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DECLARATION ON DRUG POLICY IN THE ANDEAN REGION

Dec. 15, 2011

The following signatories are members of the Carter Center and International IDEA's Andean-United States Dialogue Forum, which has met from 2010 to 2011 and in which prominent people from various sectors in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, the United States, and Venezuela participated. After a debate on the alternatives to current drug policy presented in the forthcoming report, *"Drug Policy in the Andes: Seeking Humane and Effective Alternatives,"* we have reached the following conclusions and recommendations:

1) Drug policies have not had the desired results. There are partial and short-term successes, but failure has prevailed. The threats derived from drugs, delinquency, and organized crime continue. The international debate on new approaches that focus on reducing the harm caused to the weakest sectors of society that are affected by the production, trafficking, and consumption of drugs has gained great momentum with the work of the Latin American Commission on Drugs and Democracy and the Global Commission on Drug Policy. Policy makers, regional experts, and activists are searching for new strategies to contain growing illicit markets and to minimize the harm done to people, communities, and states **We recommend broadening the debate in a plural and rigorous manner, with the participation of all relevant state institutions as well as the largest possible spectrum of health experts, media, NGOs, social and community organizations, churches, and academics.**

2) The narrow range of policies currently in place and unilateral evaluations of drug policies have not permitted an integral vision of this complex phenomenon and have hindered mutual understanding among Andean nations, and between these countries and the United States. **We recommend reinforcing the dialogue and consolidating the agreements among Andean countries, hosting a regional meeting to discuss the construction of a common agenda regarding drug policy and institutionalizing UNASUR's South American Council on the World Drug Problem.**

3) The strategy of forced eradication of small-scale coca production has produced transitory and counterproductive results on a social and environmental level and has strained relations between neighboring countries. Furthermore, the substitution of crops is unsuccessful when it does not guarantee small farmers real alternatives for income generation or the provision of basic services. **We recommend redirecting resources towards integral rural development and adjusting strategies to each local context in order to reduce the crops destined for illicit markets.**

4) Drug consumption is growing across the Andean sub-region and prisons are overpopulated with those carrying drugs for personal consumption or small-scale dealers, many of whom, during their incarceration, become problematic drug users and involved in criminal organizations. **We recommend constructing a strong education and health policy aimed at the prevention of consumption and the treatment of those who need it, as well as alternatives to incarceration for those who commit minor, nonviolent offenses.**

5) The corruption associated with drug trafficking-related crime weakens already fragile institutions and deepens insecurity. The response to transnational crime should not be reduced to military action. **We recommend reorienting law enforcement efforts toward dismantling criminal networks and organizations linked to drug trafficking; improving and targeting intelligence gathering efforts; changing the way in which policy is put into practice; strengthening institutions; confronting corruption; and empowering communities, particularly those located in border areas.**

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