



OAS Assistant Secretary General calls for recognition of food security as a political issue

Assistant Secretary General of the OAS, Ambassador Albert Ramdin, met with the Director General of IICA, Chelston Brathwaite, in Costa Rica today.

San Jose, Costa Rica, February 5, 2009 (IICA). During a visit to the headquarters of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), Assistant Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS), Ambassador Albert Ramdin, said that food security had become a political rather than a technical issue. When people do not have enough food, trouble starts, there are protests and sometimes governments even fall.

Ambassador Ramdin was welcomed by the Director General of IICA, Chelston Brathwaite, who viewed the visit as an excellent opportunity to reaffirm the ties between the OAS and the Institute.

Ramdin was accompanied by the OAS Representative in Costa Rica, Ambassador Patricio Zuquilanda, and an advisor to the Assistant Secretary General, Carlos Manuel Echeverria.

At a working lunch, Brathwaite and Ramdin discussed, among other topics, IICA's role as an institutional partner of the Summit of the Americas process, and preparations for the Fifth Summit of the Americas, to be held in April in Trinidad and Tobago.

The ambassador called attention to the fact that a Summit was being held for the first time in a country in the Caribbean. In his judgment, because this will be the first opportunity for many Heads of State and Government to participate in this multilateral process, what will come out of Port of Spain will be a fresh and holistic look at the problems of the hemisphere.

What is needed, he said, is a new vision of the Inter-American System and of how to promote peace and unity in the Americas.

Aware that declarations issued at this type of summit are not enough by themselves, he was confident this one would yield concrete and quantifiable initiatives focused on the day-to-day problems of people in areas such as education, security, poverty, health and food insecurity.

Agriculture and rural life also will be on the agenda of the meeting. In this regard, he recognized the role the Institute has played and the leadership of the Director General in repositioning both.

At the OAS, he said, it pleases us to see that more recognition is being given to IICA's role. Under the leadership of Chelston Brathwaite, the Institute, as the agency specialized in agriculture and in helping the countries to improve their production capacity, is now assuming a more preeminent role in the Inter-American System.

Without a doubt, when it comes to matters involving agriculture, development and rural life, the inter-American institution par excellence is IICA, he added.

For Ambassador Ramdin, there is a need for greater coordination among inter-American institutions such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the OAS, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and IICA because, in his judgment, agriculture and food security no longer refer only to producing food, but also to improving the quality of life for people in rural areas.

In his opinion, young people must feel that there is a future for them in the countryside. If we can make rural areas more attractive and young people can build a future there, rural life will improve.

Prior to his visit to IICA, Ambassador Ramdin met with senior staff of the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. Tomorrow, he will meet with the President of Costa Rica, Oscar Arias, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Bruno Stagno.

More information

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Listen to the complete interview at:

mms://zeus.iica.ac.cr/OnDemand/AudioIICA/2009/Entrevista_Albert_Ramdin_Secretario_General_Adjunto_OEA_2009.wma