

**Vision Statement: proposals and initiatives  
of  
CARICOM Candidate Albert R. Ramdin  
for the position of Secretary General 2025-2030**

**OAS Permanent Council  
Washington D.C.  
10 February 2025 – OAS Headquarters**

Chairman of the Permanent Council, Ambassador Hector Arce  
Assistant Secretary General, Ambassador Nestor Mendez,  
I especially recognize the presence of Minister Andre Arnaldo Tinoco of Costa Rica,  
My colleague from Paraguay, Minister Lezcano Ramirez,  
Distinguished Permanent Representatives,  
Delegates,  
Staff of the OAS General Secretariat,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my distinct privilege to be in this building again. This time as the candidate for the position of Secretary General, with the intention of working with you, to advance and revitalize the OAS, its goals and purpose, for greater impact and facing the future with optimism and resolve.

During my term as the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Suriname, before that as the Assistant Secretary General of the OAS, and even further back when I served as Assistant Secretary General of CARICOM, I worked with each of your countries. At different times, I have visited all countries in our hemisphere, carefully listening and taking notes of the views of member states, and sharing perspectives on substantive issues of peace, security and development.

**He convivido con la diversidad de nuestra América. Somos el conjunto de historias diversas y de diferentes niveles de desarrollo y sistemas jurídicos. En especial nos une la riqueza de nuestros idiomas, culturas, músicas y gastronomía.**

**Creo que la OEA, como principal institución hemisférica, representa esta diversidad y una oportunidad para construir un futuro brillante para nuestra gente. Ese es el alto propósito que debe cumplir la OEA a través de sus acciones, iniciativas y políticas.**

**Este compromiso con el bienestar de nuestras poblaciones me guió en mi trabajo en el sector privado. Cuando trabajé con una de las mayores empresas mineras de la región, puse en primer lugar la seguridad y el bienestar de nuestras comunidades y el desarrollo responsable y sostenible.**

**En mis años de servicio en la región, he tenido el honor de trabajar a su lado en tiempos de crisis y de celebraciones. Juntos, en nuestras conversaciones, tanto privadas como públicas, hemos forjado soluciones ante los retos que enfrentamos. Retos dentro de nuestras fronteras como con nuestros vecinos y nuevos aliados. Hemos trabajado mano a mano, en un entorno de respeto profundo y confianza mutua.**

**Todos somos muy conscientes del panorama que tenemos ante nosotros. Nuestro hemisferio se enfrenta a enormes retos y a diversas necesidades, objetivos y aspiraciones. La historia nos ha mostrado que ante estos retos, debemos crear espacios para nuevas ideas, oportunidades y soluciones.**

I observed firsthand the diversity our Americas represent with different histories, levels of development, legal systems, languages, cultures and cuisine. I believe that OAS as the premier hemispheric institution represents this diversity and an opportunity to build a bright future ahead. That is the stature and relevance the OAS must demonstrate through its actions, initiatives and policies.

During my time in the private sector while serving as an executive at one of the largest mining companies in the region, the security and wellbeing of this region, was my priority.

I have stood beside you in times of crisis and in moments of celebration. Together, in our private and public conversations, we have found solutions to challenges within our borders, among our neighbors and with new partners. We have collaborated in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust.

We are each acutely aware of the landscape before us. Our hemisphere is confronted by enormous challenges and diverse needs, goals and aspirations. Yet I believe these challenges and crises are creating space for new thinking and opportunities.

With this in mind, I want to tell you the story of a boy who lived in a small South American country.

This little boy studied hard – but didn't just learn lessons from text books. He studied the world around him, he learned from the generations before him.

His parents fostered within him values and skills to navigate the numerous challenges he faced. When he thought about the future, he was determined to face it with optimism.

This boy dreamed of a world where hard work and strength of character, matched with education and access to resources and opportunity, would lead to the quality of life future generations would be proud of.

He dreamed of a world where citizens would not be forced to seek opportunity in foreign lands, but would enjoy peace, security, stability and access to explore and develop the resources of their own land.

Today, that dream is still alive and that young Surinamese boy stands before you - with less hair, mostly grey, but more hope, dedication and commitment than ever before.

Friends, there is a lot of work to be done. It will not be easy and the road ahead is long, but I am determined to walk with you through these demanding times and look to the future with hope.

I see the challenges facing the hemisphere and confronting the OAS and I am painfully aware of the issues of our region, but as a lifelong optimist, I commit to finding opportunities to take this organization forward, making it more effective, streamlined and responsive.

Colleagues, much like my own country Suriname, where significant oil and gas finds have been announced, and where we have signed the Final Investment Decision (FID) with a multinational energy operator, I believe our hemisphere is also standing at a crossroad. The path we choose, will determine what kind of future we have.

Esteemed representatives, allow me to tell you about my journey in getting here today. From 2005 to 2015 I worked alongside Secretary General José Miguel Insulza, serving as the Assistant Secretary General of the OAS.

In those greatly inspiring ten years my vision for the hemisphere was captured in the theme “People, Peace and Prosperity”. Secure, peaceful, and healthy democracies, enabled by sound economies in which all citizens have a part in.

It is my privilege to have worked with the OAS in different roles and capacities.

In the years leading up to my position as Assistant Secretary General, I also served as:

- The Permanent Representative of the Republic of Suriname to the OAS,
- Senior Advisor in the Cabinet of Secretary General Gárriga,
- Chair of the Permanent Council,
- Chair of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development.

In all these capacities I have learned and contributed to the inner-workings of the OAS, including critical as budget, General Assemblies, Haiti, Summits of the Americas, engagement with the private sector, and many more.

I have also served as Assistant Secretary General for Foreign and Community Relations of the CARICOM Secretariat, which gave me relevant insights in the problems of small and vulnerable nations in our region, such as in the Caribbean and Central American. All regional groupings have a set of common challenges, goals and objectives, and it is important that the OAS responds equally to those needs. The OAS must be relevant to all member states.

Serving on both the political and the administrative sides of the OAS, and in the leadership, I had the unique opportunity to understand and appreciate the inner workings of this institution. I also saw the unmistakable impact of the OAS on critical hemispheric issues.

Esteemed Permanent Representatives and Delegates, over the course of more than 30 years in various capacities I have collaborated with dedicated colleagues, and I have met many talented and committed people. Today I want to thank the staff of this important hemispheric organization for their commitment and dedication to the goals and purpose of the OAS. You are the backbone of this organization, the value of which we only will recognize when, if for some reason, it does not exist anymore.

Permit me now to share with you my vision, views and concrete action plans regarding this Organization and the Western Hemisphere at large.

Ladies and gentlemen, the OAS must be repositioned at this point in history, to face this changing landscape.

I believe in the power of multilateralism – we can and must work together to create a better world, as we depend on each other in so many ways.

I believe in regionalism as geographic proximity matters; advancing peace and prosperity starts in your own neighborhood.

I believe in strong inter-governmental institutions to foster cooperation and consensus, as well as member state's driven mandates to advance democracy, peace, security and prosperity.

I believe in strong and independent judicial systems, rule of law, inclusive and effective governance toward sustainable development.

I also believe in the role and relevance of the OAS in continuing a zone of peace in the western hemisphere. For this, the political will and commitment of all are needed.

Engagement is a critical element of multilateralism and inter-governmental relations, and as such, a tool to progress and succeed.

The world is going through turbulent times. Currently there are two major on-going conflicts: one in Eastern Europe and the other in the Middle East. The humanitarian toll is high, and the threat of additional conflict situations constant.

Resolving these types of conflicts necessitates diplomacy, dialogue and negotiations towards peaceful solutions. The cost of reparation, will always be higher than the cost of prevention.

We are fortunate to not have comparable conflicts in our hemisphere. It is our collective duty, as part of the leadership of our respective countries, and as members of the oldest grouping of nations in the world – starting in 1890 under various names leading up to the OAS in 1948 - to ensure that there are no violations against humanity. As mandated, the Organization will support Member States in securing a peaceful future for all citizens and the generations to come.

Over the last few decades, the world has become more accessible through technological and transportation evolutions. This deep inter-connectedness of our global system and inter-dependence between countries requires teamwork.

Collaboration and dialogue are required to overcome the many transnational challenges we all face.

Multilateralism in this regard, remains an essential tool to achieve an order of peace and justice, to promote our solidarity, to strengthen collaboration, and to defend our sovereignty, territorial integrity, and our independence.

The contribution of the OAS as a platform for dialogue, consensus building and cooperation, must regain its right space in the inter-state relations in the Western Hemisphere.

### **Estimados miembros del Consejo Permanente, es nuestro deber colectivo**

- **prevenir las causas de conflictos y garantizar la solución pacífica de controversias;**

- **buscar conjuntamente soluciones a los retos políticos, jurídicos y económicos y,**
- **fortalecer la paz y la seguridad en todas las regiones.**

**Estos objetivos, recogidos en el artículo dos (2) de la Carta de mil novecientos cuarenta y ocho (1948) siguen siendo pertinentes hoy.**

**Está claro que nuestro mandato es fortalecer la paz y la seguridad del continente.**

**En el espíritu de estos objetivos, la OEA debe ser aún más relevante para los Estados miembros.**

Esteemed Members of the Permanent Council, it is our collective duty:

- to prevent causes of difficulties and to ensure the peaceful settlement of disputes
- to jointly seek solutions to political, juridical, and economic challenges and,
- to strengthen peace and security in all regions.

These objectives, as included in article 2 of the Charter of 1948, are still relevant 77 years later.

Our mandate is “to strengthen the peace and security of the continent.” In the spirit of these objectives, the OAS must become more relevant to the member states.

In this regard, I am committed to investing in and actively engaging in collaborative efforts, promoting dialogue and action on this issue with all member states.

Our principal modus operandi needs to be based on open, transparent and constructive dialogue with an open mind and respect for different perspectives.

It is of critical importance to be an effective multilateral organization with the purpose of generating solutions, based on respect, political will and commitment. I believe to achieve this, we must strike a balance between short-term problem-solving and crisis management, and longer-term peaceful and sustainable development of our countries.

Our efforts must continue to focus on institutional capacity-building, proactive approaches, and quiet diplomacy to mitigate and better prevent conflict and tension in our regions.

Colleagues, no country regardless of its power, can fully and comprehensively address all its challenges by itself.

Cross-border organized crime, illegal flows of capital, trafficking in persons and smuggling, all cause grave danger in this hemisphere. These issues undermine regional and global peace.

It has become crucial for nations to strengthen cooperation, share intelligence and implement coordinated efforts across borders.

Esteemed Members of the Permanent Council, one of the complex issues facing us today is migration. We need to address this issue head on. It will require short term actions and inclusive dialogue about the flow of people in the long term.

We need to address the fundamental issues, the underlying circumstances which cause migration – including the lack of employment and opportunity, and inadequate development within our borders. All people, all families want steady income and the chance at a better life. We must do more to meet the needs of our people within our borders.

The second root cause of the current migration challenge, is tied to security. Ladies and Gentlemen, both of these issues can be addressed if countries dialogue, collaborate and mobilize in a more effective manner.

I firmly believe migration will become a more manageable issue when we give committed focus and action to the underlying causes.

Ladies and Gentlemen, many of our member states have listed integral and sustainable development as a priority. Therefore, there is an absolute need for stronger dialogue on the allocation of resources on the development agenda at the political level.

Our member states confront a range of challenges ranging from natural and man-made disasters, access to clean drinking water, resource development and management, as well as renewable and nonrenewable energy supplies, on a daily basis.

We must continuously review where we stand and what resources are available. For integral development to be achieved, we must maintain our focus on education, training and collaboration, on all fronts.

Although there has been progress, too many of our people still do not have guaranteed access to basic needs including food, housing and education. Far too many parents are facing an uncertain future for their children. Far too many children do not know what tomorrow holds for them.

For our development agenda and our projects to be sustainable and have long-term impact, we must ensure that our hemisphere's vulnerable groups are meaningfully involved in the solutions attempted.

We must review the programs and strategies designed to build and support economic resilience in member states. I commit to supporting streamlined initiatives which foster innovation and address global challenges, such as the climate crisis, debt burden and adequate financing for development, through multilateral collaboration, especially engaging sub-regional development banks. The OAS is not a development financing agency, but given the impact of inadequate growth and resilience, matters of development must be included in our political discourse.

**Esto me lleva al tema de los derechos humanos. Distinguidos Representantes Permanentes, todos compartimos la premisa fundamental de que los derechos humanos se basan en el principio más elevado posible: la dignidad del hombre y de la mujer.**

**No hay excepciones a esta creencia. Sin embargo, la gran desigualdad socioeconómica y la pobreza aún caracterizan a nuestra región. Esto representa un desafío a la sobrevivencia y la dignidad de millones de personas.**

**Los derechos humanos y las libertades fundamentales son elementos importantes que deben cultivarse. Los países deben cumplir con estos compromisos para proteger a nuestros pueblos.**

**Reconocemos la diversidad de realidades sociales y políticas en nuestros países. Por ello, nuestros esfuerzos deben abordar estas complejidades, especialmente en legislaciones, educación y comunicación.**

**Debemos trabajar con diligencia para lograr sociedades pacíficas y estables en las que todos los ciudadanos se sientan protegidos y seguros.**

This takes me to the topic of human rights. Distinguished Permanent Representatives, we all share the fundamental premise that human rights are based on the highest possible principle: the dignity of man.

There are no exceptions to this belief, yet the vast socio-economic inequality and poverty that still characterizes our region, continues to challenge the dignity of millions of our people.

Human rights and fundamental freedoms are important elements which must be nurtured. Countries have pledged their commitment to these issues. Let us honor these commitments to protect our people.

We appreciate that social and political realities in our countries are **very diverse**, so our efforts must acknowledge and recognize these complex circumstances, especially in areas of legislation, education and communication.

We must work diligently toward peaceful and stable societies where all citizens feel protected and secure.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Organization of American States has decades of experience working on, and supporting issues of democracy in this hemisphere.

Having served both within the Secretariat as ASG and also as a government official in a member state, I respect the institutions capacity and reach.

The Inter-American Democratic Charter adopted in 2001, reaffirms the region's collective commitment to upholding democracy and the rule of law..

I stand fully behind the objective to promote and consolidate representative democracy, with due respect for the principle of non-intervention.

I also commit to working with Member States to implement initiatives which promote and protect democracy, including investing in education and promoting awareness about democratic practices, history, rights and freedoms.

We must continue to support and strengthen state institutions which underpin representative governments. In this regard, we will work to provide support so that parliamentary processes could be improved, while they are protected.

Sound electoral legislation is of critical importance and the OAS can work to source and provide support where ever needed.

Ladies and Gentlemen, sustainable development in today's world is not only a responsibility of elected governments, it is a collective responsibility. Civil society also has a role to play, therefore, they must be engaged and assume responsibility.

A "whole-of-society" approach is required. That is my firm belief. The role of the international community, including international financial institutions is also relevant.

We have come a long way in ensuring that space is created to facilitate and respect the views of civil society. I am of the view that an inclusive model of governance, promotes closer interaction and understanding. Again, a whole of society approach is needed.

This is an essential part of embracing democracy, safeguarding human rights and promoting sustainable development. It is crucial to include all our people.

The track record of this Organization will also show that we have not worked in isolation and that we have built meaningful relations with other regional agencies, including the European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU).

I am very pleased that there are many agreements between the OAS and the United Nations, its specialized agencies, and other national and International Organizations. To date the OAS has 75 permanent observers.

We must continue to strengthen these ties. We are part of the world and have an important role to fulfill.

Ladies and gentlemen, another assignment I am eagerly looking forward to is collaborating with the private sector on key issues such as democracy, human rights, sustainable development. I believe the private sector has a responsibility, a duty to contribute to sustainable growth and opportunities in our hemisphere.

Working with them, we must seek to provide opportunities to tap into the potential of our people. It is the embrace of critical thinking that has the power to improve the competitiveness and growth of our economies.

Enhanced partnerships with the private sector should also aim to create opportunities for youth and various vulnerable groups. This directly supports development goals.

I believe that we also need to expand our engagement with other stakeholders and consider effective and transparent public-private partnerships (PPPs).

In my view, we can implement the active and comprehensive multilateralism as I envision and illustrated to you today through actions which can be grouped in three areas of focus.



## **Area 1 - Strengthening the operations of the organization**

The first area of focus is comprised of primarily elaborating on and expanding the inner-workings of the OAS. Some of these require a more effective organizational structure and does not come with high costs. The main items I am suggesting are:

1. Strengthen the institutional capacity and work with the Secretariat to improve efficiency in operations and effectiveness in the execution of approved mandates by member states.
2. As part of this exercise, establish a closer and seamless collaboration between the institutional and political secretariats,
3. Execute within the financial means and realities of the OAS the reform track as advised by A&M consultants, for a more efficient use of resources and aligning program execution with member states driven mandates,
4. Seek the authority of member states to allow the Secretary General in the new term to develop and propose a leaner and mandate targeted and representative organizational layout,
5. Develop a realistic resource mobilization plan, to overcome the short-fall in the regular and specific fund budgets.
6. Develop a functioning and effective dialogue structure at the level of the executive management and within the secretariats to embed member states adopted mandates in work programs and projects,
7. Intensify communication with member states, as well as the lines and structures for continuous dialogue and information sharing.

Much has been achieved over the years and some of the reform recommendations have been already included in the approved budget. I aspire to keep building and improving the organization on the solid foundation laid by my dear friends and colleagues at the OAS.

## **Area 2 - Pro-active actions and collaboration all members**

This will enable us to be more effective and efficient in the second area of focus, as I envision it, which is to realize the original goals and objectives in terms of pro-active conflict resolution and collaboration and input from all members of the organization.

One of the priorities is to pay close attention to issues that require immediate attention, while at the same time developing a road map on how to deal with them and achieve constructive improvement towards sustainable political and diplomatic solutions.

Some of the current pending issues of concern are not unknown to you esteemed ambassadors. The situation in Haiti, for example, is one I have a lot of personal experience with. During my term as ASG I was very engaged in Haiti on a political, economic and social level on behalf of the OAS. We had initiated the Group of Friends of Haiti which brought together all Member States, observer countries, international agencies, partner organizations, civil society and NGO representatives. This was at the time successful in resolving political conflict and providing

human aid. Together we can resume that path of solidarity and support with our sister nation and its people.

Secondly, it is important to foster Inter-American institutional collaboration and work together to implement an agenda towards the future on the basis of the mandates emanating from the different sub-regions and the collectivity of the Summit of the Americas in their work programs. Equally, our regular engagement and consultations with sub-regional entities is necessary to construct the required alignment of goals and initiatives.

Lastly, in this area of focus we should foster sub-regional collaboration, with the aim to organize regular, by preference annual, meetings of the different entities representing the sub-regions of this hemisphere.

### **Area 3 - Long-term sustainable development/innovative technology/education/partnerships**

The third area of focus, as I envision it, is based on the premise of stability, and long-term sustainable development; I am in favor of promoting the transfer of innovative technologies to build sustainable and productive economies.

I favor certainly a “whole of society” or a “whole of the Americas” approach to foster peace, security and prosperity. We must not forget that we are part of a wider and larger globe, where there is stiff competition for all productive resources, including innovative technologies. Through the OAS we can prepare to engage beneficially in this process.

Investing in education and governance processes to facilitate stability and sustainable development, I deem it especially important to realize the full potential of our people. All the while keeping in mind the political and social realities of societies and sub-regions, strengthen democratic governance and security related confidence building measures, as a basis for economic growth and sustainable development.

And lastly, as mentioned before, I believe that enhanced and further expanded partnerships with civil society, the private sector, and private-public collaboration will further the integral development goals.

In closing, Mr. Chairman and Permanent Representatives, ladies and gentlemen, I hope to have given you a brief glimpse of who I am, what I believe in and my vision for this organization.

Strategic visioning must be accompanied by a renewed commitment to the original goals and purposes of this necessary hemispheric institution: peace, stability, security, sustainable development and equality.

Since the OAS was established, the world has evolved, but the principles are still very valid today. Where the OAS is historically perceived mostly as a political body, the time to make a shift to a more action-oriented and socially impactful organization, is now. That would require a financially sound and well-funded organization, which is present and visible throughout the world.

It is imperative that we promote unity and inclusivity in the region while recognizing our diversity. We need to unite over those topics which we have in common; sustainable

development, multidimensional security, democracy, rule of law and equality. We can leave no state or person behind. At the same time, I recognize our unique needs and priorities per subregion.

I know as no other that it requires tough leadership and diplomatic skills to foster dialogue and resolve disputes between the various social and political stakeholders with differing interests in an environment with many dichotomies.

We contend daily with competing interests, but as a senior government official, I can tell you it IS possible to facilitate growth in a constructive, peaceful and stable environment.

Member States, neighbors, friends, one cannot do this alone. It will require all our efforts.

I need input from all of you, to make the OAS live up to what we have all endorsed it to be: a respected institution that is an honest broker in times of conflict, a facilitator of development and growth and ultimately a contributor to the well-being of and peace for all citizens in the Americas.

As the great Mahatma Gandhi said once **“The future depends on what we do in the present.”**

Gracias por su atencion.

Thank you for your kind attention.