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Guatemala Declaration

XX Ordinary Meeting of the Presidents of Central America, Dominican Republic and Belize

We, the Presidents of the Republics of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and the First Vice President of Panama, together with the Dominican Republic Vice President, and Belize Vice Prime Minister, as Observers, have joined in the city of Guatemala, Republic of Guatemala, on October 18Th and 19Th, 1999.

Celebrating our ordinary meeting in the dawn of a new millennium, and aware of our commitment with integration, we have brought up priority topics from the regional agenda, which have a deep impact in the improvement of the living conditions of the inhabitants, and in creating new development opportunities.

At the end of the present century, we highlight that the Central American countries have achieved peace and important advances in the consolidation of democracy and governability, strengthening of civil governments, respect to human rights and a State of Law, the reform of the State and the economies, as well as a sustainable development. These transformations have given testimony to the world of the extraordinary will of the Central American people to live and prosper in an environment of peace and solidarity.

The devastating consequences brought by the different natural disasters that have affected the region, have made its vulnerability more evident and has put the unique richness of Central America in terms of biodiversity at risk, which represents 10% of the world's heritage of this resource.

We reaffirm that the execution of the Central American Sustainable Development Alliance - ALIDES - is a fundamental element to reduce the vulnerability of Central America, and to achieve the transformation of our societies.

Within the framework of this strategy of transformation, which implies going from reconstruction to sustainable development, we will continue conducting the necessary efforts to insert the region effectively into the world economy, through the implementation of an agenda for competitiveness and sustainable development, based on the quality of our human resources, the effectiveness of our institutions, the competence of our infrastructure and scientific and technological progress.

We reiterate our strong will to face and overcome, the adversities caused by the different kind of disasters, together with our countries.

We highlight that one of the main effects the population suffers due to Nature, is the increase of its vulnerability to diseases and the deterioration in food and nutritional security, as well as the direct impact to physical infrastructure in health, education, housing, and human settlement sectors. So it is essential to give these aspects a privileged situation in the regional integration agenda.

We recognize the solid support of the international community cooperation for the Reconstruction and Transformation of Central America, which has allowed articulating initiatives without precedent, in supporting the population affected by Hurricane Mitch.

We establish that the effects of natural phenomena are magnified and accentuated by external causes, such as the global modification of climate, which involves a shared but differentiated responsibility at an international level, with greater obligations for industrialized countries; as well as by internal causes such as deterioration, degradation and pollution of natural resources; which are conditions that we are able to address and modify, making the best use possible of the mechanisms established in the Framework Convention of the United Nations on Climate Changes, in the area of vulnerability reduction, and the promotion of adaptability to natural phenomena.

We recognize that the actions to be developed to face this thematic of vulnerability reduction and mitigation of damage produced by natural disasters, requires taking advantage of the accumulated experience in disaster management; mainly a regional focus, public and private, as well as in the community, an integral and inter-sector Central American commitment; and an effective articulation at the international, regional, national and local levels, adopting a generalized proactive attitude for the prevention and mitigation of damage that transcends the stage of emergency.

1. Adopt the Strategic Framework for Vulnerability and Disaster Reduction in Central America, which is part of the process of transformation and sustainable development of the region for the next millennium, that includes the basic guidelines on prevention and damage mitigation measures, as well as preparedness and management of emergencies, giving special attention to the most vulnerable groups and sectors of society, especially due to poverty and marginality levels, on a gender basis.

The Strategic Framework, which is an integral part of the present Declaration, constitutes the central axis for the preparation, updating, adequateness and development of regional plans in terms of Vulnerability and Disaster Reduction; Integrated Management and Conservation of Water

Resources; and Prevention and Control of Forest Fires.

2. Establish the Central American Quinquennium for Vulnerability and Disaster Impact Reduction for the period 2000 to 2004, where our efforts will be concentrated in the transformation and search of sustainable development in our societies, trusting on counting with the complementary support of the international community in its execution. Appoint CEPREDENAC to coordinate such Quinquennium.

3. Instruct the Council of Secretaries of Foreign Affairs and the competent Councils of Secretaries of State and sector Forums, so that with the support of the General Secretariat of CAIS, in coordination with the Specialized Regional Institutions, we can accomplish and maintain a close follow-up of the development of this Strategic Framework.

4. Instruct the Central America Security Commission so that it can establish transparent and participative mechanisms of joint action, in coordination with the competent national authorities, within the shortest term possible, for hazard prevention and disaster mitigation in the region, with the support of the corresponding regional institutions.

5. Designate the domestic financial resources that such initiatives might require, according to the possibilities of each country; reiterate our summons of the International Community Cooperation to contribute in the effort of decreasing vulnerability levels in disasters in our Region, and instruct the Council of Secretaries of Foreign Affairs so that it coordinates the international, technical and complementary financial resources management required for the accomplishment of regional scope projects, with the support of the General Secretariat of CAIS, while the government entities will do what is appropriate at a national level.

6. Reiterate the commitment of preserving our seas as an invaluable asset, and reject the use of them as a transportation causeway for nuclear and toxic wastes, since any unforeseen accident could produce a disaster of serious consequences in the Region.

7. Request the Bank Superintends and financial entities in the Central American countries to establish mechanisms for the improvement of the surveillance they exercise in their respective countries, within the framework of their own legislation, increasing the level of global information among them, promoting the homologation of related laws and a coordinated surveillance of the financial intermediaries in the region.

At the same time, request them to promote actions oriented to developing capital markets, and the financial systems of Central America in general, in coordination with the Central American Economic Integration Bank (CAEIB).

8. Manage the complementary financial support of the international community, through creative and innovative mechanisms, in order to support the best possible efforts of the creditor countries in the region, to grant Nicaragua, and Honduras, in its case, the corresponding debt relief within the framework of the Club of Paris.

9. Point out the importance of having an agile and effective commercial and investment controversies solution mechanism, within the institutional framework. To do this, instruct the General Secretariat of the Central American Integration System (GS-CAIS), to the General Secretariat of Central American Economic Integration (SIECA), and the Judicial Advisors of the Chancelleries and Secretaries of Economy, to propose the institutional formula to approve a different solution mechanism in terms of commerce and investment like the one agreed by the Secretaries of Economy of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

10. Recognize the importance that for all countries in the region the approval on behalf of the Congress of the United States of America the approval of the necessary legislation has for broadening the benefits of the Caribbean Basin Initiative. The efforts made by the Presidents of Central America, the President of the Dominican Republic and the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, representing CARICOM, during his visit to Washington, D.C. in September of this year, provided the opportunity for a dialogue with members of the Senate, the Chamber of Representatives and the North American Administration. Instruct our embassies in Washington, D.C., to continue with their efforts and to comply with the follow-up for this important legislation.

11. Instruct the Secretaries of Foreign Affairs so that based on a profound dialogue and a broad reflection, they determine the best way to proceed with the elements still left pending in the Declaration of Panama and the guidelines for Rationalizing and Modernization of the Regional Institution of 12th July, 1997, in a maximum term of three months.

12. Motivate, in its case, the ratification of the Protocol of Kyoto to the Framework Convention of the United Nations on Global Climate Changes; promote a market for the fixation of carbon that allows issuers compensate countries who protect their forests; strengthen the regional dialogue to put into practice the measures for the reduction of gas emissions from the Greenhouse effect and request the industrialized countries to ratify and execute such a Protocol.

13. Express the approval for the complete incorporation of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua into the Mechanism of Political Dialogue and Consensus (Group of Rio).

14. Recognize and celebrate that the return of the Canal to the jurisdiction of the Republic of Panama in compliance of the Treaties, is of an transcendental importance for the International Community and that Panama is prepared to assume its administration and total control. Likewise we outstand the commitment of Panama in operating the Canal to punctually serve international trade and promote sustained growth.

We, the Central American Presidents have decided to celebrate the XXI Ordinary Meeting of Presidents on the second semester of the year 2000 in Costa Rica.

The Presidents of the Republics of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, the First Vice President of Panama, the Vice President of Dominican Republic and the Vice Prime Minister of Belize expressed to the People of the Republic of Guatemala, to its President and to its Government, the most sincere appreciation for the warm welcome and fine attentions and hospitality offered during their visit which contributed to the success of this great event.

Subscribed in the City of Guatemala, Republic of Guatemala on the nineteenth days of the month of October of nineteen hundred ninety nine.

MIGUEL ANGEL RODRIGUEZ
President of the Republic of Costa Rica

FRANCISCO FLORES PEREZ
President of the Republic of El Salvador

ALVARO ARZO IRIGOYEN
President of the Republic of Guatemala

ROBERTO FLORES BERMUDEZ
Secretary of State at the Office of Foreign Affairs
in representation of the President of the Republic of Honduras

EDUARDO MONTEALEGRE
Secretary of Foreign Affairs Of the Republic of Nicaragua

ARTURO VALLARINO
In Representation of the First Vice President
of the Republic of Panama

JAIME DAVID FERNANDEZ
Vice President of the Dominican Republic

JOHN BRICEÑO
Vice Prime Minister of Belize