

**Farewell to CICAD Commissioners**  
**Ambassador Paul Simons**  
**Executive Secretary, Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission**  
**CICAD 57, April 30<sup>th</sup> 2015**

Thank you very much Mr. Chairman, honorable Commissioners, Permanent Representatives, friends from the Executive Secretariat of the CICAD, friends all.

I have been proud and honored to serve all of you as your Executive Secretary over the past four years, encompassing the past eight CICAD meetings. It has been a truly wonderful experience. I have come to know many of you Commissioners personally. I have had the opportunity to travel to your countries. I have become aware of your needs, to work with our very capable staff to devise creative programs and projects to address those needs. I believe we have all been very fortunate as well to have a truly dedicated staff of professionals in the Executive Secretariat to support and accompany us in all of our efforts, and I am very proud of our team.

When I assumed this position just about four years ago, I had a number of goals for my tenure.

- First and foremost, to improve the relationship and trust between the Executive Secretariat and our commissioners;
- Secondly, to develop, implement, and evaluate programs that responded to your most critical needs;
- Finally, to open up our Commission to greater participation of civil society, academic communities and other with interest in the drug field.

I trust that we have made progress in all these areas over the past years, which have been among the most satisfying of my professional career.

I particularly appreciated working with our four very talented and committed CICAD chairs over this period: starting with Argentina, Costa Rica, Colombia and now Guatemala. Each has had their own style, and has put their own imprint on this Commission, but the presence of a committed and professional chair has been extremely valuable to this hemispheric process.

We have accomplished much over the past four years. Secretary General Insulza described this morning the impact of our landmark hemispheric drug report; in addition, we have worked tirelessly with the Observatory to strengthen the base of evidence for the formulation of policy. We bolstered the hemispheric voice at the United Nations, the CND process in Vienna, and ideally the 2016 UNGASS. We have made important advances on the topic of alternatives to incarceration; we have also strengthened the Executive Secretariat with a number of talented new staff members, while providing additional responsibilities to other capable staff.

We have introduced and expanded the Fellowship Program to enable capable candidates from our Member States to work with us at headquarters, where they have made remarkable contributions.

We have opened up new channels of communication with civil society. We strengthened our relationship with the Pan-American Health Organization and with Ministries of Health throughout the hemisphere. So, it has truly been for me a very wonderful experience, and an outstanding opportunity to serve our Commissioners.

Much credit is due to our capable Assistant Executive Secretary Angela Crowdy, who has played an essential coordination role with our staff and commissioners, to Mariana Dambolena, our capable executive assistant, and our section chiefs: Francisco Cumsille, Alexandra Hill, Antonio Lomba, Sofia Kosmas, Ziggy Malyniowsky and Nelson Mena, and their staffs. It has been a privilege to work with such a fine team.

As a trust appointment of Secretary General Insulza my own appointment expires at the end of next month, and I will be moving on to other responsibilities with another multilateral organization. It has been rewarding to work with this very professional commission. I thank you again for the opportunity to serve.

While this presentation has been very positive, many challenges remain for this Commission and the Executive Secretariat.

We face the challenge of strengthening the public health-approach to the drug problem, advancing judicial reform and alternatives to incarceration, and strengthening the evidence-base for drug policy making. We have a timetable for the Plan of Action 2016-2020 and a draft Plan, but much work lies ahead. I remain fully confident that this Commission will continue to play a leadership role on drug policy issues both at the hemispheric and global levels.

Meanwhile, you will be supported by a very committed Executive Secretariat in your efforts, and also by a very committed senior team at the OAS, led by Secretary General designate Luis Almagro, who has signaled in various sessions with the Permanent Council his keen interest in these issues. This concern is shared by Assistant Secretary General designate Néstor Méndez, who is well known to many Commissioners and Permanent Representatives. Thank you, again, for your passion and commitment to this Commissions' important work.