

Report of the workshop on drug trafficking

Friday, July 21, 2000

The various arguments presented by the guest speakers led to a rich debate, not only on the role of parliamentarians in the fight against illegal drug trafficking, but also on the relevance of the various means and strategies used up until now in this fight.

The first guest speaker, Mr. Eduardo Pando Pacheco, member of the Congress of the Republic of Peru, gave a detailed presentation of his country's strategy in the fight against drug trafficking which constitutes, together with job creation, the quest for economic stability and environmental protection, one of the means chosen through which to seek to eliminate poverty. This strategy is articulated around three complementary axes, namely: the banning of illicit drugs, with the aim of dismantling the national and international drug mafias; the development of alternative crops to the coca leaf, in order to avoid the distortion of contributing to the rise in poverty among producers; and the prevention and reduction of consumption, as well as the rehabilitation of drug consumers, in order to limit the negative impacts of drug trafficking on health, public security and the productivity of the population.

Despite the instigation, in 1990, of the *National Drug Prevention and Control Program* (1994-2002) and the creation of the Anti-Drug Consumption Commission (*CONTRADROGAS*) in 1997, Peru has had to adapt its legislation in the area of drug trafficking and the banning of drugs to make it more effective. Peru is now placing the emphasis on the alternative crop development program, and on the drug consumption prevention program. While drawing a portrait of the danger arising from an association between organizations involved in drug trafficking with those of a political-terrorist nature, Mr. Pando emphasized the rapid development of the situation in recent years. Hence, he notes that as the United States of America intensifies its efforts to have production reduced and to close its borders to illegal drugs, while tightening its certification standards linked with the level of foreign aid, as the demand on the different markets changes, and as the international mafias apply pressure to drive up production, the domestic dynamics tend to deteriorate. It should be kept in mind that the rise in the domestic supply of drugs within Peru leads to an increase in consumption, as well as in the development of marketing networks and in the related juvenile delinquency and crime.

The case of Peru also underlines the interdependence between the various countries in terms of their responsibility toward the fight against drug trafficking, and illustrates the importance that Peruvians place on regional and international agreements and accords aiming to optimize the efforts in this fight. In recent years, Peru has signed bilateral agreements with Ecuador (1999), Brazil (1998), Costa Rica (1999), Colombia (1998), Venezuela (1998), Uruguay (1998) and Spain (1998). In addition, in the framework of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD-OAS), the country is currently collaborating with Colombia, Chile, Uruguay and Argentina, toward the implementation of a pilot project to attack the problem of money-laundering.

The second guest speaker was Mr. Belisario Solano Solano, a member of the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica and alternate Secretary General of Parlatino. His presentation included philosophical interpretations of the problem of drug trafficking, which he presented as following from the political utopia born in Athens over 2,000 years ago, and that has now transformed itself into the utopia of an America entirely freed from the grip of drug trafficking. He presented a "Legislator's Decalogue", in the fight against drug trafficking, starting from the question: What would be the appropriate measures for dealing with the challenge that faces us? He thus proposed three elements that are conditions for action, and then seven others that are conditions of attitude, ethics or personality:

- 1- to know oneself and to ensure, for example, that others also look toward themselves (so that everyone can give a meaning to his or her life);
- 2- to legislate with a sense of history (to raise the civic awareness of the peoples);
- 3- always to be within civil society (to serve as active intermediaries between the State and the organized groups of civil society);
- 4- to be courageous (since this is a war in which the lives of those who truly have the courage to fight are in danger);
- 5- to be responsible (in order that the saving of lives and of the foundations of societies becomes a central objective of parliamentarians);
- 6- to be visionaries (because the today's fight preserves and prepares the society of tomorrow);
- 7- to be just (because if Parliaments maintain an ethic of justice, this will have a domino effect on the citizens);
- 8- to be steadfast (because this is a war without truce, because the activities of drug traffickers are unrelenting);
- 9- to have integrity (because the drug-related corruption of political figures causes as much damage to society as does the drug trafficking itself);
- 10- to be adept (because guile and efficiency must oppose the relentless activities and strategies of the drug traffickers).

According to Mr. Solano, parliamentarians must reinforce local legislation and work unstintingly to standardize the legislation at the regional or hemispheric level, in order to improve and facilitate international assistance and cooperation aiming to fight against the production, trade and consumption of drugs and against the other related forms of criminal activities, such as money laundering. Moreover, parliamentarians must be aware that their participation in international organizations that fight against drug trafficking is necessary, urgent and vital, because such criminal activity is supranational, knows no borders, and constitutes a crime against humanity.

The final recommendation (see the *Proceedings of the Puerto General Assembly*), formulated through the active participation of the workshop participants, thus constitutes a summary of their convictions, of their commitments and of their aspirations in the area of the fight against drug trafficking, which they consider as a sub-theme intimately related to the main theme of this general assembly, namely the eradication of poverty in the Americas. According to the participants, the solutions to the problem of drug trafficking must inevitably arise out of an appropriate legislative framework and, as the actors responsible for the creation or perfecting of these regulatory frameworks, parliamentarians cannot afford to lag behind and content themselves with reacting to events.

It is in this context that parliamentarians and the participants in this workshop expressed their opinions about subjects as important as: What is the best approach to the problem of drugs; to reduce the supply, or to limit the demand? – whereas the proponents of either of these theories brought forward several strong arguments. Can supply be reduced by means of a policy of interception? How can demand be reduced? Others raised, as a possibility to be studied, the option of lifting sanctions. There was also a discussion of the phenomenon, observed in recent years, of the correlation between abusive consumption of drugs and growth in the crime rate. It was agreed that there is a need to increase prevention, an idea that is simple in theory, but in practice it requires much time and effort. As certain participants recalled, it must be understood that prevention is now being thought of as an approach that encompasses all disciplines, as well as the different sectors of society. Nowadays, the emphasis is being placed on the reinforcement of control and protection structures, rather than on the risk factors.

Finally, all legislators are urged to fight against drugs, while maintaining an awareness of their own identities and of the realities specific to their own countries, with legislation adapted to the historic moment, in close collaboration with civil society, with courage, with responsibility, with vision, with justice, with integrity, with great dexterity, and relying on the assistance of all concerned in this fight, including the active participation of the members of the Parliamentary Conference of the Americas (COPA).