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FAREWELL SPEECH

BY

MAJOR GENERAL

JOSE ANIBAL SANZ JIMINIAN
Dominican Republic

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MAJOR GENERAL JOSE ANIBAL SANZ JIMINIAN
PRINCIPAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC TO CICAD**

Dr. José Miguel Insulza, Secretary General of the Organization of American States
Mr. Hernando Velasco, Vice Minister of Foreign Ministry (Bolivia), Vice President of CICAD,
Distinguished representatives, Permanent Observers, representatives of other international and regional organizations, and special guests:

When the Dominican Republic was elected to serve as the chair of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) last December at the thirty sixth session, the Commission decided to follow through on my suggestion to proclaim 2005 the “Year of Substance Abuse Prevention.” Now one year later, I now can tell you that we have taken strong strides in expanding CICAD’s support to member states’ programs for demand reduction.

It had become a truism in our line of work that substance abuse prevention is both feasible and less expensive than addiction treatment, and more effective than supply control measures. In session after session of CICAD and in the recommendations from the Mutual Evaluation Mechanism, we heard that point repeated. But it was often hard to get past the generalization and move into action with the vigor and dedication that the issue requires. That’s why it was necessary to make a concerted effort to make a difference.

In CICAD’s push to broaden its prevention approach, we started the year with several distinctive advantages. The Group of Experts on Demand Reduction had just brought out the publication Guidelines for School-based Prevention Programs and also provided clear recommendations on how CICAD and the national programs should steer their efforts for maximum impact. In addition, Canada took on the duties of chairing the Group of Experts and the dedication and focus of the Canadian team kept the Group of Experts and CICAD’s staff on target. I should also applaud the Group of Experts meeting in Canada in September this year because the group focused on program evaluation as a vital component of an effective prevention program. The Commissioners are fortunate to have such a capable group of specialists to advise them.

With a clear roadmap in hand, it made it easy to steer our program activities towards our destination, which admittedly is only a first step in a much longer journey to safeguard our citizens from the risks of addiction.

Our first significant breakthrough was sealing a strategic alliance in April with the Lions Quest International to implement its Lions Quest program of life-skills training in school based programs throughout the hemisphere. This is the first time that CICAD has established a joint initiative with a non-traditional partner. In Colombia, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Protection, Lions Clubs International Foundation and CICAD coordinated efforts to expand the program. similar work has started in Panama and Venezuela, Belize and Paraguay.

Costa Rica’s Institute on Alcoholism and the Addictions (IAFA) had already been a pioneer in the Life Skills program, having trained teachers and adapted materials for their own homegrown version. The curriculum is now being taught in 500 elementary schools and reaching an estimated 65,000 students. Finally, I should also mention the strong participation of

Chile's CONACE, which only one month ago signed a memorandum of understanding with CICAD to provide training and advice to member states in setting up their prevention programs.

In another strategic alliance to extend our approach to school-based prevention, CICAD also enlisted the services of the National Strategy Information Center to support the expansion of a Culture of Lawfulness program, which is a crucial initiative to raising appreciation and understanding among our young people for the value of the rule of law and legality. We will be building on significant progress made by our Mexican colleagues who have been working on this type of program since 1999.

I am sure that as the week progresses, we will hear more in detail about the advances that CICAD's demand reduction program has made and how each member state is dealing with that challenge. We will also be informed about the other program areas that contribute toward prevention efforts.

As chair of CICAD, the Dominican Republic had the opportunity to host the thirty seventh session of CICAD in Santo Domingo in April. There is no greater pleasure than to welcome the Commissioners, their delegations and the hard-working CICAD staff to our country. Admittedly, we did have to work hard and productively in the meeting, but our organizing team made a point of ensuring that visitors could also enjoy our hospitality and breathe the welcoming tropical airs of the Dominican Republic.

Allow me to close by saying that I personally appreciate the opportunity to assume the chair of CICAD on behalf of my government. It was a pleasure to work with the committed and enthusiastic staff of the Executive Secretariat and with the colleagues from other member states. I would also like to thank my own government on allowing me to accept this honor and to my own staff that labored to free up the time for these additional responsibilities.