

Remarks as Prepared for Delivery to the XVII Inter-American Conference of Mayors and Local Authorities by U.S. Ambassador to the Organization of American States Carmen Lomellin

Thank you very much for your kind welcome. It is wonderful to see so many representatives from local governments throughout the hemisphere represented here today.

Like you, I look forward to hearing from Senores Hernandez, Cravacuore, and Caballero on sustainable development. But first, I hope you won't mind if I discuss a few issues of relevance to everyone in the region, including events taking place in the Organization of American States and the promise of the 2012 Summit of Americas. These issues are the backdrop against which we all work on issues such as sustainable urban development.

I've just come from the OAS General Assembly in El Salvador where I had the opportunity to meet with some of your colleagues in government. It was an intense schedule, but we covered some important topics.

The theme that El Salvador selected for the General Assembly, "Citizen Security in the Americas," is profoundly relevant to a pressing challenge which El Salvador, and its immediate neighbors, face today. Of course, it is also a challenge that tops the list of public concerns throughout the Americas—and one that speaks directly to the need for responsive state and local institutions.

Throughout my entire time in El Salvador, I was struck by our region's common commitment to confront the wide variety of challenges we face in order to provide a better future for all of our peoples. Whether on political or economic topics, cultural or commercial concerns, we are united – at many levels of government -- in our desire to tackle the challenges of today, and provide everyone in the Americas with ever-better opportunities for tomorrow.

The Organization of American States, the oldest regional organization in the world, has played a very important role in supporting our region's efforts to meet these challenges.

The central pillars of the OAS -- strengthening democratic institutions, safeguarding human rights, promoting development, and enhancing multidimensional security – are well placed to meet our region's strong need for effective governance at the national, regional, and local levels. At the end of the day, our region's citizens are asking for institutions that can meet these basic needs – for security, for sustained development and investment, as well as for due process and rule of law. The work of the OAS, as reflected in part by its increasing observation of elections at the local and municipal level, seeks to meet these needs in a constructive fashion.

But there are also other processes in place within the Inter-American System to assist these calls for action:

Next April, in the beautiful city of Cartagena, Colombia, the leaders of 34 of our region's democracies will meet personally to forge a consensus on ways to meet these challenges and take advantage of opportunities to spur progress. This will be the Sixth Summit of the Americas. The Summit is still unique in that all 34 of these leaders sit down together with the stated objective of tackling the biggest issues of the region.

While our governments may sometimes disagree, the fact of the matter is that we have a great deal in common. The hemisphere is linked more than ever before—through strong cultural connections, a host of multilateral institutions, powerful trade flows, and vibrant economic activity. The Summit strengthens these existing connections as well as building partnerships in new areas of mutual interest.

On the margins of the OAS General Assembly, foreign ministers and national summit coordinators met to discuss the upcoming Summit. The

Colombians announced the theme of the Cartagena Summit—Connecting the Americas: Partners for Prosperity—I congratulate the Colombians on this theme; it provides an excellent umbrella under which we will be able to grapple with important challenges.

I'd also like to note that it is appropriate that my first opportunity to talk about this theme is right here in Miami. As many of you know well, this city hosted the first Summit of the Americas in 1994 at which the region declared its commitment to strengthening and preserving democracy; promoting economic prosperity; eradicating poverty and discrimination; guaranteeing sustainable development; and preserving our environment for future generations. We are working every day to bring these commitments to fruition.

Those of us who work day-in and day-out on the Summit are used to see its benefits. Some of the most important regional cooperation initiatives have come out of the Summit, but this fact is all too often missed by the casual observer. There are also those, who for reasons of their own, want to dismiss the Summit as a "talk shop." Let me be clear; we're not interested in talking for talking's sake. We have, and will continue, to maintain our focus on translating broad principles into concrete, cooperative actions that improve the lives and livelihoods of all of our people.

I'd like to point out some examples of the direct and meaningful impact that the Summit has had on the region:

- One, Democracy: The Third Summit in Quebec City, Canada in 2001 saw the adoption of the Inter-American Democratic Charter which calls for "good governance, sound administration, democratic values, and the strengthening of political institutions and civil society organizations." This charter has been instrumental in supporting effective democracy in the hemisphere and its central role as a guiding document was just reaffirmed with the readmission of Honduras to the OAS on June 1.

- Two, Citizen Security: In Trinidad and Tobago in April 2009, the leaders committed to work together to stop the growth of crime throughout the region. In support of this commitment, President Obama announced the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, for which we are seeking \$73 million in fiscal year 2012. This concrete action was taken in close cooperation with the governments of the Caribbean and supplements active security partnerships with other governments such as with Mexico under the Merida Initiative, our Central American friends under the Central American Regional Security Initiative, and of course our longstanding security cooperation with Colombia -- just to name a few. As we just reaffirmed at the recent OAS General Assembly, the United States is committed to working together with our partners to improve the citizen security of the region.
- Three, Economic Growth: While we were in the midst of the economic crisis during the April 2009 Summit in Trinidad and Tobago, governments in the hemisphere followed through on commitments to bolster their economies and launched a process to double lending by the Inter-American Development Bank. President Obama announced a new Microfinance Growth Fund which the U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporate has funded with \$70 million in loans to-date. The fund, which is housed at the Inter-American Development Bank, has over \$150 million in capital, and has made loans to 25 microfinance institutions in Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Paraguay, Honduras, Mexico, Colombia, and Argentina. In this manner the Summit has helped to expand the supply of credit to entrepreneurs to support economic growth and poverty reduction.

But let me be clear -- the United States doesn't have a monopoly on good ideas. We want to promote the free exchange of good ideas throughout the hemisphere. When President Obama came to Trinidad in 2009, his goal was to build meaningful partnerships in which good ideas and best practices flow not just one way or two ways, but every which

way. It was with this in mind that we translated the general principles of the Summit into two unique partnership initiatives—the Energy and Climate Partnership for the Americas (or ECPA, “EK-pah”), and the Inter-American Social Protection Network.

- The Inter-American Social Protection Network is a Chilean initiative coming out of the Summit in Trinidad and Tobago. Secretary Clinton joined the Presidents of Chile and Colombia to launch the Network in New York City in September 2009. The Network facilitates the exchange of best practices in social protection and it is a vehicle for deepening regional partnerships on a range of social protection programs. Under the IASPN, Chile has been providing training and technical assistance to seven Caribbean countries, which have initiated or improved their social protection systems based on lessons-learned from Chile. The United States is even providing resources to enable Chile to provide similar assistance to Paraguay.
- Since President Obama invited any interested countries in the hemisphere to join the Energy and Climate Partnership for the Americas in 2009, over 25 initiatives and projects have been launched by ECPA partners to promote a more secure and sustainable energy and climate future in the hemisphere. For example, Mexico is leading the charge on energy efficiency. Brazil has spearheaded the creation of the Senior ECPA Fellows to work on urban development, particularly in the Caribbean. The United States is contributing over \$60 million in global energy and climate change resources that are helping to advance ECPA.

With this in mind, I would like to briefly highlight the role of ECPA in sustainable urban development, a topic of interest to many local and municipal governments throughout the Americas. Environmental management is a key part of designing and maintaining sustainable cities.

Under the ECPA umbrella, Brazil is leading efforts to promote sustainable urban development and planning, and has launched an initiative to promote energy-efficient housing for low-income residents. Brazil and the United States, along with the Rockefeller Foundation and the Ashoka Changemakers Organization, launched a Sustainable and Inclusive Housing Initiative and Prize Competition to draw ideas from private sector.

One winning entry was “Zero Waste, Sustainable Architecture, Renewable Energy: Unlimited Source of Renewable Materials for Sustainable Housing” project from Curadores da Terra in Brazil. But the real winners were everyone who stands to benefit from this type of regional public/private collaboration. We can’t let artificial barriers remain between those who have innovative ideas and those who are entrusted with solving problems.

The OAS, through its Inter-American Program on Sustainable Development, is also working hard with OAS Member States to highlight the most promising approaches to environmental management. Good practice examples include providing financial incentives that involve communities, businesses, and governments to build consensus on shared goals and actions. Legislation is most effective when it allows private-sector participation in urban investment and also promotes the national government, the private sector, and local communities to finance municipal programs jointly. Efforts should continue to include issues relating to urban areas on the agenda of international organizations and national governments.

I can’t stress enough the importance of fostering public-private partnerships in this area. This is because cities that involve the private sector also tend to forge ahead in the construction and operation of transit systems with improved policies and plans in public transport, waste management, traffic reduction, outreach and awareness. Countries must face head-on the issues of low-income housing and regularization

of land ownership with the direct and active involvement of financing institutions.

As we work to bolster our efforts in these areas, we must continue to work even harder to strengthen the underpinnings of our democratic societies — good governance, responsive institutions, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law — those essential elements of democracy enshrined in the instruments of the OAS, and reaffirmed in the Democratic Charter. They reflect the values we cherish, and the values we stand for in the Americas as we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Democratic Charter's adoption.

Of course, the reality of turning broad hemispheric agreements into action takes a lot of work by a lot of stakeholders. Local governments have a large role to play in this process. You are the incubators of good ideas. You are where the rubber meets the road and we really find out whether a best practice in one place is a best practice in another. If we don't have your involvement and feedback, then we're likely to get off track -- and support initiatives that don't actually work on the ground. Indeed, it is only through you and civil society --and private sector engagement-- that we can truly fulfill the promise of the Summit and our multilateral efforts at the OAS.

Without a constant conversation among all stakeholders in the hemisphere, it will not be possible to make progress towards these goals. That is where the Summit comes in. Our hemisphere needs a high-level forum to discuss good ideas for cooperation, reinforce existing relationships, and form new partnerships for meaningful action that will make our corner of the world a better place to live. The role of the private sector and civil society is also essential for this forum to thrive and support responsive institutions.

I wear two hats for the U.S. Government – Permanent Representative to the Organization of American States and U.S. National Coordinator for the Summits of the Americas process. I firmly believe that these two

institutions are working hard to address the concerns that you see every day: democratic governance and basic human rights; citizen security, economic opportunity.

With this in mind, I look forward to talking with you all and hearing your thoughts on what we are doing as governments, and perhaps what more we could be doing. Thank you for your kind attention.