider the evolving situation in Venezuela. In a resolution adopted shortly after midnight, the Permanent Council condemned the recent "alteration of constitutional order" and the acts of violence in Venezuela, and called for the "normalization of the democratic institutional framework...within the context of the Inter-American Democratic Charter."

The Democratic Charter, adopted by the OAS member countries last September, states, "The peoples of the Americas have a right to democracy and their governments have an obligation to promote and defend it."