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**INTER-AMERICAN DRUG ABUSE**

**CONTROL COMMISSION**

**CICAD**

Secretariat for Multidimensional Security

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**SPEECH BY DR. JOSE RAMON GRANERO, SEDRONAR**

Our country is honored to be chairing this distinguished meeting of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission, which is celebrating its first twenty-five years of existence.

Since its creation in 1986, it has traveled a path that has been shaped by the experiences of the times through which our countries have lived, dealing with a topic that has always been complex, that has demanded efforts, and, above all, that has tasked our countries with the responsibility of preserving the health, security, and wellbeing of our peoples.

This is a moment for remembering the past but also for shouldering future tasks, with the resolve that can transform the reality we face as a hemisphere.

Since the Program of Rio de Janeiro, the situation has changed completely and we are forced to adopt an updated vision of our potential, as societies, for resolving the problems we face, to be permanently critical of ourselves in order to correct errors and to adopt appropriate strategies in the corresponding areas, in order to be able to transform that reality to the benefit of our communities' health.

It is a responsibility we all share. Coherent thinking indicates that the drugs problem makes no distinctions anywhere.

Consequently, in no area can we stand to one side, with the misguided idea that a given phenomenon won't affect us, much less believe that because of considerations of power – economic, political, or whatever – we can shirk our responsibility toward our peoples.

The Hemispheric Drug Strategy adopted by our Commission includes several key ideas for implementation through the 2011-2015 Plan of Action.

There are at least three of these that, I believe, should be emphasized.

The definition of drug addiction as a chronic, recurring illness that needs to be addressed as a public health issue.

Since this ailment has particular characteristics for its victims – it affects not only their health, but also has an impact on socio-economic considerations, security, and violence, and, very often, leads to their refusal to accept assistance – we must make progress with specific features to ensure appropriate strategies for preserving the good we seek to protect.

The second idea in the Strategic Plan that I would like to stress is respect for human rights in the implementation of drug policies.

This is an aspect that, along with others, we can find in the OAS Charter that predates the foundation of this Commission.

Clearly, there is no right with a closer relationship to life than the right to health and the right to the full recovery thereof, regardless of the ailment that affected or undermined it.

For that reason I want to emphasize that idea as a guiding principle in the policy actions of all our countries.

And, finally, scientific evidence as the basis for devising drug policies.

I do not have to tell you about the progress that science has made at the hemispheric and global levels through research and development into how drugs affect people, the consequences they bring, and the demands for assistance imposed by different cases.

In my view, along with the two I referred to earlier, this is the main guiding principle of any policy we seek to implement to protect the health of drug users, be they problem users or not, in order to uphold the right that is most closely related to life: the right to health.

At this stage in the world's development, we cannot ignore the importance of scientific evidence in any drug-related policy.

And certainly not when the aim is to discourage and/or control harmful behaviors that affect health.

To ignore that would be to return to the past. Would we be capable of ingesting a substance that hadn't undergone investigations ratified by the applicable protocols and endorsed by the agencies responsible for ensuring their effectiveness?

On the contrary: we cannot ignore the research indicating the impact that given substances have on human health.

Nobody can shirk that responsibility, regardless of the role they play in the society in which they live or the duties with which they have been charged.

Before I go on, I would like to refer to the five topics or chapters that make up the Strategy: institutional strengthening, demand reduction, supply reduction, control measures, and international cooperation.

All of great importance; all with a bearing on our policy actions; all with much room for development going forward, particularly as regards international cooperation. That is the logical and coherent response to the problems of drug trafficking and addictions, in light of the globalization of consumption and the universal scope of the drug cartels' actions.

But in developing and implementing public policies, we must not neglect or scorn tools created within this Commission.

Public drug policies are based on laws and programs developed by each state in accordance with autonomous guidelines, related to the countries' own realities and cultures.

Based on the criteria that CICAD has implemented, preventive policies have developed prevention plans that must be modernized and, necessarily, adapted to the digital age, to increase their universalization and reach the greatest possible number of the region's inhabitants.

Training in supply reduction; improvements to controls –through cooperation either among agencies from our countries or with those from other parts of the world; and the contribution technology can make to the agencies that combat drug trafficking: these are areas in which we must make progress. In these investigations, we must not forget to analyze the possibility of our Commission agreeing, in conjunction with institutes and/or universities that carry out technical research, on tools to further supply reduction.

Just one example of the problems we have to resolve: the inadequacies of the current detection methods for people who have ingested liquid cocaine, which the drug traffickers are shipping across international borders in our region.

The treatment of drug addicts as an alternative to custodial sentences, or the use of drugs courts, with experiences valid for the Hemisphere, is one of the elements that, using international cooperation, must be a part of policies promoted by the CICAD in those countries that have not yet developed such mechanisms. Prison walls do not stop drug use, neither on the inside or on the outside, and it has been shown that relapses or criminal recidivism can be prevented, in addition to the benefits of reduced crime and violence.

The BIDAL Project, which seeks to improve financial investigations and the seizure of the assets related to drug trafficking, is aimed not only at improved investigations and seizures: it also proposes a system for administering them, allowing countries to obtain resources that can be channeled into to tasks to counteract the harm caused by drug trafficking and addictions.

At the 39th Regular Session of CICAD, the Secretary General of the Organization of American States, José Miguel Insulza, spoke of the possibility of using this policy to improve the funding of public policies in the member states.

The SMART Program, a joint effort in the Americas between the Inter-American Drugs Observatory and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, is gaining importance because of the impact of the growing presence of synthetic drugs throughout the world.

The compilation that LEDA has made of 300 laws and regulations from 34 countries requires us to analyze in depth the impact, effective or otherwise, that those laws have had on the countries' public policies.

At the end of the day, much has been done already, and much still remains to be done. The work will be hard and the risks are great, but the strength of an organized, mobilized community can surely achieve more than the ominous presence of drug trafficking. I often repeat a lesson I learned from one of my life's greatest teachers: Communities do not commit suicide.

Distinguished principal representatives of the member states to the CICAD, authorities, ladies and gentlemen: finally, I would like us to urge each other to redouble our efforts in the face of the historical moment at which we live.

Let us embark on these almost three days of work in pursuit of achievements that will benefit our people; let our judgments be correct in our analyses and policies, particularly in our efforts to promote social inclusion as the leveler of opportunities; let us know how to be critical when we make mistakes and to be persistent when we are right; and let our main objective be the wellbeing, health, and happiness of our peoples.