

Statement of the Honorable Liliana Ayalde
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Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, U.S. Department of State
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Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Chairman Salmon, Ranking Member Sires, members of the committee, it is a privilege to join you today. I appreciate the invitation and this subcommittee's continued support for the Administration's efforts to partner with our neighbors in the Western Hemisphere to increase citizen security, particularly through the Central America Regional Security Initiative (CARSI) and the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI).

I wish to focus my comments today on the Administration's and Department's increased efforts, both diplomatic and programmatic, to meet pressing challenges and to galvanize the international community to work more effectively across the region to ensure that our combined efforts are impactful, sustainable, and ultimately successful in thwarting external threats to security, countering local and transnational criminal activities, and strengthening law enforcement capabilities while providing the full range of economic, social, and preventive services to communities at risk. The challenges of crime and violence in the region directly impact U.S. interests

and our own security. We believe that the security needs, rule of law capacity deficits, and requirements for improved quality and quantity of basic government services to citizens of Central America and the Caribbean are beyond the capability of any single nation or donor and that the international approach to coordinating and leveraging our efforts with other donors and multilateral institutions is the best path forward.

My colleagues, Assistant Secretary Brownfield of the Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs and U.S. Agency for International Development Deputy Assistant Administrator Lopes, will speak on CARSI, CBSI, and related citizen security law enforcement, rule of law, and crime prevention programs we are implementing in the region in concert with partner nations. We believe this coordinated approach is critical to the overall success of CARSI and CBSI.

Secretary Kerry recently traveled to Guatemala where he participated in the annual General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS). The theme of this year's OAS General Assembly, "Drug Policy and the Fight Against Drugs in Latin America," helped to highlight the fact that drug trafficking and its corrosive impact on citizens extends beyond Central America, and represents a challenge to all governments and a threat to citizens throughout the hemisphere. At the OAS General Assembly, the

recently released baseline review of current hemispheric drug policies and options for policies pertaining to illicit narcotics was the focal point of discussions.

Secretary Kerry, who was accompanied by Assistant Secretary Brownfield and Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, Gil Kerlikowske, emphasized our common ground with countries of the region in tackling this problem. Secretary Kerry was able to highlight the U.S. successful efforts to reduce our demand for drugs, including our 50 percent reduction in cocaine consumption over the past five years, our commitment to promoting cooperation on supply reduction and demand reduction policies, and our openness to continue the hemispheric dialogue on effective drug policy reform. The drug issue is a subject of importance in our bilateral and multilateral relationships with countries throughout the hemisphere and we look forward to continuing our longstanding efforts on this vital issue.

This idea of shared partnership was also at the heart of President Obama's visit to Costa Rica in May, where he met with the seven Heads of State of the Central American Integration System (SICA) and the Dominican Republic. The meeting reinforced the commitment of the United States to continue working with the region on issues related to security, highlighting CARSI and the \$492 million in U.S. cooperation it has channeled to the

region since 2008. It also built upon our CARSI engagement to emphasize areas that we had not typically included in our citizen security engagement in the region, by highlighting, for example, the connection between security and economic opportunity and prosperity, a critical dynamic that is frequently absent in discussions about challenges facing Central America and the Caribbean.

The United States stressed that the relationship between economic opportunity and security underpins our partnerships across all sectors of society in the region. Our aim is to reinforce security and opportunity in every sense – not only combating crime, but ensuring that human rights are respected and communities are secure in their access to food, energy, education, health care, social services, and financial and economic opportunity. Vice President Biden reinforced this message when he met with Caribbean leaders in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago last month

This was the first time the United States has participated at the Presidential level in a SICA meeting since we were granted observer status in 2011, and I believe the meeting reemphasized our commitment to partnership in the region and tackling the issues of insecurity through joint cooperation.

In April, as part of our effort to strengthen multilateral approaches to supporting Central America, the Department held the first North America – SICA Security Dialogue in Washington between Canada, Mexico, the United States, and the seven SICA countries. The dialogue provided an opportunity to discuss enhancing regional coordination on security programming and specifically focused on the two pragmatic themes of precursor chemicals and violence prevention. It provided a forum where we were able to discuss these two issues and begin the process of bringing additional resources, expertise, and commitment to specific problems faced in both Central and North America.

This Security Dialogue is part of our larger engagement as a member of the Group of Friends (GOF) of Central America. Launched in 2011, the Group of Friends comprises donors, and international financial and multilateral organizations providing citizen security assistance in the region and supporting SICA's Central American Security Strategy. The United States has been active in the Group of Friends process, bolstering our bilateral engagement by ensuring that CARSI and related U.S. government citizen security efforts are aligned with, and responsive to, the SICA Security Strategy's goals. Within the GOF, the U.S, with Colombia and Mexico, chairs the Security Experts Group (SEG), supporting SICA's

Combating Crime Pillar. USAID is working with Germany, the Inter-American Development Bank, and World Bank, among others, supporting the coordination of prevention programming across the region.

In the Caribbean, the United States has partnered with Canada, the European Union, the United Kingdom, and other donor nations to form the Caribbean Security Donors' Group. The aim of this Group is to provide a forum for donor nations to discuss best practices for security assistance in the region and coordinate efforts in order to increase effectiveness and eliminate duplication. The United States has already partnered with Canada and the UK on security assistance programs in the Caribbean, and our Embassies in the region regularly coordinate with other donor nations on the ground in the region.

However, it is not just donor nations that are increasing coordination in an effort to combat insecurity. We are also seeing partner nations demonstrate increased political will and the prioritization of their most pressing citizen security, rule of law, human rights, and prevention challenges, both nationally and regionally. President Chinchilla of Costa Rica has asked the Costa Rican legislature to amend its laws to permit the extradition of Costa Rican citizens involved in organized crime cases. The Guatemalan government, largely through Attorney General Paz y Paz's

work to build the government's investigative and prosecutorial capacities, achieved a 27 percent increase in the number of murder cases brought to trial in Guatemala City over the last two years and an increase of almost 14 percent in general convictions nationwide. Honduran President Lobo has declared 2013 the Year of Prevention and is working to support job training for at-risk youth, community policing, the establishment of safe urban spaces, and juvenile justice reform. In El Salvador, the government's commitment to reducing urban violence has exposed over 6,000 elementary and junior high school students to the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T) program. During 2013, the Government of Panama planned to increase its overall citizen security related spending by nearly 6 percent, with funding for the police, border service, air and naval service, and investigative police increasing by 16.2 percent.

Recently, Dominica passed a comprehensive civil asset forfeiture law with a dedicated forfeiture fund to ensure that seized illicit proceeds are used to strengthen law enforcement, prosecution, and drug abuse treatment and prevention. This is the first such law passed anywhere in the Eastern Caribbean. The Government of Jamaica has embraced a comprehensive police anti-corruption program. This includes the reorganization in partnership with the international community of the Anti-Corruption branch

of the Jamaican Constabulary Force which conducted 188 operations last year resulting in criminal charges against 88 police officers and civilians and the dismissal of another 57 police officers for corruption or ethics violations in 2012.

While these efforts represent a good start, without a sustained effort and commitment by both citizens and leaders to continue their progress, they could be fleeting. As part of our partnership with the region, and in recognition of the significant budgetary challenges we face here at home, we expect to see additional partner nation efforts that will establish the underlying foundations upon which the sustainability and success of our efforts will be built. We must see nations develop professional and accountable police forces that respect the rule of law and human rights; judges and prosecutors free from corruption and with the desire to end the culture of impunity; and political leaders committed to improving the lives and opportunities available to the most vulnerable among their populations.

Through CBSI we have an unprecedented opportunity in the Caribbean. We have the chance to address vulnerabilities in infrastructure, build government and law enforcement capacity, and engage at-risk youth before transnational and other criminal elements take hold. As our efforts in Mexico, Colombia, and Central America are increasingly effective, there is a

real threat of an increase in drug trafficking and associated crime in the Caribbean. It is only through our continued monetary and institutional support, the support and expertise of other donor nations, and the fiscal and policy commitment of our partners in the region that we can prevent an increase in crime in the Caribbean.

As countries in the region take increasing ownership of their citizen security challenges, the United States will continue to work closely together with each partner nation, multilateral organizations such as CARICOM and SICA and within the Group of Friends of Central America and the Caribbean Security Donors' Group to increase the pace of implementation of our assistance programs in the region, seeking to marshal the resources of other nations and multilateral institutions, leveraging our respective efforts, reducing duplicative programming, and ensuring that we do not overwhelm the limited capacity of the region to absorb increased levels of assistance.

As a partner of Central America and the Caribbean, it is the goal of the United States to continue to support these regional and national efforts, and to utilize our diplomatic and political resources, as well as our foreign assistance, to foster enhanced levels of sustained dialogue and collaboration to turn today's citizen security challenges into catalysts for building a more secure and prosperous future for the Hemisphere.