

**Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs  
U.S. Department of State  
Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere  
House Foreign Affairs Committee  
April 25, 2012**

Chairman Mack, Ranking Member Engel, Members of the Committee, it is an honor and privilege to be here today. I am genuinely pleased to be able to speak with you again after an absence of several months, and I greatly appreciate this subcommittee's engagement and support for both U.S. assistance and our policies and engagement in the Western Hemisphere. Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Engel, it is especially good to see you again after our visit to Colombia, and I look forward to sharing with you my reflections on the Summit of the Americas.

We are fortunate that our hemisphere overwhelmingly presents opportunities to advance U.S. interests and objectives and promote greater prosperity and growth for the United States and all countries of the region. The President's and the Secretary's engagements in Colombia demonstrated the power of this positive vision to expand social and economic opportunity, the Summit also provided an opportunity to continue our work to stand up for shared democratic values in the Americas. We are especially engaged in responding to threats against democratic governance and freedom of expression, threats to citizen security and threats from external actors in the Western Hemisphere that directly impact the security of the United States. Addressing these

challenges bilaterally and at the Organization of American States remains our top priority; without improvement in these fundamental areas, economic development, social equity, and democratic institutions will falter. These objectives will continue to be the focus for U.S. assistance resources.

The Summit of the Americas, which I am pleased so many of you had the chance to attend, showcased the region's rapid change. Although obscured by reporting on other issues discussed, the Summit highlighted the many practical ways that countries and societies in the Americas are coming together to solve problems and build a more successful and interconnected future. President Obama reinforced the spirit of partnership that has been at the core of his administration's policy in the region. The Colombian government's program for this year's Summit -- including both CEO and civil society forums -- was a successful example of what Secretary Clinton calls the "other legs of the foreign policy stool" -- accountable governments, prosperous economies, and engaged civil societies. A robust business sector and strong civil society are essential counterparts to an effective and responsible government in achieving regional progress.

Our initiatives for the Summit included: establishment of a Small Business Network of the Americas, the SBNA, to provide technical assistance to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and to encourage American SMEs to take advantage of the market opportunities that the region presents; announcement of the Women's Entrepreneurship network; advancement of the President's 100,000 Strong in the

Americas effort to increase academic exchanges; expansion of regional broadband capacity; and support for innovation efforts in development; and launching a security partnership with Colombia to provide enhanced levels of citizen security assistance in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Panama. I am especially enthusiastic about the United States' role in the creation of Colombia's Connect 2022 initiative to expand electrical connectivity throughout the Americas, which will further reduce energy poverty in the region and foster a vast regional market for electrical grid technologies and equipment. Our shared goal is that by 2022, all people of the hemisphere will have access to the electricity they need to do their work productively and to educate their children for the future.

Through equal partnership and the power of proximity, the United States is working effectively with capable regional partners to address key challenges facing the people of the Americas. Increasingly, these partnerships do not require U.S. assistance, as more and more countries become global players and donors of global goods in their own right. North America is an example of such a partnership. There, our initiatives to enhance regulatory cooperation and improve border management, including infrastructure at our ports of entry, will further expand trade and create jobs for all involved.

At the same time, trafficking and transnational crime in the hemisphere have created a violent environment that makes day-to-day life for some of the region's people

intolerable, creating situations where people are afraid to leave their homes or send their children to school. Sustained U.S. engagement and assistance on this front is required to counter these threats, improving the lives of people throughout the region and protecting U.S. security interests. In addition to our support for the Partnership for Growth in El Salvador, food security, inclusive economic growth, promoting energy security, and mitigating the effects of climate change, the Administration's FY 2013 request of \$1.65 billion for the Western Hemisphere prioritizes the Merida Initiative in Mexico, security assistance in Colombia, the Central America Regional Security Initiative, and the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative. These U.S. assistance investments support partner governments' efforts to make their streets safer for their citizens by strengthening the institutions of governance, including the judiciary, law enforcement, and defense institutions.

Our FY 2013 requests for these initiatives reflect an emphasis on enhancing capacity and strengthening institutions over the long term. We are also emphasizing prevention assistance, to ensure a comprehensive approach to crime and violence and enhance the rule of law. Our assistance draws upon the capacity of partners in the hemisphere, such as Colombia, Brazil, and Mexico, Canada, and other international donors, such as the European Union, Spain, and the Inter-American Development and World Banks, to contribute to greater security. Engagement with our partners on issues that they care about, including social inclusion, energy and the environment, will help us

build stronger relationships and contribute to a holistic approach to the difficult security problems we face.

Our FY 2013 request also prioritizes assistance for Haiti to support the country's ongoing development efforts, focusing on: sanitation and health services to help prevent and treat cholera and other water-borne diseases, expansion of energy infrastructure, and economic growth to increase agricultural incomes and get Haitians back to work, and improving the government's ability to deliver needed services and restore faith with its people.

In Mexico, the FY 2013 request continues a shift from equipment items toward training and institutional capacity building assistance, especially state-level programs that will strengthen Mexican capacity to sustain the rule of law and reach young people at risk. Assisting Colombia in its whole-of-government efforts to expand state presence in former conflict areas, protect human rights, and promote economic development, remains a priority for U.S. assistance. The ongoing transfer to Colombia of financial and operational responsibility for counternarcotics and military assistance permits the planned reductions of our aid there.

During the Summit of the Americas, President Obama announced our intention to seek an increase to at least \$130 million in FY 2012 assistance under the Central America Regional Security Initiative in response to continued high levels of violence in that region. Our assistance under CARSI is heavily oriented toward training,

professionalization and capacity building. Community action and municipal crime prevention will help at-risk and vulnerable members of society and marginalized communities.

Our FY 2013 request also supports the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative and is consistent with our comprehensive approach to transnational crime and trafficking in our hemisphere.

Finally, democracy assistance is also a critical component in achieving our goals, and our commitment to democracy and human rights throughout the hemisphere is unwavering. While our security assistance seeks to strengthen democratic institutions threatened by transnational crime, we continue to support human rights activists and fundamental freedoms around the world through democracy programming, including in challenging environments like Nicaragua, Ecuador, Venezuela, and Cuba. As with all our assistance requests, our request reflects the needs as best understood at a particular moment in time. Should the underlying conditions change, we will adjust and discuss our needs with you.

Again, I am pleased to be working with you, and I look forward to continuing our joint efforts to advance U.S. interests and objectives in the Western hemisphere and promote greater prosperity, growth, and security for our region. Thank you very much for your time.