

Speech by Secretary General of SICA, Ambassador Aníbal Quiñónez, at the Extraordinary Meeting of the Central American Security Subcommissions.

Welcome to the General Secretariat of SICA, the home of Central America, the home of all of you!

This morning we are gathered here to begin the extraordinary sessions of the Subcommissions of the Central American Security Commission, whose aim is to continue the work begun during the Technical Meeting held in Panama on April 26, 2006.

The Priority Action Program for Democratic Security in the Region, the Program for Arms Limitation in Central America for Reaching a Reasonable Balance of Forces and Promoting Stability, Mutual Trust and Transparency, as well as the revision of the Internal Rules of the Central American Security Commission, will address the tasks assigned to them during these three days of meetings. These meetings are very important as the efforts undertaken by the Subcommissions to meet in particular the mandates emanated from the XXVII Regular Meeting of the Heads of State and Government, held in Leon, in December 2005 in Nicaragua, regarding the Reasonable Balance of Forces and the Promotion of Stability, Mutual Trust and Transparency, will be a significant step for the region upon being approved by the Central American Security Commission, which will hopefully happen in the shortest term possible. Similarly, the changes inherent to the process of regional integration call for modernization and a continuous updating of the different instruments and initiatives, which are essential to the continued study and analysis of all the tools at our disposition on the matter of security, the Internal Rules of the Security Commission being a key instrument for the functioning of the integration process.

That is why the valuable participation of representatives from the Ministries of Foreign Relations, the Ministries of the Interior or Public Security, the Ministries of Defence, as well as the Commission of Chiefs of Police of the Central American Countries, is important to get input establishing priorities for Democratic Security, which may be submitted to the Security Commission for approval and subsequent instruction. I appreciate your presence and please feel, as I said, warmly welcome to this home of yours, the home of Central America. I want to reiterate to all of you that you have the support of all staff of the General Secretariat of SICA, including, of course, my personal support. I feel very honoured that you've chosen the seat of the General Secretariat for such meetings as this is your home, and it is at home where everyone should feel with the greatest ease and comfort.

The Central American integration process keeps moving forward. You are witness to the achievements that we have made. I think it was no accident that last May 13 the European Union chose Central America's as the only Integration System in Latin America with which to have an association treaty, which will therefore allow us to begin negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement. The situation in the region from the standpoint of integration is improving. Day by day, we are becoming more aware that only united can we fulfil all the dreams we have, which is why the Regional Awareness programme which we intend to launch in the second half of the year, becomes an initiative of the utmost importance. When we succeed in making Central American citizens feel proud of belonging to a region called Central America, feel pride of Central America as

the homeland of all, when Central American citizens realize that integrated living signifies for them a great added value and, finally, when the people of Central America realize that the endeavours of integration, in the case of the Security Commission, give them benefits and tranquillity, then I think can we fulfil this mandate we have received precisely from the people of Central America to whom we dedicate all our sleepless nights and all our efforts.

I wish you the best during these days of meetings and as always, I reiterate our full support and our appreciation for your presence today in this home of yours.

Thank you very much.

San Salvador, El Salvador, June 20, 2006.