



Opening Remarks

By

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at

The Consultations with Interested States, in particular Latin American and Caribbean States, on practical disarmament activities conducted by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament, and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UN-LiREC)

Conference Room 5
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Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

As a Latin American, it gives me special pleasure to welcome you to these consultations on the work of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UN-LiREC).

Your presence here today demonstrates your keen commitment for the Centre and your support to its work and to advance the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda and improve the security and the stability of the countries throughout the region.

Armed violence is the most serious security threat throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. The region has the highest rate of gun deaths per gun in the world and indices of armed violence are continually increasing, in particular in the large urban areas. As a consequence, armed violence constitutes a constant and growing impediment to social order, good governance and the rule of law.

Over the past decade, Latin American and Caribbean States have intensified their efforts to stem this tide. In this respect, the Centre, in responses to requests from countries in the region and with the support of a number of donors, has provided technical assistance to countries to combat illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. Please allow me to mention a few examples which illustrate the activities of the Centre in this area:

- The Centre facilitated the training of more than 2,000 law enforcement officers from 30 countries from the region in the areas of combating the illicit trafficking in firearms, weapons destruction and stockpile management as well as border management and customs investigations whereby more than 100,000 firearms have been taken out of circulation.
- The Centre participated in several firearms destruction events where more than 150 tons of ammunition and explosives have been destroyed.
- The Centre provided technical assistance to almost one-third of the countries of the region to reform of their national firearms legislation and harmonize them with relevant international instruments.
- As part of its advocacy activities, the Centre supported and promoted the universalization of international disarmament instruments, such as the Certain Conventional Weapons Convention (CCW) and its related protocols, the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty Agreement (NPT), and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), just to mention a few.

Additionally, the Centre established strong partnerships with a number of entities of the United Nations system, in particular members of the Coordinating Action on Small Arms

mechanism (CASA), as well as with specialized agencies and relevant organizations such as the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL), the Preparatory Commission of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Organization of American States (OAS) and the European Union (EU).

The Centre celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2007 when it undertook an extensive review of its past and present programme of activities. This was a very useful and opportune exercise which allowed the Centre to take stock of best practices and lessons learned, assess the impact of its activities in the region, taking into account feedback from donors' and recipients, as well as to realign itself to better deliver its mandate and meet the emerging and pressing needs of the countries in the region.

This extensive review has also reaffirmed the Centre's identity as a specialized regional Centre for the promotion and execution of disarmament activities in accordance with its mandate and in response to requests from member States throughout the Latin American and Caribbean region. As you will see from the presentation of the Director of the Centre, Mr. Gasparini, the Centre will continue to play a pivotal role in fostering information exchange, awareness raising and capacity building activities. Through its Strategic Plan for 2008-2011, the Centre will respond with efficiency and agility to the increasing and diverse requests for assistance from States in the region.

However, for the Centre to continue to serve the region, it is essential to secure the necessary resources needed for its adequate functioning. In this regard, I count on your Governments' support, financial and in-kind, to ensure that the Centre continues to respond effectively to your needs.

Today's consultations are part of the Office for Disarmament Affairs' (ODA) incessant efforts to foster its effectiveness in implementing its mandates, including at the regional level. The "regional disarmament team" both in New York and in Lima, as well as the other two Regional Centres in Lomé, Togo, and Kathmandu, Nepal, will continue to work closely with all Member States and other partners.

I am gratified by the high level of participation in today's consultations and am confident that this meeting will achieve its purpose.

Thank you for your attention.