

Meeting of Experts on Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs)

Lincoln P. Bloomfield, Jr., Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs
Remarks to Organization of American States Summit-mandated Meeting of Experts on CSBMs
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Mr. Assistant Secretary General, Mr. President, Vice-Ministers, delegates, experts, observers, civil society representatives, guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Evaluation -- A Record of Success

At the 1994 Miami Summit of the Americas, our presidents and leaders endorsed CSBMs as a means of sustaining democracy and economic development in the region.

Since 1994, the Western Hemisphere has considered its own unique circumstances in successfully crafting and establishing a regime of confidence and security building measures. These are a major foundation of our hemisphere's overall political and security architecture. Over the past decade, this hemisphere has successfully defined its own process and identified its own transparency and confidence building measures. Building mutual confidence is now a priority on the agenda of each of our states. We have achieved great progress in building mutual confidence at the bilateral, sub-regional and regional levels. The examples of sub-regional advances are abundant, and we need look no further than to the Southern Cone and what has occurred with relations among the MERCOSUR member states, to Central America and their Democratic Security Treaty, and to the Andean region and their Andean Charter for Peace and Security.

Just last November, the Ministers of Defense of our Hemisphere, at the Fifth Defense Ministerial of the Americas (DMA), underlined the need to increase confidence building and transparency in the Hemisphere. This was the fifth time our Defense Ministers have considered CSBMs at the DMA. The issue is now a main staple of bilateral, sub-regional, and regional meetings in the Hemisphere on defense and security issues.

Indeed, since that first call almost a decade ago in Miami by our presidents and leaders, several historic events have charted a common path in this critical phase of Inter-American cooperative efforts to build security, especially the 1994 Buenos Aires Governmental Experts' Meeting, the 1995 Santiago Conference, and the 1998 San Salvador Conference. The Buenos Aires Meeting began the rich dialogue on CSBMs. The two regional conferences built on this dialogue, and the CSBMs developed by Santiago and San Salvador have strengthened regional military-to-military relations, reduced inter-state tensions, and fostered cooperation and security among the democratic states of the region.

In addition, we have established a very significant CSBM for the Americas -- the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions, which is legally binding on the states parties. This unprecedented Convention is a significant achievement for the OAS and our Hemisphere, and it lays an important cornerstone in constructing an Inter-American foundation for peace. The United States encourages states to consider signing and ratifying the Convention.

Today, there is consensus in the Hemisphere on the value of CSBMs. Our governments' activities in this area also reinforce the basic tenet that participation by civilian and military officials, in partnership, constitutes an important factor in the development and implementation of CSBMs.

The most striking aspect of this Summit-mandated Experts' Meeting is the resolute determination of all our states to strengthen confidence with their hemispheric neighbors and partners.

Additional Opportunities for the Americas

Indeed, this Hemisphere has long possessed such determination, and the OAS and its member states have been in the vanguard of encouraging and implementing confidence and security building measures. We should all take pride and satisfaction in this.

The first generation of CSBMs, set in motion by the Buenos Aires, Santiago and San Salvador conferences, have each had a major impact in our region and in a short period of time have collectively demonstrated their usefulness. The development, implementation, and eventual assessment of future measures is necessary to ensure that we do not stand still, but continue to build on our progress. That is why we support the call for the establishment, within the OAS framework, of a permanent forum for confidence and security building to review and evaluate existing CSBMs and to discuss, consider, and propose new CSBMs. Mr. Chairman, this is why we also support the identification of new measures for states to consider and the release of an illustrative list of CSBMs for states to develop on a bilateral, sub-regional, and regional basis.

Traditional CSBMs have well-defined goals. CSBMs seek to reduce the risk of armed conflict stemming from misunderstanding, mistrust, or misinterpretation. They strive to decrease international tensions by slowing down or reversing the dangerous interaction between spiraling suspicions, arms races, and military hostility. Moreover, CSBMs contribute to arms control and disarmament by encouraging increased transparency in military affairs.

Admittedly, though, traditional CSBMs do not address the non-traditional threats, concerns, and other challenges to hemispheric security that now affect many states throughout the hemisphere. In the 21st century, these transnational threats, concerns, and other challenges confronting hemispheric security necessitate a new generation of CSBMs. These new threats, concerns, and other challenges are distinct from traditional threats because they often do not warrant a strictly military response. Rather, multifaceted responses by the appropriate national institutions are necessary to address the law enforcement, environmental, social, and health aspects of these transnational issues.

Thus a new generation of non-military CSBMs is required. These measures to promote transparency, dialogue, cooperation, and trust in non-military areas would bolster hemispheric security by improving coordinated, multilateral responses to non-traditional threats, concerns, and other challenges to hemispheric security.

We therefore strongly support this Experts Meeting and its recommendations regarding the application of non-military CSBMs to our governments and to the May Special Conference on Security in Mexico.

This Conference will contribute to a new page in the history of our CSBMs process. It is an historic opportunity for all of us to find better ways of cooperating to advance our mutual security, which is so essential, not only to our political relations, but also to our ability to build an economic community that benefits all of our people and spreads opportunity to our citizens. Let us take this opportunity, then, to build a stronger, more peaceful, and democratic Hemisphere for the citizens of the Americas.

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