

REMARKS BY
OAS REPRESENTATIVE JEAN RICOT DORMEUS
WORKSHOP ON DRUG INFORMATION NETWORKS (DIN's)

Jolly Beach Hotel, August 1st, 2012

Honorable Dr. Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Honorable Willmoth Daniel, Minister of Health, Social Transformation and Consumer Affairs,
Lt. Col. Edward Croft, Director, Office of National Drug and Money Laundering Control Policy,
Mrs. Paula Frederick-Hunte, Permanent Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister,
Colleagues Pernel Clarke and Rachel Boyce of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control
Commission (CICAD),
Distinguished Facilitators and Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I appreciate and enjoy this training and strategizing session opportunity. And I am saying that for two reasons. Firstly, we know the importance of effective adapted solutions to drug issues in a world where the dream life and easy money promised by drug trafficking lead to corruption and creative risk taking. In this context, protecting society and especially young people has come to require more and more commitment and imagination. Secondly, we will be cogitating on the novel idea to establish a Regional Drug Information Network that will strengthen existing national networks while tapping from their experience, and help create new ones. In a sense, this workshop generates much hope and enthusiasm, as it contributes to nurture a positive security outlook in our societies.

I wish to thank the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, in particular the Honorable Prime Minister Spencer and the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) for the unwavering dedication to regional public security and law enforcement efforts. This workshop is another witness of this dedication. I would like to highlight as well the steady support of Canada to the OAS and CICAD in their fight against drug abuse and drug trafficking, which is in fact a fight whose results will define life quality and standard in our region.

As you know, peace and security is a major pillar of the OAS mission, and we take it very seriously, because we clearly understand that drugs are for society what weeds are for farmers; left unchecked they will outgrow and choke useful plants. We applaud the fact that almost all CARICOM member States are represented in this workshop, which also count with the presence of a delegate from Bermuda. That speaks volume on the importance attached to the drug control issue in our region.

Over these two days, five facilitators will help us review several surveys, studies and information projects undertaken during the last two years throughout the region. We will also table preliminary discussions on setting up a regional Drug Information Network (DIN) and training new persons to be part of the network. Some of the key areas of focus in this workshop will be the definition of standard indicators for DIN's, the fostering of a commitment by countries to produce annual DIN reports, as well as the implementation of a pilot project to improve the availability of information from treatment centers in Caribbean countries.

The training and strategizing focus of this workshop is very encouraging as it speaks to capacity building and institutions strengthening. In the face of the drug scourge and the violence that often accompanies it, we definitely need knowledge and muscle. This scourge has reached such proportions that in a gathering such as this one, each one would know or would have heard of some young person victim to drug, serving jail time or having lost their life, or incapacitated to make a living. As far as I am concerned, I know a 45 year old mother of seven with high hopes in the bright future of her oldest son Randolph. You see, Randolph was a brilliant 22 years old with such intellectual capacity that he was offered a scholarship by a Catholic University. However, bad company and the pull of immediate paradise caught him in a drug addiction vicious cycle. He was jailed, and a while thereafter was gunned down by gang members while trying to buy drugs.

Because the scourge is so rampant, we need knowledge and muscle. It is written "my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge". I believe right understanding of the drug

phenomenon leads to right policies and practices. Any sustainable solution to this phenomenon requires search for knowledge as a vital component. And I mean updated knowledge, because some people will always think they can outsmart the security system and conceive new ways to run their business. It's the reason why the OAS promotes continuing information gathering and information sharing.

We also need muscle and teeth. There come in efforts and ideas such the Regional Information Network, which work will inform law enforcement entities and increase their effectiveness. Nonetheless, for the network to work properly we need sustainability, commitment, perseverance and the harvest of some low hanging fruits to celebrate some early victories.

I am confident that the OAS and CICAD support and cooperation will contribute to equip our region with excellent surveillance systems to identify new trends, develop adapted policies and responses, and evaluate progress. I wish you fruitful deliberations and every success in our quest for a society imbued with peace, integrity, security which will redound in collective prosperity and well-being.

Thank you and God bless you!