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Characteristics of CSBMs in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Presentation by Ambassador Hugo Palma

It is my privilege to be here with such a distinguished group of scholars and diplomats to discuss a subject that is attracting growing attention from latin american academic and political sectors. The subject in question is the one of this meeting and concerns the manner how CBMs may be of interest for our region.

Without the intention of going into an elaborate academic discussion, I would like to say that basically there are two views with respect to confidence building. In the Northern Hemisphere with the accumulation of arsenals of all types and the fierce East-West confrontation prevailing until very recently, the idea of promoting confidence is generally related to concrete steps oriented to the avoidance of an armed conflict. Confidence, in this sense, means confidence that no specific threat would materialize, for instance a surprise attack and is therefore linked to military and military-security aspects. This view is also known as confidence in an strict sense.

For others, the idea of confidence does not only relate to military aspects but may encompass a wider view of security concerns that could be relevant to an specific situation. In this case, the perception of threat may derive not exclusively from a concrete possibility as in the case of the already quoted surprise attack but also from more general elements such as policies that may be detrimental to confidence as will be, for instance, a policy of interference or domination or menaces that do not necessarily originating in a neighbouring country. This is called confidence in a larger sense.

In the case of Latin America, the question of confidence is understood in the larger sense. This is an inherent feature of the historic and social personality of the countries of the region as well as of their perception of the nature of intraregional relations.

This view of the specificity, unity and intrinsic identity of regional actors was presented as far back as the beginning of independent life. In the Treaty of Perpetual Union, League and Confederation suscribed under the influence of Bolivar in 1826 in Panama, provisions were made not only for economic integration and political consultation but also for the organization of a common military army and navy.

A good part of the XIX Century witnessed a very substantive political desintegration and a number of conflicts

mainly of a territorial character throughout the area. By the beginning of this Century the political map of Latin America was drawn but the countries and the ideal of unity were severely weakened. Not surprisingly, this was also the time of the beginning of Pan-Americanism as the political force behind the evident growth of the United States. Ideologically the new significance of that country was already presented in the Monroe Doctrine or in the pursue of the "manifest destiny".

After the conclusion of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War, latin american countries were enlisted into the world-wide security situation established by the super-powers. A treaty for regional defense (TIAR), formalized in 1947 our adherence to the strategic system of world confrontation.

With the passing of time, a form of strategic independence began to prevail in the views and deeds of a number of countries in the region. This was somehow coincidental with an increased presence of the military in politics and had as a consequence a substantive increase in terms of number of troops, expenditure and diversification and modernization in the procurement of weapons.

It is also manifest in Latin America a relative indefiniteness of strategic concerns that are very vaguely presented and usually poorly understood or not necessarily shared by peoples or even politicians. This translates into the implementation of defensive systems that only the military seem to understand and support. As a conclusion, there is no clear social and political understanding of who the enemy may be and how defense should be prepared.

With respect to security matters it should be also noted that in the Western Hemisphere and specifically in Latin America, over the years a complex system for peaceful resolution of conflicts has been established. There is a substantive number of arbitration agreements that entered into force among many countries of the region. In the last three decades, wide-ranging integration processes were organized on a regional and sub-regional basis. Also, a number of joint development projects went into materialization. Slowly, the concept that regional latin american security could not be a by-product of United States security was being admitted. At this time it is clear for decision makers that there is an strategic differentiation between the US and Latin America. Finally, for some years now, the possibility of defining elements for common or shared security on a latin american regional or sub-regional basis has been attracting interest from academic and political quarters. The concept of regional common security may be returning to its source in the thinking of Bolivar; hopefully without the rethoric that for many years served essentially to dissimulate latin america inability to act in unison.

It should be similarly taken into account that Latin America is not alien to matters of arms control and disarmament. The Treaty of Tlatelolco of 1968 was pioneer in establishing a nuclear weapons free zone in a populated area since the previous ones, Antartica and deep sea treaties refer to unpopulated environments. It is evident that a tremendous responsibility rest upon governments and peoples in the region to see that this Treaty is duly abide by. There could be no worst situation in the region than the one arising from a violation of the letter or the spirit of Tlatelolco. The Ayacucho Declaration of 1974 was followed by formal negotiations among the andean countries. The conflict in Central America called for the confidence building and disarmament measures that were eventually agreed upon in the Contadora Act and the Esquipulas agreements.

Also, there have been a number of political declarations that underlined the increasing openness of security concerns. Among the more substantive already produced the Acapulco and Galapagos Declarations should be noted. In the former, the idea of common regional security was presented at the Head of States level of the Mechanism of Political Consultation and Concertation (Rio Group) together with the call for increased co-operation against drug-traffic and terrorism. In the latter orientations were given for confidence building measures and joint border commissions by the Presidents of the Andean Group countries.

It is clear then that there is an specific and manifest latin american interest in matters of security and also that perhaps slowly but steadily this concern is attracting academic

and political attention translated into concrete decisions that are bound to have significant influence in regional affairs.

Another matter of undeniable importance is the fact that Latin America and the Caribbean covering such a vast expanse with a variety of political and strategic problems may not be very suitable for a single project for the enhancement of security. In this respect, it would be wise to take a more restricted geographical approach and select sub-regions that could be more amenable to the task of promoting confidence. Very briefly it could be said that the Caribbean and Central America present a quite complicated strategic situation with significant influence of extra-regional powers. The case of South America is more manageable due to a number of reasons including its almost insular configuration and its marginalism with respect to the world main strategic concerns. It is no accident then, that academics and politicians have already begun consideration of the possibility of establishing a Zone of Peace in that area. In any case, it does certainly look as the more promising sub-region for confidence and security building purposes.

Coming back to the specifics of building confidence in the region it should be said that measures of the Helsinki type concerning manouvres or military movements, relevant as they might be for Latin America, are not likely to be of paramount importance. This is due to the fact that the strategic situation despite the fact that there certainly are still a number of elements with potential for conflict, does not center around the notion of surprise attack nor is overly dependent on concentration of military forces. There are cases where military presence is very thin as in the Brazilian-peruvian border that stretches for thousands of kilometers with only token military posts.

Nevertheless, CBMs including some related to the military or military-security aspects have been established and consistently applied in the region. Among the more often quoted are the programmes of medical assistance by the navies of Peru-Brazil, Colombia-Peru and Colombia-Brazil in the border area; the surveillance operations conducted by Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay in the South Atlantic; various types of participation of foreign officers in training courses in a number of countries; the talks on CBMs by Peruvian and Chilean military authorities; etc. Two other elements may be of interest. First, the CBMs approved by Argentina and the United Kingdom for activities in the Malvinas area and the ones mentioned in the Central American peace process, specifically in the already quoted Contadora Act and Esquipulas agreements.

Additionally, it could be said that there are a number of CBMs currently being applied in various situations without receiving that name. Activities and understandings for the avoidance of incidents or their handling, visits and courtesy practices, institutional contacts for different purposes including sports, health care and other matters seem to be more frequent than it is thought. Latin America can show, therefore, a practice germane with confidence even in the strict sense.

But, this does not preclude the possibility that many other CBMs belonging either to the military-security realm or to the wider political context that is certainly favoured as a vision for the strengthening of peaceful relations among Latin American countries, could be negotiated and agreed. These CBMs or, perhaps more adequately measures and policies for the promotion of confidence, may encompass several areas and some could be categorized as follows:

MILITARY.-

a) Information.- General exchange of publications including programmes of studies; agreements on previous notification of manouvres and military movements as well as invitations to observers.

b) Training.- Exchange of students in military schools; special courses open to foreign students for some subjects such as military participation in civic activities (road construction, disasters relief, etc.); courses on arms control and disarmament and on the economy of defense for military officers; participation in activities like search and rescue, etc.

c) Contact.- Increase of military visits and delegations; military

contacts in border areas; procedure for the avoidance of incidents and their handling; procedures for consultations with various purposes including limitations of some types of armaments; direct lines of communication among military authorities; joint exercises and manouvres; other contacts for institutional purposes such as health, sports, etc.

d) Institutionalization.- Regional military conference of the South American authorities for the identification of additional CBMs, various aspects of security and others.

POLITICAL.- Consultation at different levels for a number of matters of common interest such as external debt, integration and other forms of co-operation; meetings of parliamentarians for the identification of ways of restraining arms expenditures, promotion of peace and reiteration of the principle of peaceful solution of disputes; identification by political leaders of the elements of strategic differentiation and common security for the region and establishment of policies of "defensive defense"; mechanisms for the combat of drug traffic and subversion and for joint action in case of natural disasters; priority to development projects that are of interest for more than one country, particularly in border areas; possibility of the limitation and integration of military industries; incorporation into the political programmes of definitions of strategic concerns and defense postures; etc.

DIPLOMATIC.- Courses on arms limitations and disarmament at the training institutions; international seminars on relevant issues; establishment of specialized sections at the foreign ministries for disarmament matters open to visit by diplomats of other countries; political sers on strategy; etc.

ACADEMIC.- Studies on the economy of defense, arms limitations and the promotion of peace research; studies on the relationship between disarmament and development or the arms race and underdevelopment and on the question of military expenditure and external debt; etc.

CIVIC.- (NGOs, churches, media, etc.) Seminars and other mechanisms for the orientation of public opinion on matters pertinent to this problem and ways of promoting interest in the maintenance of peace at lower levels of military deployment, equipment and expenditure.

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It is essential to take into account at this time, that there are not only momentous changes at the political and strategic level worldwide as proven by events in Europe, the Middle East and other areas but also that the nature of threats, at least for some countries including latin american is changing.

For instance, at this juncture the most serious challenges to latin american sovereignty and independence are certainly not coming from the threat of armed conflict with a neighbouring country but mainly from the new and urgent danger to national viability represented by the problems of governability, subversion, drug traffic, extreme poverty, environmental decay, etc. All these elements constitute menaces to national security that perhaps were not foreseeable some time ago but command now such immediacy that no delay in dealing with them would pass without dire consequences.

All this require that Latin America makes renewed efforts to promote confidence among countries in the region. This improved confidence would be not only instrumental for the preservation of peace and the strenghtening of security but also for the region as a whole having the capacity to deal with the problems of the hour with increased confidence in itself.