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DURING A MEETING WITH US CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION, SECRETARY GENERAL INSULZA AFFIRMS THAT "TODAY MORE THAN EVER, WE HAVE A COMMON AGENDA IN THE AMERICAS"

Port of Spain. The Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS) Jose Miguel Insulza held a meeting with a group of thirteen American members of the House of Representatives in Trinidad and Tobago during the recent Fifth Summit of the Americas.

In his welcoming remarks, Secretary General Insulza thanked the members of Congress for their interest in the region and in the OAS. He emphasized the importance of the Port of Spain meeting with its political and regional content and outlined his vision on Latin America's relations with the United States.

In this regard, he stated that "the issues that President Barack Obama referred to recently are central issues for the majority of our citizens. The fight against crime and poverty are priorities in this context of the current economic crisis."

"Today more than ever, we have a common agenda in the Americas, where issues such as crime, drug control, immigration, renewable resources, energy and global warming are common concerns of governments and are also essential to democratic governance. If we focus on that agenda, we will achieve great progress, mainly in Latin America and the Caribbean," he said.

Insulza told the representatives of the United States Congress of his interest in continuing to work with this institution, and to improve relations that have been formed over time with its various members and committees.

Representative Eliot Engel, who led the delegation of congressmen and is chairman of the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee of the House of Representatives, recognized the work of the OAS and the disposition of the Secretary General to work with the U.S. legislative body. "As chairman of the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee, I have always been very positive about the work of the OAS, I think it is an institution of great importance, and one with which we must work closely with in order to achieve the common welfare in the hemisphere."

Echoing the words recently spoken by President Barack Obama at the Summit, Representative Engel called for a new chapter in U.S. relations with Latin America, overcoming the past in order to start building a new future. Engel said that the Summit should serve to strengthen relations between these countries and United States should adopt a policy of greater engagement and more involvement in hemispheric dynamics.

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General Secretariat of the Organization of American States

Press Department

1889 F Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006

Telephone: (202) 458-6824 Fax: (202) 458-6421 Internet: www.oas.org



- 2 -

The Congressional delegation attending the meeting with Secretary General Insulza and Assistant Secretary General, Albert Ramdin, included representatives Eliot Engel (D), Gregory Meeks (D), Nydia Velazquez (D) and Yvette Clarke (D) from New York, Connie Mack, (R) and Kendrick Meek (D) of Florida; Ciro Rodriguez (D) of Texas, Sam Farr (D) Xavier Becerra (D) and Mary Bono Mack, representatives of California, Donald Payne (D) of New Jersey; Pierluisi Pedro (D) from Puerto Rico and Donna Christiansen (D) of the Virgin Islands.

During the meeting, the members of the U.S. Congress expressed their perceptions of the Summit, the hemisphere's priorities and the areas and issues where they hope for closer cooperation with the OAS and its member countries, including the fight against drugs, regional economic development, support for Haiti, renewable energy, property rights, and security.

Representative Gregory Meeks took the opportunity to call on members of Congress to participate in the newly formed OAS Congressional Caucus, which will facilitate cooperation with the OAS and a better understanding of regional dynamics. Meeks announced this bipartisan initiative in early April, with the aim of contributing to the work of the OAS and strengthening hemispheric relations.
