



NATIONAL POINTS OF CONTACT OF
THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMITTEE AGAINST TERRORISM

FIFTH MEETING
February 28, 2007, Panama City, Panama
9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Opening remarks by the Assistant Secretary for Multidimensional Security
of the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (OAS),
His Excellency Ambassador Alexandre Addor-Neto

Distinguished National Points of Contact to CICTE;
Distinguished delegates;
Madam Secretary of CICTE;
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am truly honored to address this Fifth Meeting of National Points of Contact to CICTE, for several reasons.

First of all, because this is a gathering of the national experts in the field of counter-terrorism, a meeting of the best minds, as it were, involved on a daily basis in ensuring the prevention of terrorist acts.

Second, because it is a significant anniversary of this body –the Fifth encounter- significant not just because of numbers, but rather because this annual meeting is clearly a sustained effort to interact at the operational level and demonstrates that the nations of this Hemisphere, the distinguished members of CICTE, consider of utmost importance their joint endeavor in the fight against terrorism.

The importance of the role of the National Point of Contact cannot be overemphasized: in the global phenomenon of terrorism and the international fight against it, it is the National Point of Contact that brings the focus down to the national level where all efforts must inevitably begin and end. It is this focus on the national realities, vulnerabilities, priorities and needs that must be assessed and defined **first**, in order to generate a meaningful, practical and successful response in the form of national policy, strategy and mechanisms, and sub-regional and international cooperation. We recognize that each nation has its own character and therefore different kinds and levels of potential vulnerability to terrorist attack. Terrorists strike where they can effect greatest damage, so that an attack on a tourist resort in one country may have a greater impact than on another where tourism is not crucial to economic stability, for example. In another instance, an attack on vital waterways used for commerce can only be inflicted where such infrastructure exists.

We also recognize that all human beings are vulnerable in their health, and so the threat of an act of bioterrorism is ominous not only for one country but for all. It may seem in such a case that the importance of the national circumstance is diminished; I believe, and I am sure you would agree, that this is not so. The need to assess local risk and vulnerability must still be carried out, and again, the National Point of Contact is best placed to do so.

In addition, the NPC provides a direct link between the member state and CICTE and its Secretariat. This link is crucial to ensure hemispheric understanding of national priorities and challenges and also to create partnerships that can contribute to responding to those situations. The Secretariat cannot act without mandates from the member states, but any directives must be founded on national, sub-regional and regional needs. The answer to what these are can best be ascertained by the NPC system, which should constitute a central element for the development of both the CICTE Work Plan and a practical hemispheric counter-terrorism agenda.

The ease of access and the timely sharing of information are also permitted by having NPCs and an NPC network, with whom the Secretariat can connect on a daily basis or as needs arise.

The CICTE Member States, in their wisdom, set up this mechanism, appreciating the value of having a permanent responsible authority at the national level, and this approach has proven fruitful in the past five years. Your agenda today speaks of the beneficial nature of each NPC, the NPC network, and the NPC relationship with the Secretariat, while recognizing that improvements can always be made. Indeed, we recall that the Terms of Reference originally defined at the First Meeting of National Points of Contact in 2003 were revised last year at the Sixth Regular Session of CICTE, to address a particular issue which had arisen over the years: it was considered necessary to specify that “the person assigned to this position by their government should have operational responsibilities directly related to national security and specifically to counter-terrorism activities.” It is a description which, if put into effect, will guarantee the most effective execution of the role of the NPC.

I would now like to share with you the somewhat new structural arrangement at the General Secretariat, and how it relates to the CICTE Secretariat. There is a new functioning Secretariat for Multidimensional Security, which I have the honor to head. The CICTE Secretariat is one of the three entities within that Secretariat, the other two being the Department of Public Security and the Secretariat of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD). For all practical intents and purposes the CICTE Secretariat continues to function as it has in the past, under the directorship of the Secretary, who is presently Dr. Carol Fuller.

The OAS Member States have agreed that security is multidimensional in nature, and that among the threats to the security of the Hemisphere is that of terrorism. Not being a traditional threat to security in the sense of military aggression by one state against another, terrorism was deemed an emerging threat in 2003 at the Special Conference on Security in the Americas. The concept of multidimensionality covers at least two aspects of the reality of security in our countries: first, that the threat to stability and thus to security of the States is not today mainly represented by the risk of military aggression by another State or States, but rather caused by factors in the political, economic, social, environmental and health fields; second, that the concept or notion of security has to go beyond the traditional view of security of the State and has to cover the security of each citizen, as part of his or her exercise or fruition of citizenship: as stated in article 4, letter e of the

Declaration on Security in the Americas, Mexico City, October 2003, “the basis and purpose of security is the protection of human beings”, o, en español, “el fundamento y razón de ser de la seguridad es la protección de la persona humana”.

This new Secretariat combines counter-terrorism in the CICTE Secretariat, drug control and related crimes –such as money laundering, in the CICAD Secretariat, and a Department of Public Security, which covers a number of very important issues, including demining and destruction of firearms and ammunition (originated in political conflicts), illegal manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, gangs, police action and training, trafficking in persons and the special security concerns of small island states. The creation of the new Secretariat for Multidimensional Security represents an effort to treat each of these issues not merely as individual phenomena, but from the single perspective of security-related matters that challenge, threaten and are of concern for the security of the entire region.

If we consider not only the protection of the State but also the protection of human beings a central concern and focus in security matters, it becomes clear that the concept of security must be closely linked to development in its economic, social and political aspects. If people are the victims of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, illness, exclusion, why would they think their fate is connected to the progress of the nation, why would they endeavor to fight for a kind of security that does not protect them?

I am sure that your reflections today will lead to enhancements in the execution of your role as NPC of your respective countries and will also lead to a more productive relationship with the CICTE Secretariat. While you use this opportunity to share experiences, best practices and information and to foster partnerships with each other, I encourage you to look at your role also in the broader context of contributing to the security of your respective countries and sub-regions, and to the Americas as a whole. In the latter context, I urge you to consider embracing (reaching to) your colleagues in other government ministries as well as members of the private sector and civil society so that there can be a multifaceted approach to security and to the fight against terrorism.

I wish you the best of success in your work today at this, your fifth meeting, and over the next few days at the Seventh Regular Session of CICTE.

I thank you.