

V-SOA: a view from within

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JOSÉ MIGUEL INSULZA is a Chilean politician with an accomplished record of public service. He began his career in academia and until 1973 he was Professor of Political Theory at the University of Chile and of Political Science at Chile's Catholic University. Following the coup that brought General Augusto Pinochet to power, Mr Insulza went into exile for 15 years before returning to his home country in 1988 to help lead a political movement toward democratic elections in 1990. He was elected OAS Secretary General on 2nd May 2005.

The Fifth Summit of the Americas (V-SOA) comes to fruition at a propitious time for exchanging new ideas and points of view. The Summit also plays a fundamental role in creating spaces for dialogue in order to promote democracy, peace and the opportunity for all Member States to come to the forefront of this renewed engagement in our Hemisphere, in a spirit of solidarity and cooperation to tackle the many challenges we face.

During the negotiation process of the Declaration of Port of Spain, which began in September 2008, the stage was provided to address a variety of themes that are relevant for all countries of the Hemisphere. As a matter of fact, democracy has always been a central theme in the Summits despite the heterogeneity of Summit themes. It has been addressed according to the needs and concerns of the moment, which has varied from the construction of a democratic hemispheric community to the preservation and strengthening of the democratic system, good governance, and the inter-relationship between democracy and socio-economic issues.

Good democratic governance paves the way to democratic legitimacy by building people's faith in democracy over all other forms of government and ensuring their acceptance of the way it works in their respective countries. Our region is showing the world a face with attractive new features: more stability and greater pragmatism in policy and institutional reform are now the norm in the region rather than the exception. However, the challenges that the region faces today are no less daunting. Continuing high levels of poverty and inequality are at the top of the list. Together with policies to sustain growth, these challenges call for less regressive and more efficient social and public expenditures that help build democratic legitimacy.

We can rightfully say today that Latin America has successfully concluded the transition to democracy and is heading towards the consolidation of democratic governance. In this regard, the ratification of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, as a direct result of the Third Summit of the Americas in 2001, has provided us with agreed upon principles, values and standards which enable us to collectively promote and consolidate democracy.

The promotion of democracy needs to be understood

beyond the concept of holding recurrent democratic elections. Today, the promotion of democracy entails providing concrete and real benefits for the population at large. The challenge, however, lies in how we can all reap the benefits of democracy. The participation of citizens in the realm of democratic, accountable governance is reflected in their desire for improvement in their quality of life and in the generation of sustainable development and social inclusion and cohesion.

As global prosperity has increased in the past century, each generation has been called upon to meet new challenges in extending the possibilities of human well-being. Reducing the inequality gap is the great opportunity of our time, a commitment that would not only relieve massive suffering and spread economic well-being, but that would also promote and reinforce objectives of democracy and good governance, security, health and education as well as of decent work and greater social justice. In this respect, we still have an enormous pending task ahead of us. It is not sufficient to ask the peoples of the Americas to vote in elections and chose their respective governments. It is also essential for all of us to participate in the further development and consolidation of institutions that will enable the fulfilment of democracy. A democratic system must therefore ponder the issues of poverty, development and inequality in order to confront the hardships of unemployment, migration, and insecurity that afflict our Hemisphere. It underlies the unequivocal search for the powers of the State to give solutions to the needs of the people and to the democratic development of the region.

The Summit Process is looking for a multidimensional way to strengthen democracy and governance, and increasing opportunities in the Americas. The multiple and values-based aspects of the Declaration of Port of Spain show quite clearly that this multidimensional approach to the challenges we face to achieve integral development, peace and prosperity, is a diverse and complex goal to strive for. That is the reason why action on poverty, on environment, on security issues and inclusion matter far beyond the obvious importance for each individual issue. These actions are indicative of an attitude of responsibility to others and an acceptance that international relations should not be simply a dispute of interests but also of principles and of things we stand for and are proud of defending.

An inclusive society is not necessarily entirely

devoid of poverty and social problems, rather it is a society where the color of one's skin and/or the riches of one's parent are not key factors of whether one is poor, or receives a quality education or proper medical care, or has access to justice and to the information technologies of today. Inclusive societies provide in essence equal opportunities, representative political systems, processes of democratic governance, and enhanced social mobility. From this perspective, social inclusion is a fundamental factor of effective democratic power, and a greater way to deepen and sustain democracy. In this context, the Summits of the Americas make a determinant contribution.

Even though the issues of democracy, democratic governance and social justice are at the centre of the preoccupations of our leaders, we have attempted, during this negotiation process, to construct the broadest possible agenda that is capable of unifying all the Member States of the OAS. The issue of energy security is of central concern to the countries of our Hemisphere. We cannot overemphasise the crucial importance of implementing successful energy strategies in the interest of the generations of today and tomorrow. Measures needed to ensure the continuity of fuel sources, the diversification of energy sources, and oil and gas price stability, among others, have been discussed by our governments at virtually every Summit of the Americas since the first one held in 1994. For their part, the region's governments are increasingly aware of the interrelationship between energy, environment, climate change/disaster management, agriculture/food security, and poverty, as well as transportation and public security.

Energy security cannot be comprehensively understood without specific reference to the increasingly important role of renewable energies and their conservation. In that regard, the region has vast potential for renewable energy generation. Society as a whole – including citizens, governments, and the private sector – shares responsibility for improving energy security. The Fifth Summit of the Americas affords a unique opportunity in that it brings together governments, civil society, and the private sector, thus enabling them to take an effective multidimensional approach to the energy security issue.

As well as constituting a matter of highest importance to our countries, energy also constitutes a common thread for hemispheric integration. In that vein, cooperation and integration must be more than mere words and must translate into specific actions. Such exchange might be effected through an intra-hemispheric strategy wherein countries with large oil and gas reserves might benefit from technological exchange with and the know-how of more developed countries. These in turn might benefit from less

expensive oil and gas imports, since the former countries are closer to the large consumer markets and can provide more stable supply (greater security in South America than in the Middle East and other parts of the world). This would increase the competitiveness of the countries of the Hemisphere.

We share the conviction that the role of public policies in Latin America and the Caribbean needs to be enhanced. Nonetheless, it is important to highlight the fact that the current crisis did not begin in the region, the existence of macro-economic and more solid policies, more developed and stable financial systems, and more diversified markets made the difference this time.

As Latin America and the Caribbean are experiencing more and more aggressively the ripples of the economic decline, I have confidence that our governments have the institutional capacity, the will and necessary resources to address this latest challenge. Nevertheless, I also believe that our leaders should address this issue in their meetings during the Fifth Summit. I deem that it is impossible to advance in a Summit of the

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The Hall of Heroes at the OAS' headquarters in Washington, DC. The Hall has 23 busts donated by Member States in honour of the heroes of their own independence struggles. Jamaica and Haiti are the only Caribbean countries with busts in the Hall



Crime not only impacts the citizens of our region but also, the national productivity, employment, markets, and investment

Americas, or in any gathering of world leaders, without any accountability on the progress achieved or what is being undertaken in order to surpass the crisis.

Naturally, however, some assurances exist that everything possible is being done to mitigate the crisis, especially when we are aware of the enormous amount of resources being allocated to stimulate the economy not only in the United States of America but in Europe as well. However, the countries of this Hemisphere are concerned on how cooperation will be addressed regarding the developing states, when we address a crisis that this part of the world certainly did not cause.

The global situation comes at a time when the region has been discussing the nature of the new State in the context of this new democracy as the condition of our institutions are central to the undertaking of the numerous issues that defy the democratic sustainability of the region. The challenges we have before us, are to say the least, enormous and it will be a daunting task to try to resolve them. The will of the OAS has always resided in confronting each and every one of the issues, exposing them to the general consideration and debate. There must be no forbidden topic or agenda when democracy is at stake.

As mentioned earlier, the leaders of the region are working tirelessly with their economic teams to move forward and navigate successfully through these troubled economic and financial times. But we have to be able to make the case, for the people of the Americas who are worried about not being able to make their payments, for our citizens who worry that the employment opportunities are no longer available, for our friends who are worried that their jobs are going to disappear. We need to be able to make the case that what we do here for the Americas today is not only important, but essential for the future of our continent, even in these tough times.

I strongly believe that we can make that case. But it cannot be just a statement from me. It has to be the accumulated efforts of every one that will enable us to make the case, not just to our Presidents, but to the citizens of the Americas as a whole.

It is important to highlight that the Declaration of Port of Spain tackles the issue of security in a holistic manner. Security is present in the agenda, as crime and violence constitute the main concerns of our citizens. In this regard, the topic of security will not be undermined during this high-level meeting. Nonetheless, we need to bear in mind that when security is at stake, not only the economy is affected by it; the integrity of the role of the State and the democratic institutions is also being jeopardised by this phenomenon.

Our security concerns are directly linked to the foundations of the economic development in

the region. The Inter-American Development Bank estimates that crime has a cost of 15 per cent of the Latin America GDP. Crime not only impacts the citizens of our region but also, the national productivity, employment, markets, and investment. When referring to investment, crime has a deeper impact in the national economy, as per a high rate of crime directly influences the national and international investment in our countries. In summary, security is one of the issues that is at the centre of the preoccupations of our leaders, and therefore will not be absent in the up-coming debate nor in the agenda.

Finally, we would be remiss if we did not acknowledge, with genuine appreciation, the tremendous contributions to the Summit process of the institutional members of the Joint Summit Working Group, including the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO), Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI), Andean Development Corporation (CAF), the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), the World Bank, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Institute for the Connectivity in the Americas (ICA). The 12 members of the group, which is chaired by the OAS, have committed to contributing resources and technical and analytical support to achieving the goals of the Summits of the Americas.

When we meet in Port of Spain during the Fifth Summit of the Americas, all of our leaders will have been democratically elected. All the active members of the OAS have come to power amidst recurring free and fair elections based on universal suffrage and secret ballot as a true expression of the sovereignty of the people. There is no other organisation in the Americas that has the totality of the Caribbean countries, Latin-American countries, Canada and the United States sitting around the table in the same forum in order to discuss issues that are common to every country.

I could not continue without recognising the hard work undertaken by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in the design and in the preparation of the Fifth Summit, a process in which we can exchange experiences and share our vision on the matters of today, and that is going to be, without a doubt, the major challenge of the Hemisphere: how to articulate all of our efforts so that the peoples of the Americas enjoy and reap the benefits of peace, democracy and development. **F**