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The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development

Letter dated 15 April 2002 from the representatives of Costa Rica and Panama to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a document entitled “Proclamation for peace, human security and demilitarization” which was signed by Ms. Mireya Moscoso, President of the Republic of Panama, and Mr. Miguel Angel Rodríguez, President of the Republic of Costa Rica, on 29 November 2001 (see annex).

We should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a General Assembly document, under agenda item 44.

(Signed) Bernd **Niehaus**
Ambassador

Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations

(Signed) Ramón A. **Morales**
Ambassador

Permanent Representative of Panama to the United Nations

Annex to the letter dated 15 April 2002 from the Permanent Representatives of Costa Rica and Panama to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Meeting in the community of Bambito, Chiriquí, Republic of Panama, to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the signing of our border treaty, we, the lawful representatives of the Republics of Panama and Costa Rica, jointly issue this call for peace, human security and demilitarization in Latin America.

Through the visionary decision of Presidents Rafael Angel Calderón Guardia and Arnulfo Arias Madrid, the foundations were laid in 1941 for a peaceful and respectful relationship between our fraternal countries. The territorial delimitation was followed by trade and cultural exchanges between the border communities which strengthened relations between the nationals of the two countries. At the same time, there was increased awareness of the need to preserve and develop our shared biological wealth, with the establishment and maintenance on the common border of the Parque Internacional La Amistad ("Friendship" international park).

The decision of our predecessors was made possible by the commitment of our peoples to a peaceful existence devoted to human development. Domestic peace, which engenders public security in the face of the threats of poverty and ignorance, is a precondition for a harmonious relationship between the nations.

The historic vocation for peace of our two countries was demonstrated with utter clarity in our decision to abolish the armies in an area which in the past had been characterized by civil war, coups d'état, militarism and inter-State disputes. As a result, Costa Rica decided to abolish its army in 1949, and in 1990 Panama took the same step, which was incorporated into its constitution in 1994. In declaring war on war, and undertaking unilateral disarmament, we are opting for the course of peace and human development. In a world which demands reconciliation and the bridging of differences between cultures and religions and between genders and ethnic groups, the starting point must be rejection of all types of violence, both individual and collective.

Time has proved us right: with the advent of the new millennium, old concepts of sovereignty based on territorial considerations have been transcended, and a new concept of security has emerged, promoted by the United Nations: human security, the security of all men and women, which is now a priority of our Governments.

Human security derives from a dual awareness: on the one hand, the awareness that at the dawn of the third millennium, the model of military security, which prevailed in the past, has ceased to be functional for effectively confronting the new threats which pose new kinds of risks and dangers to human existence, and, on the other hand, the awareness that life together, between and within nations, is based on respect for the rule of law, the division of power, representative democracy and the active participation of citizens in the discussion and management of public affairs; in other words, the awareness that authoritarianism and militarism are no more than admissions of failure on the part of States in the process of building just societies.

In the particular case of our America, human security corresponds to the need to change the traditional role played by the military in the region, above all in view of the absence of threats against our territorial integrity and the existence of

enormous social needs which require the allocation of resources which are frequently used to prop up an obsolete and cumbersome military machine.

The new concept of security to which our two countries adhere is based not on the coercive force of the State, but on the access of each citizen, both men and women, to material well being, a democratic system of government, liberty and the rule of law, justice, education, health and the economic, social and political life of their respective nations. Human security requires respect for minorities and strict observance of human rights as a precondition for the maintenance of peace and security.

Costa Rica and Panama may take pride in having the best human development indicators of the region as a result of, inter alia, their constant adherence to an approach of human security. For that reason, we remain committed to directing the actions of our respective Governments towards the application of a coherent, democratic and participatory model of human security, in order to safeguard the integrity of individuals and the community of our countries. In order to consolidate this commitment of our two States, we have instructed our respective Ministers for Foreign Affairs to establish a binational commission on human security with the mandate of designing and implementing a common policy in this area.

We reaffirm our conviction that the experience of our peoples in the promotion of human security and development, and in the practice of peaceful coexistence, gives rise to a call to the peoples of the Latin American community of nations to take the road of demilitarization and democracy towards new goals of liberty and justice.

We proclaim our common borders as an example of peace, productive coexistence and cooperation in the region, and undertake to plan the future of our peoples with the moral force of two States which are committed to the advancement of life and repudiate the promotion of the culture of death. As a result and corollary of all the foregoing, we, the Presidents of Costa Rica and Panama, also take advantage of this happy occasion, which celebrates the beneficial results of international diplomacy and cooperation, to call upon the Heads of State of Latin America to undertake action aimed at:

- The progressive elimination of military forces, through their gradual conversion into civilian police institutions;
- The reduction of the military influence in political, social and economic processes;
- Re-education and the creation of alternative employment for members of the armed forces, and the promotion of retraining programmes for the civilian police, emphasizing training in respect for and the protection of human rights and democratic and civic values;
- Follow-up and verification of the agreements on demilitarization in the Central American countries, with the aim of consolidating the major advances achieved during the 1990s by Central America in the process of the reduction of armies and the building of new democratic States;
- Substitution of armed violence as a means of resolving disputes by peaceful negotiating mechanisms by promoting preventive diplomacy, dialogue and

juridical procedures as the normal way of preventing, resolving and transcending violent conflicts;

- Directing their policies towards the human security model proposed here;
- Transformation of military economies into economies of peace;
- The use of peace dividends to allocate at least 5 per cent of GNP to public expenditure on health and promoting the allocation of at least 6 per cent of GNP to public education by the year 2010;
- Institutionalization of the processes of permanent social dialogue among the various representative social and political actors as an effective way of promoting active citizenship and national integration;
- Negotiation, signing and ratification of international treaties on the protection of human rights, particularly the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court;
- Improving and strengthening the inter-American system of human rights, increasing its resources in order to contribute to the eventual permanent operation of its organs, facilitate the access of victims to the system and ensure adequate follow-up of its resolutions and recommendations;
- Negotiation and ratification of international treaties for the elimination of nuclear weapons and treaties concerning chemical and biological weapons;
- Review of domestic legislation on the control of arms trafficking and adoption of codes of conduct on the transfer of small arms and light weapons;
- Application of measures to prevent and avoid accidents caused by unexploded ammunition and landmines, and to clean up the sites of material of this kind;
- Rejection of terrorist violence because of its disregard for life, intolerance and violations of the individual and collective rights of human beings;
- Ratification of the conventions against terrorism, within the United Nations and the Organization of American States;
- Support for the strengthening of the Committee on Hemispheric Security of the Organization of American States;
- Promotion of civic education for peace and democracy from an early age and, in particular, support for the work of the University for Peace, especially its programme on the culture of peace, with a view to the development of personal responsibility in building peace and human development.

Done in the community of Bambito, Chiriquí, Republic of Panama, on 29 November 2001.

Miguel Angel Rodríguez
President of the Republic of Costa Rica

Mireya Moscoso
President of the Republic of Panama