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AND OTHER RELATED MATERIALS (CIFTA) Original: Portuguese

Consultative Committee

Twentieth Regular Meeting

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Washington, D.C.

REMARKS BY ARTHUR WEINTRAUB, SECRETARY FOR MULTIDIMENSIONAL SECURITY, AT THE OPENING SESSION OF THE TWENTIETH MEETING OF THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE OF THE INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION AGAINST
THE ILLICIT MANUFACTURING OF AND TRAFFICKING IN FIREARMS, AMMUNITION, EXPLOSIVES, AND OTHER RELATED MATERIALS (CIFTA)

Distinguished Ambassador Luz Elena Baños Rivas, Permanent Representative of Mexico to the OAS, Pro-Tempore Secretary of the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials;

Ambassadors, heads of delegation, OAS officials, esteemed participants at this Twentieth Meeting of the Consultative Committee of the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials (CIFTA):

Good afternoon.

I am honored to be opening this virtual meeting.

I would be remiss if I failed to begin my remarks by extending the warmest of thanks to Mexico for its leadership on the issue of firearms in the Americas, which since 2017 has been serving as the CIFTA Pro-Tempore Secretariat. Thanks to its efforts, important forums for dialogue between the Convention’s states parties have been reactivated. In addition to the annual meetings of the Consultative Committee, the Fourth Conference of States Parties was successfully held in Mexico City in 2018.

These interactions between national authorities is fundamental for governments to be able to discuss and adapt their strategies to the constant changes in criminal patterns in the region.

In recent years, we have seen how organized groups, with increasing sophistication and complexity, have expanded their operations and dominated the illicit arms trafficking market. Those groups’ vertical structures have been replaced by networked organizations, which allow the division of tasks and the specialization of processes, resulting in the greater efficiency and profitability of illicit businesses and increasing the difficulty of identifying and investigating offenders. This year, with the COVID-19 pandemic, we witnessed these criminal structures’ enormous capacity to adapt, as they explored new routes and expanded the illicit flow of weapons and drugs.

The pandemic served only to exacerbate a problem that was already severely affecting the region’s countries. According to the United Nations 2020 Global Study on Firearms Trafficking, Central and South America, together with Western Asia, account for 80% of arms trafficking destinations. In addition to being a destination for external trafficking, the region is also affected by internal trafficking, at both the both subregional and national levels, on account of the relative ease with which organized groups can divert legal weapons to illicit markets.

We cannot and must not minimize the impact of those flows and those crimes on the citizens of the Americas. Regrettably, despite our governments’ efforts, the region remains one of the most violent in the world. While the average global homicide rate in 2017 was 6.2 per 100,000 inhabitants, the Americas registered the world’s highest regional rate, with 17.2 murders for every 100,000 people.

The availability of firearms and unrestricted access to them have been identified by experts as risk factors that help explain these high rates of lethal violence. In the Americas, firearms are used in almost 75% of murders,[[1]](#footnote-1)/ according to the United Nations 2019 Global Study on Homicide.

It is therefore clear that the firearms trafficking impacts society in different ways and represents one of the main problems and challenges for global security.

For that reason, it is vitally important to activate specialized political forums and combine our efforts in the fight against organized crime and firearms trafficking. And therein lies the importance of CIFTA. Ratified by 31 of the 34 of the OAS member states, this is a pioneering convention that enables us to address the topic in a coordinated, transnational way.

I am convinced that holding regular meetings of the CIFTA Consultative Committee is one of the best mechanisms for designing coordinated and comprehensive strategies. In 2018, at the Fourth Conference of the CIFTA States Parties, the signatory countries took another significant step in combating arms trafficking. The adoption of the Second Course of Action of CIFTA, covering the 2018–2022 period, equips the region’s countries with a road map for action for establishing priorities and meeting the Convention’s obligations and recommendations. In 2019, the General Assembly agreed to establish a Voluntary Fund to strengthen the operation of CIFTA’s mechanisms, which received an initial contribution from Mexico.

In addition, within the OAS Secretariat for Multidimensional Security, we are also supporting the countries in building their capacities to comply with their obligations under CIFTA, as we will see during this meeting. Our programs prioritize improving countries’ capacities to regulate and control the entire firearms cycle, including marking, handling, storage, and destruction. We also support countries in improving their resources for investigating, pursuing, and prosecuting crimes linked to illicit trafficking. With those actions, we provide the countries with direct support in line with the specific needs of each subregion. In particular, the Caribbean and Central America—two subregions heavily hit by armed violence—benefited from our projects.

As the CIFTA Technical Secretariat, we reiterate our commitment to continue supporting the countries. This meeting is yet another indicator of the priority position that the issue of firearms occupies on the Hemisphere’s public security agenda. With that in mind, I wish you every success at this event. May you use this forum for dialogue in the most productive way, leading to concrete commitments and actions for promoting the multidimensional security of our communities.

Thank you very much for your attention.

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1. . Global Study on Homicide, 2019, UNODC. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)