

12-13 January 2004

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Julian Robert Hunte,
President of the 58th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Special Summit of the Americas**

Mr President, esteemed Heads of States and Government, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

We in the Americas have reaffirmed, in the Inter-American Democratic Charter, that democratic governance is the right way to order our affairs, both as nations and as a hemisphere. As a member state of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and one whose Prime Minister has lead responsibility within CARICOM for Justice and Governance, St Lucia was particularly pleased that this important accord was agreed in a CARICOM State, Barbados. Indeed, for the countries of CARICOM, democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are common and intrinsic values, which is why we strongly support hemispheric initiatives in this area.

Democratic governance is a continuous process that must be nurtured and sustained. Let us, therefore, be forthright about the factors that advance and hinder our democracies, or that can put them under pressure. We are, for example, challenged to continue our vigilance against deadly terrorist attacks. We must continue to ward off the deleterious impact of illicit trafficking in drugs and in small arms and light weapons and the organised criminal networks that control them. We must continue our determined efforts to confront money laundering and corruption.

As globalisation and trade liberalisation lead the way in reshaping the world's economic landscape, we must confront the inequities in the global economic system that seriously threaten the well-being of a significant number of developing countries, including countries in our hemisphere. The Monterrey Consensus, adopted at the International Conference on Financing for Development here in Monterrey in 2002, is among the significant responses to current development challenges. Keeping the commitments made must feature in our efforts in the Americas, as should support for the outcomes of the Millennium Summit and the Johannesburg Sustainable Development Conference. Small Island Developing States of the Americas also require hemispheric support, as the Programme of Action for their sustainable development is reviewed at an international conference in Mauritius in August of this year.

We have a solid foundation that underpins democratic governance in the Americas. In addition to our Democratic Charter, we may cooperatively address many of the significant issues that challenge us, such as arms trafficking and corruption, by signing, ratifying and implementing hemispheric treaties. Civil society is speaking with an increasingly clear voice to articulate people's expectations of those that govern, and emphasising their role as responsible partners in nation building.

This is an opportune time for us to renew our commitment to work together, in every aspect of the Americas process, to ensure that we effectively address issues such as poverty, unemployment, debt and deadly diseases such as HIV/AIDS, and other ills sorely affecting the region. In this way, we will consolidate the significant gains we have made and buttress democratic governance, and thus ensure peace, economic and social progress and stability in our nations and in our hemisphere.

Let me conclude, Mr President, by commending you on your chairing of this meeting and though you, the Government and people of Mexico for the excellent arrangements made for this meeting.

I thank you.