

AT HAITI PARLIAMENTARY FORUM, OAS ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL URGES MORE BORDER COOPERATION FOR HUMAN AND TRADE MOVEMENT

February 19, 2008

Ambassador Albert R. Ramdin, the Organization of American States (OAS) Assistant Secretary General, urged authorities from Haiti and the Dominican Republic on Monday to work more closely together to harmonize policies for cross-border human and trade movement. He announced that the OAS would provide support to that initiative, through the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF) with funding from United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

“The challenge that we all face is the establishment of manageable, transparent and harmonized systems, procedures and mechanisms to facilitate the interactions, to take mutual advantages of the opportunities, and to enhance the lives of their people living in border communities,” Ramdin said at a Port-au-Prince forum of Haitian parliamentarians, government officials and other parties engaged in developing the Haiti-Dominican Republic border region. He suggested that cross-border cooperation emphasize the review and revision of the relevant procedures and regulations, publishing and strictly enforcing them. Increased border cooperation and transparency hold the key to combating corruption and smuggling, Ramdin added.

Immigration, trade and security issues feature at the top of the agenda for the two-day forum inaugurated by President of the Chamber of Deputies and Vice President of the Haitian National Assembly, Erick Jean-Jacques. Participants also heard from Senator Edmonde Suplice, of the Department of Centre; Patrick Robasson, Deputy of Anse à Pitre; Deputy Denaud Charlemagne, President of the Border Commission, and PADF coordinator for the Haiti side of the Our Border project, Joseph Félix, who moderated the opening.

Among other issues, the forum is examining the Haiti-Dominican border region as an opportunity for social and economic development. On the security question, forum participants are considering an array of topics, including Haitian National Police structures and infrastructure and modernization as well as the engagement of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). They will also consider governance and local government issues in the border towns.

In his remarks, Ramdin also stressed that the OAS Group of Friends of Haiti and other arrangements the organization would continue to encourage member-states and other members of the international community to increase assistance to the Haitian government so it can continue developing basic infrastructure along the border. As well, the Group of Friends could be used for enhanced synchronization of the technical assistance coming from different sources, and to contribute to the Border Development Funds. He highlighted the importance of the “Mixed Commission” and other formal working groups, as mechanisms for effective dialogue, partnership and cooperation towards long-term solutions.

The OAS Assistant Secretary General told the forum participants: “As parliamentarians, you have the historic role and the vision and foresight to move this issue forward on the national agenda, and the OAS stands ready to support you in this endeavor.” Noting the OAS is pleased to be active in the border region of Haiti and the Dominican Republic through the

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excellent work of the PADF, Ramdin thanked the Canadian Government, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and USAID for providing the funding.

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