



**MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY
P.O. Box N-3217
NASSAU, THE BAHAMAS**

**CONFERENCE OF DEFENCE MINISTERS
OF THE AMERICAS (CDMA)
BANFF, ALBERTA, CANADA
2-6 SEPTEMBER 2008**

OPENING REMARKS

**A. MISSOURI SHERMAN-PETER
PERMANENT SECRETARY
MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY
HEAD OF THE DELEGATION
OF THE BAHAMAS**

**PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY
3 SEPTEMBER 2008**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, let me again express the regrets of the Minister of National Security of The Bahamas, the Hon. O.A.T. Turnquest that he is unable to participate in this important Conference. As I indicated earlier, the Minister is preoccupied with the impact of Hurricane Hanna, which is traversing The Bahamas even as we speak. Hanna, is followed by Hurricane Ike, and perhaps Hurricane Josephine.

Mr. Chairman, the establishment of the CDMA in 1995 represented a significant step in hemispheric efforts to secure and preserve peace, security and stability in the Americas. Each CDMA continues to build on the action of others.

Defending national sovereignty and territorial integrity from external aggression remains an important priority for all countries, including the countries of the Americas. However, incidences of inter-state conflict and war are becoming less manifest in the hemisphere and in the world.

Today, security challenges come from a multiplicity of sources, from terrorism to potential threats from weapons of mass destruction, from natural and man made disasters to transnational crime.

Confronting new and emerging security threats requires ongoing re-conceptualization of conventional notions of national security and defence, and particularly their focus on external aggression and war.

The defence and security concerns of states can never be uniform. Each state undoubtedly has its own particular security concerns. The CDMA's collective effort to enhance defence and security must take these varying concerns into consideration, and indeed, it does.

Maintaining law and order, halting and reversing current crime trends, reducing illegal immigration and illicit drugs, arms and human trafficking into and through The Bahamas, are on The Bahamas priority defence and security list.

The Bahamas, and indeed the countries of the Caribbean, are vulnerable to transnational crime, including transnational organized crime. The Bahamas' vulnerability stems from its archipelagic configuration and geographic location in the sea lanes between Central and South America and the Caribbean and North America. Transnational crime is therefore a priority national security concern for The Bahamas.

The Bahamas transnational crime challenges include a persistent and now chronic illicit drug trade and illegal migration now compounded by arms trafficking and human smuggling. New transnational crime activities at sea generally follow established drug trafficking and illegal migration routes, and multiple activities – drugs, illegal migrants, human smuggling and illegal guns may all be part of one complex operation.

The increase in crime and criminality consequent to transnational crime is of serious concern for The Bahamas, The deportation of criminals from other countries, persons who have in some instances committed serious crime, is also a matter to which we have had to turn our attention as well.

Illegal Immigration is a particularly costly security matter for us, with The Bahamas expending some one million dollars annually to repatriate persons from as far away as Uzbekistan. Transnational crime at sea is also an expensive proposition for us, with Government having to expend millions of dollars to fight this problem, including through the acquisition of assets for our sea going forces.

The CDMA permits divergent defence and security concerns of the countries of the Americas to be integrated into a hemispheric consensus on what might be done, both as individual states and collectively, to build confidence through cooperation and collaboration, to enhance hemispheric security.

While it is reasonable to expect that each country will define its own defence and national security compass, there are areas that lend themselves to broad consensus and cooperative hemispheric action, in the context of the CDMA.

For example, the CDMA may encourage signature, ratification and adherence to regional and international instruments, such as the Convention on Transnational Crime and its protocols.

The CDMA may lend its support to regional security arrangements, and it should recognize the contribution to these various arrangements to hemispheric security. The Bahamas is actively participating in the CARICOM regional security regime.

The CDMA may emphasize the importance and support the strengthening of cooperation through regional and hemispheric organizations, including the Inter-American Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CICAD) and Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (CICTE).

The Bahamas supports the initiative to give the CDMA institutional memory, and to implement the courses of action in CDMA's Declaration. In that regard, we were particularly pleased to hear the views of the OAS Secretary General on this matter.

The CDMA might, as appropriate, support pertinent regional and international initiatives, for example, the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI).

Technical and other assistance to developing countries ought to be given strong support by the CDMA, to help these countries address the multiplicity of threats to their national security.

The CDMA should give its support to the exchange of information and ideas within the Hemisphere, especially on best practices in the area of defence, security and crime and criminality.

The CDMA should also give its support to bilateral cooperation among the states of the Americas.

The Bahamas will continue to actively participate in the CDMA process, in the interest of achieving, individually and collectively, the safe and secure hemisphere all our countries want.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.