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CONTROL COMMISSION

CICAD

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ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

**REMARKS OF APPRECIATION ON BECOMING
VICE CHAIR OF THE INTER AMERICAN DRUG ABUSE CONTROL COMMISSION (CICAD)**

Lt. Col Edward Croft
Remarks of Appreciation on Becoming
Vice Chair of the Inter American Drug Abuse Control
Commission (CICAD)

Monday 11th December 2023
at the 74th Regular Session of CICAD, Washington D.C.

Thank you for the invitation to address you, distinguished fellow Commissioners, colleagues from both government and Civil Society, leadership of the OAS, the Secretariat for Multi-dimensional Security and the team at the Executive Secretariat of CICAD as we gather for this 74th Regular Session of CICAD.

Permit me to recognise the distinguished members of the Head Table and Virtually

- Rodrigo Ferres, Deputy Secretary of State to the Presidency and President of the National Drug Board of Uruguay and newly elected Chair of CICAD
- Ambassador Adam Namm, Executive Secretary, CICAD/OAS
- Daniel Radio, Secretary General, National Drug Council and President of the Institute for Regulation and Control of Cannabis (IRCCA), Uruguay

I also want to thank the outgoing chair of CICAD Jalil Rachid, Secretary Minister, National Anti-drug Secretariat (SENAD, by its Spanish-language acronym), of Paraguay on his leadership and the myriad of accomplishments over the past year.

Let me express heartiest congratulations to Uruguay on being elected as the new Chair of CICAD. I look forward to working with you and to providing you with every support possible in fulfilling your stated goals and objectives.

I must extend a special thank you to the Commission for providing Antigua and Barbuda with the opportunity to be of service to you and our Hemisphere as Vice Chair of this august body. The country extends its sincerest appreciation and embraces this historic opportunity since it will be the first time any country of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) will serve at this level.

I want to encourage us to pay collective attention to developments in our Hemisphere, which is at an interesting intersection of policy direction as more and

more countries are legalising/decriminalising cannabis. These actions have the potential to create a series of outcomes that challenge our collective abilities to respond in areas of prevention, treatment, reintegration, supply reduction, law enforcement and other control measures. Today we also face the growth of activities related to the smuggling of chemical precursors, as well as increased availability of New Psychoactive Substances, and opioid analgesics such as fentanyl.

These varying situations require that we have strong policies to facilitate development of meaningful programmes. In this hemisphere we are fortunate to have an organization like CICAD which provides us with empirical based strategic direction and guidance through the Hemispheric Drug Strategy, the Plan of Action and the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM.) We are guided to ‘address the transnational drug problem in an integrated manner, with full respect and consideration for human rights, gender, cultural context, and social inclusion’. These initiatives place individuals at the core of our drug policies and takes a public health approach while balancing the safety and security of the citizens of our member states.

With this in mind, let us spend the next few days learning from each other as we strengthen our international cooperation, but also seeking to take the good practices that will lead to tangible responses to dealing with this complex, dynamic and multi-causal phenomenon. As we go through the various deliberations this week, let us keep our thoughts on how many lives we can save through our collaborative efforts to reduce drug demand, interrupt drug supply, strengthen our treatment of those who have a substance use disorder, establish meaningful alternatives to incarceration and social reintegration programmes and finally, make it increasingly difficult for persons to profit from drug related activities by robust and effective investigations and prosecutions to take the “Profit out of Crime” in our respective communities.

Thank you for this opportunity to serve in this capacity, I am convinced that as we continue working together, we can make a positive difference in our Hemisphere. As we approach the Christmas Season one which is usually associated with **Hope** that as through our efforts we can bring hope to the people of the region, **Peace** – the implementation of the hemispheric strategy and plan will create a more Peaceful environment; **Joy** – the smiles and joy of our children at Christmas will act as a motivator for us all to strengthen our resolve to remain focused on the goals and objectives as established by our newly elected Chair and finally **Love** – that we will continue to share the passion and Love to make this hemisphere a loving region in which to work, play and raise our families in a safe space. Thank you and God Bless.