**SIXTH MEETING OF MINISTERS AND HIGH AUTHORITIES** OEA/Ser.K/XVIII.6

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CLOSING REMARKS BY KIM OSBORNE

 EXECUTIVE SECRETARY FOR INTEGRAL DEVELOPMENT (SEDI), OAS

**Closing Remarks by Kim Osborne**

**Executive Secretary for Integral Development (SEDI), OAS**

**SIXTH MEETING OF MINISTERS AND HIGH AUTHORITIES OF**

**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

**December 8, 2021**

**12:30 PM**

Good afternoon.

Distinguished delegates,

Distinguished member states and partners.

As we come to the end of these two days of discussions, allow me to express my deep appreciation to all our member states and partners who have joined us for this meeting.

While this meeting coincided with a few other similar events in the region, I am deeply grateful that 31 member states dedicated time to participate in the discussions on such a critical topic for our region.

Minister Vaz, on behalf of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development, and its Secretariat – the Secretariat for Integral Development –

I congratulate you on your leadership of this Ministerial, and thank you and your team for the dedication in the preparation and conduct of this meeting. Our thanks also to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Permanent Mission of Jamaica to the OAS, for their hard work in preparing for this meeting.

It is not often that Meetings of Ministers move beyond dialogue and declarations. This Ministerial resulted in a very tangible first for our region: the Youth Academy on Transformative Technologies. I thank Jamaica for its insistence, at the outset, to have a meeting with tangible results. I can safely say: mission accomplished. All of this was possible under your leadership, Minister, and so I thank you and your country for that.

The young people of our Hemisphere now have a dedicated mechanism for accessing training and acquiring the skills and certification necessary for their full participation in the digital and virtual economies, bringing our region one step closer to bridging the technological gap with other regions of the World.

Next week, we will join Meta/Facebook to launch the first training and certification in Augmented Reality (AR) under the Academy.

Yet an important outcome of this Ministerial was the announcement of the first two Centers of Excellence of Prospecta Americas – from Hidalgo, Mexico on Blockchain and from Barranquilla, Colombia, on Robotics and Artificial Intelligence. We thank both countries for their contributions to this meeting and for agreeing to host a Center of Excellence, and I encourage member states and partners to join Mexico and Colombia in expanding the work of these two Centers, and also consider hosting a Center at one of your research facility or institution of higher learning.

The need for data to drive our decision making is more critical than ever. Our partners are ready and willing to join forces with us and we should embrace the opportunities presented to change the trajectory of our region.

By working together, we can in this region, become leaders in science, technology and innovation in the world.

Distinguished member states, the *Declaration of Jamaica* challenges us to concrete actions. I want to highlight one key element of the Declaration, that is, to embark on deepening regional collaboration and cooperation to ensure connectivity for all in the Americas. In the Declaration, Ministers and High Authorities agreed to elevate this recommendation to the upcoming Summit of the Americas; an urgent priority to close the digital divide and promote secure, reliable broadband services at affordable prices in all of our member states, with a special focus on access for women, youth, rural and indigenous communities, and individuals within traditionally underrepresented populations.

I hope that we will have the cooperation of all member states in ensuring that this aspect of the Declaration moves up to the Summit of the Americas.

Having approved the Declaration is only the first step. The real work begins now, as we start to prepare the Plan of Action over the next few months to implement the commitments that we have all made under the Declaration – commitments that the countries of our Hemisphere have expressed that they want, and that all citizens deserve.

In closing, I would like to thank the team at SEDI, Maryse Robert, Cesar Parga, and Aryanne Quintal, for their hard work in organizing this meeting.

Distinguished member states, rest assured of the continued commitment of my Secretariat to continue to do all we can to ensure that we build the necessary partnerships, coalitions and alliances, with our member states to drive innovation in our countries, and address collectively the challenges that we face.

Again, I thank you for your participation, I thank Jamaica for their leadership of this process, and I wish a good day to all.

Thank you.

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