

Speech by Secretary General of SICA, Ambassador Aníbal Quiñónez, on the occasion of the Inauguration of the Second Central American Numismatics Meeting.

Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the General Secretariat of the System of Central American Integration, to this house of Central America in El Salvador, which is the home of all of you. Mr Federico Hernandez Aguilar, President of the National Council for Culture and Arts, CONCULTURA (we are greatly honoured by your presence, as we are honoured by the presence of everyone here today); Most Excellent Mr Guillermo Mendez, Director General of Foreign Policy of the Republic of El Salvador. Mr Roberto Jovel, President of the Central American Numismatic Association, ANUCA; Mr. Francisco Gonzalez, Secretary of the Salvadoran Numismatic Association, ANUSAL; members of the Central American and Salvadoran Numismatics Associations; functionaries from the General Secretariat of Central American Integration; ladies and gentlemen,

It is gratifying for me, personally and in my capacity as Secretary General of the System of Central American Integration, to address you on the occasion of inaugurating a cultural event that speaks very closely to the integration ideals that we share. According to connoisseurs, numismatists are sometimes differentiated from collectors insofar as the latter derive their pleasure from the simple ownership of monetary devices, while the attention of the former focuses on the acquisition of knowledge about them. In this event, our intention is to deepen the knowledge of Central American currency in its various forms, because this form of knowledge includes topics of the most varied nature regarding our reality, that unique and constant reality that acts over us, and on which we also act in shaping what we somehow feel when we define ourselves as being Central Americans.

There is a long string of illustrious coins in the world, like those used by the Roman emperors or the pontifical coins issued under a succession of different popes, whose minting was done with the purpose of rescuing from oblivion certain historical moments. One day the currencies of Central America will tell our descendants of important aspects of our way of life and changes it underwent as a result of our institutions. The creation in 1999 of a Central American Numismatic Association was, indeed, a regional integration initiative. It gathers and engages numismatists from all the countries in the region in order that they may both get to know each other and exchange experiences and knowledge on a common subject. In addition, the association promotes studies and research on our common features as regards numismatics and the history of our coins and currency. It is, therefore, an integrationist enterprise that is useful and important to support.

Currency –either metal or paper– is not only a means to facilitate trade. In fact, it represents an important stage in the life of people, which says a lot about the maturity of the exchanges among the inhabitants of the issuing country and between them and the international community. Currency embraces symbols and recalls the historical facts of the most diverse communities. In addition, each issue is defined by the social, economic and political setting at the time when the minting took place. Therefore, the study of the history of currency contributes to our understanding of our realities and experiences of the past. Of great concern is the availability of coins, banknotes, medals and tokens issued by a group of countries, as it reflects the desire to express ideals of cohesion and future destiny. Since many years, this has been the case of the Central American region. Its integration into a federal republic after independence from Spain in 1821 –and a short period of accession to the Mexican Empire of Agustín de Iturbide– is reflected in a series of coins of the Federation minted between 1821 and 1841, worthy witness to the desires and search for common destinies. Moreover, in recent years a series of commemorative

coins has been issued to celebrate several milestones in our history. I refer, inter alia, to the series coined by the predecessor body of SICA, the Organization of Central American States (OCAS), on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of its founding. I'm sure we will be able to see some of these pieces, which are among the most fascinating in Central America.

I was pondering this baggage of ideas at a Central American airport while waiting for a flight to attend an important intergovernmental meeting when I had a fortuitous meeting where I had the opportunity to learn of the existence of the Central American Numismatic Association and its desire to continue with its habitual range of cultural performances. I could not do less than offer the auspices of the General Secretariat under my charge to hold precisely the event we are celebrating today. With it, we support not only the expansion of knowledge of our history and common destiny, but also a true integration initiative. I note with great satisfaction the convening power of the topic of numismatics in the region, clearly represented by the number and the diversity of origins of those who accompany us in this ceremony. I am sure that the presentation of the specific works that are planned for this meeting and the exchange of ideas and opinions that will follow them will advance the knowledge of numismatics in the region.

With those expectations in mind, it gives me great pleasure to declare open the Second Central American Numismatic Meeting, which, in addition to the sponsorship of this General Secretariat, has the substantive support of the Central American Numismatic Association and the newly created Salvadoran Numismatics Association. This event marks, and why not say it, the start of a new program of the General Secretariat, namely the Central American Regional Awareness Program, that is, we will be supporting all those kinds of activities that make Central Americans feel the pride and privilege of belonging to a region, in this case to the Central American region, of which we should all be proud.

Additionally, I wish to hope that in the near future the Integration System that today we strive to consolidate will lead us to a monetary union, as a fundamental condition of our process, under a single currency as it occurred under the Confederation.

Thank you very much.

SG-SICA, San Salvador, El Salvador, May 4, 2008.