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REMARKS BY THE OAS SECRETARY GENERAL, JOSÉ MIGUEL INSULZA\*  
THIRD INDIGENOUS LEADERS' SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS

(April 14-15, 2009 - Panama City, Panama)

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From OAS Headquarters, please accept my warmest greetings, to all of the participants and organizations attending this indigenous forum, as well as to those who, in one way or another, participate in the Draft American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. I regret not being able to join you in this very important meeting, but my commitment with the organization and development of the Fifth Summit of the Americas in Trinidad and Tobago, does not allow me to be there. However, taking advantage of the benefits of current technology, we can shorten the distances and be present in a virtual manner in this meeting.

As you know, the process of the Draft American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples started in 1999, and many say that it has been in the institution for too many years; but, in reality, the text under consideration, the Record of the Current Status<sup>1</sup>, has been the object of only 5 meetings of negotiation in the past four years, given the fact that its revision was initiated in 2006.

The OAS General Assembly has annually renewed the mandate of the Working Group and has also clearly expressed the commitment of the OAS to the rights of the indigenous peoples of the hemisphere; likewise, it has opened an important space for the indigenous representatives, giving them full and effective participation within the meetings of discussion.

The participation of indigenous peoples' representatives in the meetings of negotiation and the special sessions is assured by the Specific Fund to Support the Elaboration of the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This Specific Fund makes possible the participation of at least one indigenous representative per country in each meeting.

Without a doubt, the impact of the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples has presented additional challenges to our negotiations on the hemispheric text, taking into account that not all of the OAS member states signed the United Nations document.

Nevertheless, the OAS Working Group has continued its work to seek a document that can be the result of consensus among member states and that gives the regional text legitimacy in relation to the themes.

I must also highlight the role of the Inter-American Human Rights System, both the Commission and the Court of Human Rights, organs that have issued opinions and established jurisprudence which advances the rights of indigenous peoples in our hemisphere.

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\* Original: Video projection during the inaugural session of the Third Indigenous Leaders' Summit of the Americas "Implementing the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas for Present and Future Generations." Panama City, Panama. April 14-15, 2009.

<sup>1</sup> Record of the Current Status of the Draft American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Document [[GT/DADIN/doc.334/08 rev.3](#)] December 30, 2008)

I would like to reiterate the commitment made by the General Secretariat of this Organization since the beginnings of the Working Group to Prepare the Draft American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The General Secretariat has involved itself in this effort and has been supporting the task of the Working Group, providing human and logistical services and resources, support that we will continue to contribute until the successful culmination of our efforts.

I would like to thank you for this opportunity to share this moment with you. Please accept once again my greetings from the OAS and our best wishes for the success of this important meeting.

Thank you very much.