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OPENING SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY RICARDO DURÁN JAEGER,
VICE-MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA

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Your Excellency Ambassador Camilo Ospina, Permanent Representative of Colombia to the Organization of American States and Chair of the Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism;
Dr. Carol Fuller, Secretary of the Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism;
Esteemed Heads of Delegation,
Esteemed Delegates,

Friends:

Our country is most honored to be visited by such distinguished figures from the struggle against terrorism and, on behalf of the First Vice-President and Minister of Foreign Affairs, I am pleased to welcome you to the Republic of Panama.

The topic that has brought us together this year, and which we put forward to guide the discussions of this important committee, is “Critical Infrastructures: Policies, Regulations, and Hemispheric Cooperation.”

The application of counterterrorism measures in the field of critical infrastructure is by nature preventive and, by reason of its own dynamics, is in many cases carried out in collaboration with the private sector.

One not insignificant challenge in that undertaking is ensuring that intelligence information is shared, particularly among companies that, in turn, compete against each other.

Another important aspect – one regarding which this Committee has received an explicit mandate – is the Inter-American Integral Cyber Security Strategy: a multidimensional and multidisciplinary approach to the creation of a culture of cyber security. The problem is how to protect facilities and to preserve the quality of the services and information that are provided to users.

Esteemed delegates:

In preparation for this event, the Panamanian Foreign Ministry oversaw the organization of two seminar-workshops, one of which was attended by participants from other countries, which brought together all the sectors involved with the nation’s security.

I believe it would be appropriate to share some of their conclusions with this meeting, as a contribution toward the discussions beginning today. The first is the need for each state to develop a national strategic plan for prevention and defense, the importance of training members of civil society and raising their awareness, and ensuring the viability of cooperation schemes within the hemispheric and international frameworks in order to facilitate joint actions.

Another important issue I would like to share with you is that of protecting the security of the Canal, our main piece of critical infrastructure. The Canal carries around three percent of the world’s total trade and, following its transfer into Panamanian hands in December 1999, progressive

development has taken place in the multimodal sector of our economy – namely, private ports, rail links, logistics companies, and supply centers, which combine with the International Banking Center and Free Zone of Colón, the world's second largest free-trade zone after Hong Kong.

From the perspective of the topic at hand, security involves a chain that entails adopting a series of measures, and simplified procedures, in order to ensure that world trade is efficient and safe. All that is part of the national defense strategy known as the Panamanian Secure Trade and Transportation Initiative.

We are therefore very pleased that this vitally important topic is being dealt with by CICTE.

We thank the Government of Colombia for its effective service in the Chair of CICTE.

Our thanks also go to the Government of the Federative Republic of Brazil, the Government of the United States of America, the Government of the Republic of Korea, and the United Nations, for sending their experts to this meeting; we are certain that their contributions will serve to enrich our work.

My friends:

I trust that you will all find this event enjoyable and fruitful. On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Panama, I hereby declare the Seventh Regular Session of the Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism open.