**INTER-AMERICAN COMMITTEE AGAINST TERRORISM (CICTE)**

TWENTY-FIRST REGULAR SESSION OEA/Ser.L/X.2.21

October 7-8, 2021 CICTE/INF. 7/21

Washington, D.C. 14 October 2021

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REMARKS BY MRS. ALISON AUGUST TREPPEL, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

OF THE INTER-AMERICAN COMMITTEE AGAINST TERRORISM (CICTE),

AT THE TWENTY-FIRST REGULAR SESSION

October 8, 2021

**REMARKS OF CICTE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**

**ALISON AUGUST TREPPEL DURING CICTE’S 21ST PERIOD OF SESSIONS**

I am very pleased to report on CICTE’s accomplishments over the last year and to forecast some of the priorities we expect to pursue over the remainder of 2021 and into 2022.

This last year has been an extraordinary one for all of us given the ongoing pandemic. Nonetheless, the CICTE Secretariat has continued to implement important new and existing security programs in the field to prevent and counter terrorism. In addition, we have redoubled our efforts to adapt these programs to COVID times.

In implementing this work, we have collaborated closely with the donor community and beneficiary countries. We also continue to work closely with the broader international community, including the United Nation’s counter terrorism bodies, to ensure we are aligned and informed about other global efforts.

Against this background, I would like to highlight a few of the initiatives we carried out in 2020 to support our Member States.

To begin with, CICTE worked with almost a half dozen states to update or develop their National Cybersecurity Strategies. Now 17 states in the region have such strategies and our goal is to continuously encourage member states to adopt such strategies and update them as necessary.

CICTE also hosted the third meeting of the Working Group on Confidence Building Measures in Cyberspace. You will hear more about the results of this meeting in just a bit, but the Secretariat was particularly pleased to report on our progress in developing, among other things, a portal of focal points and a transparent policy repository related to cybersecurity matters.

In total CICTE’s cybersecurity program trained last year over 1,000 public and private sector officials through education courses; trainings and special events such as the Cybersecurity Symposium and the Cybersecurity Summer Bootcamp. We also continued to publish data-driven reports on diverse cybersecurity topics.

Finally, we continued to promote and help cyber incident response teams through the CSIRTAmericas network, a hemispheric platform that promotes information sharing among 30 CSIRTS from 20 OAS member states. We are always seeking new participation in this incredibly important network and encourage interested Member States to reach out us if they would like to join.

I’ll turn now to key accomplishments from other security areas:

During 2020, CICTE continued to develop another important network – one that links counter terrorism authorities from throughout the Hemisphere in order to quickly and efficiently address terrorist threats. You heard a bit about this yesterday during the intervention from the United States. Over the past year we have hosted several virtual meetings of this network and a recent survey we conducted indicates that participating Member States endorse the direction of the Network and are finding it to be a valuable new tool. Again, we would welcome participation from any Member States who have not yet joined the Network so you can benefit from this timely information-sharing platform.

Over the last year, CICTE also launched a program to promote biosecurity and biosafety in the Americas. Under this program, CICTE is conducting a thorough analysis of relevant legislation in seven countries, and we are hoping to include an eighth shortly. We are also developing two massive open online courses on biosafety and biosecurity – one for policy makers and the other for technicians.

In addition, we provided legislative support and capacity building to strengthen strategic trade regimes in Panama and the Dominican Republic consistent with U.N. Security Council Resolution 1540, a key global instrument for non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. And we were very pleased that the Chair of that group –Ambassador de la Fuente of Mexico -- was able to make an intervention yesterday.

In the maritime space, we supported - together with the Regional Security System - eight states in the Eastern Caribbean to develop national maritime security strategies, as well as a comprehensive regional strategy for that region. In addition, we published the first regional report on maritime and cybersecurity readiness and spearheaded an effort to review how Member States can promote gender equality in the maritime sector.

Regarding aviation, we are proud to report that CICTE is launching a new program to support increased security in the this sector. In light of the rapid change in technology and the toll that the pandemic has taken on the aviation industry, we believe this new program will support Member States in their efforts to prevent and counter internal and external threats to the aviation ecosystem.

In the tourism and cargo security areas, we are working continuously to strengthen the capacities of officials to safeguard public spaces and promote greater security measures in trade and border crossings more generally. We are also developing new online training programs for front line officials in the customs, maritime and other border management areas.

We also implemented two different programs to counter terrorism financing in the Hemisphere. One was was a 3-year initiative to reinforce targeted financial sanctions systems and terrorist domestic designations regimes in Panama and Paraguay. A second program addressed threats and vulnerabilities related to terrorism financing activities in the Tri Border Area of Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay. CICTE continues to respond to requests from member states to receive capacity building training and legislative assistance to prevent and counter terrorist and proliferation financing threats in the Americas.

In addition to these concrete programs I have just listed, CICTE also continued its efforts to promote policy dialogue on preventing and countering terrorism. For example, with the collaboration of CARICOM IMPACs, we hosted a virtual event this past summer that brought together a wide range of authorities from throughout the Caribbean to assess evolving terrorism and other security-related challenges.

Of course, none of these efforts would be possible without your support. As you know, CICTE is funded almost exclusively from voluntary funds and we are very grateful to those OAS member states, Permanent Observers and other partners who support our work, either through financial or in-kind contributions throughout the year. Special thanks to the Governments of Canada, the United States, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Panama, Estonia, the Netherlands, Spain, and the United Kingdom, from the European Union, from our private sector partners at Citi Foundation, CISCO, Amazon Web Services and Trend Micro, and from the Inter-American Development Bank, the Caribbean Development Bank, and Global Partners Digital.

But we would like to do more. And we would specifically welcome additional support in three key areas:

First, Member States may recall that we organized a series of webinars last year around the issue of violent extremism, a growing concern in our Hemisphere. That experience provided important inputs for a new CICTE program that we will soon be launching to prevent and counter violent extremism in our region, and we would be grateful for your support of this effort in the months ahead.

Secondly, largely as a result of our successes in the maritime and port security area, including our strategy development work, the Secretariat has received a number of requests from Member States for additional assistance in this field. This is a key economic industry for so many of our states – for trade and for maintaining our supply chains. I am particularly grateful to the government of Mexico for their tradition of seconding a Naval Officer to CICTE, but the Secretariat is seeking additional technical and financial support to expand our programming portfolio in this regard.

And third, as we have heard mentioned over the past 2 days, next year we will observe the 20th anniversary of the Inter-American Convention against Terrorism, a landmark international instrument. The Secretariat remains hopeful that the first Conference of States Party to the Convention could take place next year. We would welcome support around the organization of that event to help realize the vision of that important multilateral agreement, to which 24 Member States are currently Party.

I will close my remarks by offering my thanks to the Governments of the Dominican Republic and the Government of Guyana for their interest in CICTE’s work and for their support of this Committee and its Secretariat. It has been my distinct pleasure to work with each of these member states in the lead up to this meeting.

I also want to thank each of your governments – and particularly our National Points of Contact -- for your commitment to supporting CICTE’s mission. Without your encouragement and your support, we would not be able to accomplish all that we have achieved over the last year.

I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to recognize the incredible contributions of the entire Secretariat. I wish I could name them all, since it is only through their extremely capable hands that we have been able to achieve so much success, but I thank each and every one of them. Special thanks for the ongoing support of my Deputy, Violanda Botet, our invaluable administrative officer, Carmela Burbano, and also to Ana Perez-Katz for organizing this annual meeting.

Finally, I’d just like to recall, as others have done earlier, the recent twentieth anniversary of September 11 and how important it is for states to remain focused on safeguarding their security, both individually and collectively. As one author has noted “Persistence and resilence only comes from having been given the chance to work through difficult problems”. Our focus in CICTE remains to help states be prepared, resilient and proactive in addressing and preventing terrorism in the Americas. We remain committed to helping all member states in this important endeavor.

Thank you very much.

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