



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA
TO THE
ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES

Washington, DC, August 16, 2001

His Excellency Hernan R. Castro H.
Chairman, Permanent Council
Office of the Chairman
Organization of American States
Washington, DC 20006

Excellency,

I have the honour to forward a copy of a Statement which was made on behalf of Ambassador Odeen Ishmael during the discussion on the Inter-American Democratic Charter on August 15, 2001.

Ambassador Ishmael, who is presently out of Washington, DC, has asked that this statement be circulated to all member countries, and Permanent Observer Missions to the Organization of American States.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Critchlow". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D".

Donnette Critchlow
for
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA
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**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR ODEEN ISHMAEL
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF GUYANA TO THE OAS
DURING DISCUSSIONS ON THE
INTER-AMERICAN DEMOCRATIC CHARTER
WASHINGTON, DC, 15 AUGUST 2001**

Today, the countries of the Americas are making steady progress toward the formation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas, which will be the start of a firm economic union of all the countries of the Americas. As the peoples of the Americas draw fundamental benefits from this economic union, they will demand more closeness, and venture to say that before the next decade the leaders of regions of the hemisphere will be seriously planning regional political unions. It is easy to predict that not too long after, the political leadership of the various regions will surely begin talking about what can be termed the Union of the Americas.

But the expansion of hemispheric unity, economic or political, can only come about with expanding democracy. Our leaders and our peoples realize this fact, and that is why the leaders of the Americas established a mandate for the development of an Inter-American Democratic Charter.

Democracy has to be enriched based on the experience of our history. Today we talk about expanding democracy. Democracy itself, as a pattern of government and a system of belief, has been going through an evolution since the idea emerged out of Greek political economy and culture nearly three thousand years ago. In this hemisphere, we have reached a stage when we now boast of achieving representative democracy, as expressed in the OAS Charter of 1948. It is now necessary for our elected representatives to move representative democracy a number of steps further to make it more qualitative. They must apply consultative and participatory democracy by involving minorities and women in the process. In so doing a purer form of democracy will further evolve.

We must remind ourselves that everything is always changing. This doctrine that everything is in a state of change was debated even as far back as during the era of the classical Greek Philosophers. The process of change will have its pitfalls, and there will be times when it may be necessary for us to take one step forward and two steps back. Plato summed up this doctrine very clearly when he wrote: "You cannot step twice into the same river, the fresh waters are ever flowing in upon you".

Furthermore, we cannot have sustained democracy if we do not tackle the problem of poverty. How long can the poor people of our hemisphere continue to listen to our political leaders and international policy makers debate countless suggested proposals to easy poverty? We must be reminded that when people have a perception that action is too slow, they will want to carry out their own actions, which can lead to destabilization and changes in the pattern of democratic development. The poverty-stricken people living in our countries may be as poor as Job, but not as patient!

At the same time, the multilateral financial institutions also have a moral duty to protect democracy.

Many poor countries become heavily indebted because the multilateral financial institutions (MFIs) granted large loans years ago to the then despotic regimes which had no interest in promoting democracy. In reality, the MFIs propped up these non-democratic regimes which, after periods of long struggle by democratic forces, were replaced by democratic governments. Today, these democratic governments are being pressured to repay the heavy debt. Those which are negotiating debt relief are also constrained in their development because of the unreasonable conditionalities by the MFIs - conditionalities which put pressures on their economic and social programs. By not being able to deliver quick development for the benefit of their people, the entire fabric of democracy becomes threatened, because impatient people may turn against the very democracy which sympathize with their problems. Thus, we are left to wonder if the MFIs are really fulfilling a mandate for democracy since their slow process concerning debt relief for poor countries is not really helping to bring quick relief to those fledgling democracies.

Mr. Chairman, as we consider the terms of the Inter-American Democratic Charter we must also make a firm statement that no country which has political and economic problems with another should use its international influence to slow down development in the latter. For when this happens, the country which may be affected by the reduction in investments and economic development can face internal and external destabilization, and thus have its democratic systems undermined. Democracy must be all-encompassing and all of our countries, despite whatever differences they may have from time to time, have a responsibility to assist in protecting, developing and expanding each other's democracy.

Mr. Chairman, the delegation of Guyana is committed to working closely with our colleague Member States of CARICOM as well as other subregions in concluding the proposed Charter.

I thank you.