

PANAMA PI-SF. FEBRUARY 23-24, 2023

PARLATINO – PANAMA

SUMMARY REPORT



FEBRUARY 23 (THURSDAY)

✓ **OPENING REMARKS (9:00-9:40)**

- **CONGRESSMAN ROBERT PITTENGER, CHAIRMAN, PARLIAMENTARY INTELLIGENCE-SECURITY FORUM, UNITED STATES (9:00-9:10)**

Congressman Pittenger started his opening remarks by expressing his gratitude to Parlatino and all collaborators for making the Forum possible.

- **SENATOR LARRY PRESSLER, UNITED STATES (9:10-9:20)**

Senator Pressler began his remarks by stating that, despite our geographical separation, we are one country in terms of communications. He explained that the Telecommunications Act was his main piece of legislation when he was in the Senate.

- **ALEJO CAMPOS, REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF CRIME STOPPERS (9:30-9:40)**

Mr. Alejo Campos started his remarks by thanking the organization for hosting the Parliamentary Intelligence and Security Forum in Panama. Mr. Campos explained that the phenomena that are currently occurring in the region, such as the use of Panamanian seaports for illegal activities, the passage of military ships through the Panama Canal, and the Our Ocean conference that will take place in Panama in the coming days, among other phenomena, make Panama the ideal place to hold this parliamentary intelligence and security forum.

- **SENATOR TED CRUZ, UNITED STATES – SPECIAL MESSAGE (9:40-9:50) (video)**

Senator Ted Cruz began by thanking the organization for inviting him to speak at the forum in Panama, which is an important United States ally. Senator Cruz explained that Latin America is a critical region for American interests. He stated that the United States has indispensable allies in Latin America, where our relationships date back nearly 200 years. He explained that we have deep economic and security ties, which is why it is so concerning that a left-wing movement has taken hold in the region, with socialists now controlling ten governments.

✓ **REMARKS (9:50-10:00)**

- **President Bol Gai Deng, The Republic of South Sudan Government in Exile**

President Bol Gai Deng started his remarks by expressing his gratitude to the organizers who invited him to the forum. He explained that he is not only representing South Sudan, but also the voice of the African people and the African continent, as well as the continent's most vulnerable people.

✓ **OMINOUS SECURITY CHALLENGES (10:00-10:30)**

- **Ambassador Robert C. O'Brien, Chairman, American Global Strategies, Former National Security Advisor, United States (virtual)**

Ambassador O'Brien stressed that the region has an important role to play in the overall global security. Due to the war in Ukraine, South America and Central America are critical to the world economy in light of the amount of agricultural, oil and gas, and minerals production in the region. The region is going to have a very important role to play worldwide that we haven't seen in many years, he mentioned.

Ambassador O'Brien pointed out that the number one challenge we have in the is the rise of the cartels. It's a moral problem in addition to being a national security and economic problem.

Ambassador O'Brien stated that we need to be vigilant and work together as a team to address this issue, which affects all of us, both on the consumption side in America and on the production side in the region.

✓ **COFFEE BREAK (10:30 - 11:00)**

✓ **HUMAN TRAFFICKING (11:00-12:10)(1 hour presentation/10-minute Q/A)**

- **Ms. Anne Basham, CEO of Ascend Consulting, Chair of PI-SF Taskforce on Human Trafficking, United States**

Ms. Anne Basham explained that human trafficking is one of the largest humanitarian crises in the world. It enslaves millions of people through sexual exploitation, labor exploitation, forced marriage, orphanage trafficking, and other forms of modern slavery. According to her, the most recent global estimate estimates that 50 million people are enslaved. To put that in perspective, that is the equivalent of the entire population of Colombia. And this number continues to rise every year with no signs of stopping. Human trafficking is currently the second largest criminal enterprise in the world.

- **Ms. Alika Kinan, “Lived Experience Expert” and President of the Alika Kinan Foundation, Argentina**

Ms. Alika Kinan shared, through her experience as a survivor of human trafficking, the correct models to work on this big problem that exists in all regions. She lamented that governments are only limited on investigating numbers, but when it comes to actions, there is very poor assistance to victims, who do not receive adequate psychological care nor follow-up care, which causes the victims to go through basic needs such as a lack of job opportunities. She concluded by urging people to listen to the victims, understand their perspectives, and include them in plans to combat human trafficking since they can provide useful tools based on their experiences to combat this sad situation.

- **Honorable Beatriz Yañiquez, MP, President of the Human Rights Commission of the Chamber of Deputies, Bolivia**

Honorable Beatriz Yañiquez lamented that it is still believed that slavery is something of the past, when the reality is that it still exists and continues to grow. Hon. Yañiquez stated that the slavery of this century is human trafficking, from which not only some regions but the whole world is suffering. Hon. Yañiquez, representing Bolivia, spoke about the existing data on human trafficking in her country, expressing concern that these data are increasing rather than decreasing.

- **Lieutenant Carlos Cossio, Panama National Police, Head of the TIP Unit**

Lieutenant Carlos Cossio spoke about human trafficking and its relationship with sects, explaining that many people think of sects as something utopian, when in reality, they exist and pose a threat to all regions. Mr. Cossio commented that these sects, in addition to being related to human trafficking, are also involved in crimes such as homicide, sexual crimes, forced disappearances, document forgery, and money laundering. Mr. Cossio explained how these sects operate, the different types of sects that exist, and how they act to attract potential victims and persuade them to join said sects, where they are later abused.

✓ **LUNCH BREAK (12:10-13:10)**

✓ **ENERGY SECURITY (13:10-14:05) (45-minute presentation/10-minute Q/A)**

- **Ms. Diana Furchtgott-Roth, Director, Center for Energy, Climate, and Environment and The Herbert and Joyce Morgan Fellow in Energy and Environmental Policy, The Heritage Foundation, United States**

Ms. Diana Furchtgott-Roth stated that energy security is of vital importance to all regions. She explained that we have seen from the events with Russia and Ukraine that energy security is really important because it allows the economies of the world to function at their true capacity.

- **Mr. François Baird, Chairman and Founder, Baird’s US LLC/Baird’s CMC Limited/Calbridge(Pty) Ltd/FairPlay, United States**

Mr. François Baird, founder of the FairPlay movement, addressed the link between energy access, food security and stability for developing nations, particularly in Africa. He pointed out that according to the International Energy Agency, 600 million people (43%

of the total population) lack access to electricity, and most of them are from sub-Saharan Africa. He used the Fragile States Index of 2022 of the Fund for Peace to demonstrate the link between low energy access and weak food security, to fragile states in Africa. He commented that even South Africa, the most industrialized African state is becoming more fragile due to a lack of access to electricity and power. Mr. Baird proposed that the solution to more stability is the promotion of affordable energy in Africa, providing base load for industrial development, supported by investments in rule of law institutions, trade with Africa that is not predatory in nature, but adheres to WTO standards, and more market-based development solutions. He pointed out that most industrialized states are food secure and therefore encouraged support for commercial agriculture in Africa, to encourage food security. He proposed nine steps to unleash the creative and entrepreneurial energy of ordinary Africans to build a better, more stable future. With these steps policymakers and leaders will stand on the side of the people.

Actions Steps for Africa:

- Reliable energy supply to industry
- Stop predatory trade policies
- National and regional food & energy security
- Agricultural and industrial innovation
- Empower rule of law institutions against corruption
- Market solutions & private ownership
- African jobs
- Sustain rural livelihoods
- Support farmers & food producers

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- **Mr. Lucian Pugliaresi, President, Energy Policy Research Foundation, Inc, (EPRINC), United States**

Mr. Lucian Pugliaresi commented through slideshows about technology constraints, costs, risks, and failure modes of the energy transition. He stated that what we know about models is they're all wrong, but some of them are useful (George G.P. Box). Mr. Pugliaresi explained that when we look at the future, we can see how people model the future and that there's enormous uncertainty. Mr. Pugliaresi showed through slideshows that the models can show us that some of them are quite complex and quite elaborate, but they have tremendously different outcomes looking into the future. In fact, he commented that they were able to replicate some sort of business as usual.

✓ ILLCIT FINANCE (14:05-15:15) (1 hour presentation/10-minute Q/A)

- **Mr. John Walsh, President and Chief Executive Officer, SightSpan Inc. Washington D.C., United States**

Mr. John Walsh explained that the UN estimates that money laundering is about 2–5% of the world's GDP, which places it around 2 million plus 2 million a year, which would make it one of the world's largest businesses. Mr. Walsh explained that one of the things they were always concerned about was the next generation and how they would educate them about this problematic issue and how they would convince younger people to fight it. He explained that they're struggling with that because criminality and money laundering are very profitable.

- **Hon. Isabel Perez, Director of the FIU, Panama**

Honorable Isabel Perez explained that the financial analysis unit of Panama has been working a lot in 2022 and 2023 on the focus of training on specific issues related to the quality of suspicious transaction reports. Hon. Pérez commented that the principal reason for the trainings is the importance of having sufficient and quality information to prepare a financial intelligence report and send it to the public ministry so that the corresponding investigation can be initiated. Honorable Pérez explained that illicit financing is basically the use of capital from the activities of criminal organizations; she commented that these criminal organizations are related to money laundering, financing of terrorism, the destruction of mass weapons, and all those crimes of destruction are present in the present-day money laundering that is established in the penal code of the Republic of Panama. Honorable Perez also explained that fragile crimes are intended to be introduced into the economic and professional financial platform of Panama and across borders.

- **Mr. Jonathan Holden, FBI Attache - US Embassy in Panama**

Mr. Jonathan Holden talked about why it is important to talk about and care about illicit finance. He explained that this problem has caused an increase in the threat of monetary instability, the loss of tax revenue, the weakening of financial organizations, among other critical situations. Mr. Holden commented about how Latin America can combat illicit finances; he explained that it is very important to notify law enforcement or regulatory agencies when illicit financing is suspected and to establish a national culture of compliance and anti-illicit finance.

- **Mr. Ezra Cohen, Representative of ITUR Financial Intelligence Ltd for Latin America**

Mr. Ezra Cohen explained that the state of Israel is a global leader in asset tracking and has been instrumental in the fight against Terror financing by locating hidden assets from terrorist organizations. Mr. Cohen commented that Global mapping is conducted using unique technologies such as the dark net, cyber intelligence, and proprietary databases to identify weaknesses in targets, their surroundings, and their related entities.

✓ **STRATEGIC MINERALS (15:15-15:55) (30-minute presentation/10-minute Q/A)**

- **Hon. Maria Gabriela Burgos, Congresswoman of Jujuy Province (Litio Triangle-Argentina)**

Hon. Maria Gabriela Burgos commented about the change that occurred in Jujuy; she expressed that previously only tobacco was cultivated, but around 2015, there was a change in the productive matrix but directed on a main axis that is the care of the environment. She explained that through public policies, they began to think about how to move forward to generate real and genuine sources of work while respecting care for the environment. She commented that Jujuy has the most important solar radiation in America, and using that as an advantage, Cauchari was created, the largest solar park in Latin America, with more than a million solar panels. Hon. Burgos also commented about lithium; she explained that most technological devices need lithium for their operation since lithium favors the transmission of energy. Hon. Burgos explained that her nation, along with Salta and Catamarca, are part of the lithium triangle, which has one of the largest lithium reserves in the world. Hon. Burgos explained that lithium is extracted from brine, and Jujuy has large spaces of saline,

from which lithium is extracted. Hon. Burgos explained that thanks to the energy from the solar park and the extraction of lithium, Jujuy is carrying out the largest educational public policy of the last century, allowing the construction of 258 schools.

✓ **ADVERSARIAL INFLUENCE THROUGH COERCIVE DIPLOMACY (15:55-16:35) (30-minute presentation/10-minute Q/A)**

- **Admiral Doug Fears, Former Deputy Assistant to the President and the Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Advisor on the National Security Council staff, United States**

Admiral Doug Fears described the world as increasingly VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous). Rapid advances in technological development increases the threat surface area for nation states. For example, we understand that the industrial control systems that run our pipelines and electric grids, and all these different elements of critical infrastructure, all have a cyber-threat surface area that's exposed for adversarial manipulation, and so the ideas behind distributed denial of service affect our critical infrastructure and our ability to function. Admiral Fears commented that he would argue that in this modern age of cyber effects, many times we don't know that we've been the recipient of a cyber-attack until after the fact, sometimes days after the fact; certainly attribution of the cyber effects might take you days, weeks, or months after the fact, and so your strategic and tactical warning times in this context are actually now negative.

Additionally, the persuasion of our populations through social media malign influence has been rising for years, and now coupled with artificial intelligence, influence operations are happening at scale and speed around the world. Additionally, many nations are using favorable lending terms with nation states that then use coercive diplomacy to pressure countries to make decisions that are not in their best, sovereign interest. In aggregate, these technological advancements in adversarial activity coupled with coercive diplomacy reduce a sovereign nation from fully being capable of exercising sovereignty.

- **Mr. Andrew Publicover, Economic Officer, US Embassy in Panama**

Mr. Andrew Publicover expressed that the President Biden and our Secretary of State, Anthony Blink, have made it clear that we see the People's Republic of China as posing a unique long-term challenge to the international order, as the only country with both the intent and the capability to reshape the international order, with that unique economic, diplomatic, military, and technological capacity to do so, and we see Beijing with a vision for the world that would move us away from the universal value of human rights. Mr. Andrew stated that we see countries including the People's Republic of China using a variety of tools, particularly China's central position in the global economy, to increase other countries dependent relationship with them and then to use that dependence to impose their own foreign policy preferences and ultimately limit other countries. He commented that there are some headline-grabbing examples that may appear to come from far from this region, but there are also other examples from much closer to home, and these lessons are important for all countries to consider.

✓ **SUMMARY REMARKS (16:35-16:45)**

- **Mr. Anthony Kim, Research Fellow in Economic Freedom, Editor of the Index of Economic Freedom, and Manager of Global Engagement, Margaret Thatcher Center for Freedom, Davis Institute for National Security and Foreign Policy, The Heritage**

Foundation

Mr. Anthony Kim started his summary remarks by thanking Congressman Pittenger for his vision and commitment. Mr. Kim expressed that the organization that Congressman Pittenger has created intends to create actionable solutions, not just talking points. He also expressed that it is important for us to think together and try to find actionable solutions together. Mr. Kim also extended an open invitation to all of the attendees to come to Washington, DC. The Heritage Foundation is a public policy and educational think tank that has a mission and vision statement to build on America's freedoms. They want to create Panama, where freedom, opportunity, prosperity, and civil society flourish. To do this, they need to empower individuals and put together actionable ideas and solutions. This is an ongoing journey, and Mr. Kim finally urges people to keep adding and multiplying good ideas.

FEBRUARY 24 (FRIDAY)

✓ **CRYPTO ASSETS / CRYPTOCURRENCIES (9:00-9:40) (30-minute presentation/10-minute Q/A)**

- **Mr. Combiz Abdolrahimi, Esq., Global Emerging Technology & Innovation Leader, Deloitte, United States**

Mr. Abdolrahimi spoke about the security challenges posed by the intersection of crypto or digital assets, artificial intelligence and quantum technologies, which have the potential to revolutionize the way we do business, interact with one another, and wage war.

He has served in the US government as a regulator, policy advisor, attorney, and chief Innovation officer, and is aware of the potential for these technologies to undermine national security and global security.

Quantum has the potential to break existing encryption methods, leaving our data and communication vulnerable to interception and misuse, and the growing adoption of digital assets must address the potential security implications from these new forms of transactions, he mentioned.

Mr. Abdolrahimi also stated that AI has the potential to transform the way we approach security challenges, from automated threat detection to autonomous decision making. Digital assets and blockchain technology can help Panama expand business opportunities by enabling faster and more efficient cross-border transactions and providing new financing options and that AI can also provide deeper insights into consumer preferences and operations.

- **Mr. Martin Rodriguez, Legal Advisor for DOJ - ICHIP US Embassy in Panama**

Mr. Rodriguez spoke about the threats that have been identified with the misuse of crypto assets, the challenges that cryptocurrency investigations have, the difficulty of investigating cybercrime, and the work done to improve the capacities of Panama and other countries to respond to this type of crime. These threats include the creation of complex structures to launder money or the creation of companies dedicated to the exchange of these crypto assets, which can be used to scam people. These threats are not limited to a single country, but affect cross-border. The use of crypto assets in criminal offenses is not a crime, but rather a tool that facilitates the commission of a crime. It is not necessary to reform the penal code as such, but to understand that this is only an accessory part of the conduct that is being committed.

As an example, Mr. Rodriguez explained that a traditional scam committed through technological means can be converted into cryptoactives. It is up to the investigator to understand how that part works to be able to investigate it and obtain quality information or clues.

✓ **TRANSATLANTIC ALLIANCES FOR STRONG MARKET ECONOMIES (9:40-10:20) (30-minute presentation/10-minute Q/A)**

- **Ambassador Carla Sands, Vice Chair, Center for Energy and Environment, America First Policy Institute, United States**

Ambassador Sands explained that the purpose of her discussion was to imagine a

cleaner, healthier and safer Latin America and Caribbean with prosperity and opportunity for all. She mentioned that the Chinese Communist Party has made it clear that they seek to control our systems of government, economy and beliefs, and have used their vast supply of rare earth minerals and refineries as a weapon to undermine Economic Security and sovereignty. They have a plan to dominate and subjugate the world, known as the Long March, which culminates in 2049, and have aligned with leaders like the ayatollahs in Iran, Vladimir Putin in Russia, and Maduro in Venezuela. Ambassador Sands explained that leaders are using their energy production and transportation to pressure and disrupt global supply chains and transportation, exporting terrorism, and endangering the prosperity and freedom of billions of people around the world. This is due to the West choosing politics over prosperity.

While demonizing necessary fossil fuels, proponents of the green movement are pressuring the most vulnerable individuals in developing nations to use goods that are produced through slavery and cruelty. The United States has travelled to these nations and constructed hospitals and schools, but has neglected to place a high priority on commerce and investment. China has filled a gap in the Caribbean and Latin America by financing development projects, and if the West decides to give up on pursuing Prosperity through Innovation, Energy, and Industry, the developing world will be left with no other choice than to partner with China. China will soon hold the record for the largest debt load in Latin America and the Caribbean. After a Chinese dissident was given the Nobel Peace Prize, Norway was cut off from all commercial and diplomatic ties. The United States ought to prioritize prosperity for everyone and to promote trade and investment.

- **Mr. Michael Chen, President of the Colon Chambers of Commerce**

Mr. Chen explained that Panama has been the target of news that intend to create instability, and that the only way to tackle this situation is through key alliances that protect our way of living and create synergies and win-win situations. The speaker also brings an example of Colon, a small City 45 minutes away from Panama, which contributes the most to Panama's GDP in a per capita basis. The key question is who the existing alliances are and how can they be improved. Colon's unemployment rate is high, and the main streets of the Avenues are losing businesses due to politicians giving away food and appliances in exchange for votes. This situation is similar throughout Latin America and the question is how can a city with such potential end up in such a precarious situation? To change this, Mr. Chen suggests that the private sector and Civil Society must work together to create a long-lasting alliance and put into action a plan that will guarantee true sustainable change.

✓ **ILLICIT DRUGS / GANGS STRUCTURES (10:50-11:30) (30-minute presentation/10-minute Q/A)**

- **Minister Juan Manuel Pino F., Minister of National Security of Panama**

Minister Pino pointed out that the Republic of Panama has implemented a drug containment strategy to combat the influx of illicit drugs from other latitudes, especially Colombia and Ecuador. This strategy includes territorial control, strategic alliances with cooperating countries, border security, and actions against organized crime. The law of project 625 is used to measure the impact of the actions of organized crime on the homicide rate. The interdiction network in the Caribbean and the Pacific is also used to carry out maritime interdictions. The Panamanian state has made the largest seizure of cocaine at sea, 5000 packages of cocaine north of Bocas del Toro, thanks to the implementation of new systems in the national air-naval service.

This seizure is a criminal x-ray of the fight against drugs, highlighting the country's prestigious territorial location and multimodal services, as well as its proximity to

producing countries in the South. The legalization of Cannabis in North America has led to increased daily consumption, especially of potent cannabis products, and increased suicides and hospitalizations. This has led to a surge in illicit maritime traffic, with 320 maritime traffic alerts in the Caribbean and 616 in the Pacific in 2021.

- **Admiral Doug Fears, Former Deputy Assistant to the President and the Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Advisor on the National Security Council staff, United States**

Admiral Fears explained that the cycle of success applies to all countries involved in interdiction of illicit activities, and that interdiction is vitally important to the success of the mission space. He described the interdependence between intelligence-targeting-detection-monitoring-interdiction-apprehension-investigations-prosecutions, as a cycle of success. He emphasized the importance of intelligence in this cycle, as it is a vital part of the framework to have success in countering transnational criminal organizations and counter narcotics. He emphasized that the system is not static. It is either in an upward spiral of success, or a downward spiral of deteriorating performance; therefore, each of the interdependent features of the cycle must be healthy.

Admiral Fears emphasized the importance of having laws and clear authorities that give each of the participants in the cycle of success what they need in order to be productive, and the need for a close connection with investigators and prosecutors to bring criminals to justice.

✓ **COMBATING EMERGING THREATS IN TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME AFFECTING THE CARIBBEAN AND THE AMERICAS (11:30-12:25) (45-minute presentation/10-minute Q/A)**

- **Prof. Celina Realuyo, Professor of Practice, William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies, National Defense University, United States**

Prof. Realuyo explained that Latin America is more vulnerable to transnational organized crime and insecurity due to the environment that we live in, corruption, weak institutions, and the role of external actors such as China, Russia, Iran, and the US. Additionally, Prof. Realuyo explained that the region is susceptible to natural disasters, making it the most volatile and vulnerable region in the world. Latin America is the most vulnerable region to transactional organized crime, with the highest homicide rates per hundred thousand.

Prof. Realuyo stated that Narco trafficking is the number one most lucrative illicit activity in the world, with a kilo of cocaine costing \$48,000 Dollars in the US, \$100,000 Europe and \$180,000 in Australia.

- **Mr. Joseph Humire, Executive Director, Center for a Secure Free Society**

Mr. Joseph Humire explained that transnational organized crime is becoming increasingly weaponized due to technology, disinformation, and the growth of illicit economies that introduce perverse incentives changing local cultures of many societies. He introduced the key question of what makes an illicit activity illicit, which is a border. Borders not only provide a jurisdiction for a distinct national legal framework, but more importantly it provides the cultural identity of a nation-state that drives its sovereignty. He also noted that the crisis on the U.S Southern border is an extension of the multiple border crises that Latin America is facing. Venezuela is experiencing the most severe border crisis in Latin America's history, leading to the largest migrant and refugee outflows in the world, with 7.2 million Venezuelans having left since 2014. Mr. Humire visited the Colombia-Venezuela border three times over the last couple years and saw Russian radar systems, Iranian-made surveillance drones, Chinese satellites, and a

hotbed of transnational organized crime. He called this Great Power Competition (GPC) on the most dangerous border in the Western Hemisphere and then described the process to which mass migration leads to a humanitarian crisis, which devolves into irregular conflicts among illicit actors, which leads to external actors controlling the border and weakening the sovereignty of that country. This ultimately weakens democratic nation-states by diminishing border controls and establishing a false moral equivalency between democracy and authoritarianism.

Mr. Humire then discussed how Hezbollah is at the heart of several border conflicts in the Western Hemisphere. He described how Hezbollah, as a transnational criminal organization is also recognized as a foreign terrorist organization by more than 60 countries throughout the world, including five countries in Latin America. Moreover, in 2018, the U.S. Department of Justice published a list of the top five transnational criminal organizations in the world, which included Hezbollah because of its heavy involvement in drug trafficking and money laundering. Hezbollah has been able to create a robust trade-based money laundering scheme in Venezuela by using matching corporate registries, multiple currencies, dual nationalities, and free trade zones, which can be exploited by illicit actors. This is felt in Panama because Colon, a major Free Trade Zone, is a target of Hezbollah who set up a network of illicit companies that mirror commercial transactions with two other cities: Punto Fijo, Venezuela; and Maicao, Colombia. This establishes a new maritime Tri-Border Area (TBA) very similar to the original TBA in South America. He concluded by emphasizing that this does not have to stay this way and there are many honest and hard-working businessmen in the Lebanese communities in Colon (and elsewhere in Latin America) but to ensure that this changes, legislatures and policymakers in Latin America need to properly designate Hezbollah as a terrorist organization, successfully prosecute Hezbollah's criminal activity, and establish a business network that empowers the Lebanese communities throughout Latin America to distance themselves from this nefarious organization.

- **Congressman Sebastian Cal Urrutia (Uruguay)**

Congressman Cal Urrutia spoke about cybercrime, cybersecurity and cyberdefense. He mentioned that legislators have an enormous responsibility with regard to transnational crime in all its forms, and Budapest is the largest international cooperation agreement that guides us to have in one line an essential trilogy for the fight against cybercrime. There is an essential function for legislators to typify the crimes that Budapest recommends, another part that goes by the procedural law, and the third leg is international cooperation, which helps the countries that make it up tremendously in order to be able to exchange information.

Congressman Cal Urrutia shared that Uruguay is working on a cybersecurity law since 2020 that has some peculiarities and differences from other cybersecurity laws around the world. To combat cybercrime, the bill has dedicated itself to classifying crimes that even the Budapest Convention does not contemplate, such as digital terrorism, identity theft, and human trafficking. It also promotes a National Education campaign from early childhood to the elderly and has analyzed more than 1000 cases of cybercrime to classify some crimes that were not even contemplated in Budapest. The bill also seeks to classify precedent crimes before some of these can be carried out.

✓ **DOES CHINESE TECHNOLOGY RELIANCE HAVE ECONOMIC/SECURITY CONCERNS IN THE CARIBBEAN AND LATIN AMERICA? (13:25-13:45) (15-minute presentation/5-minute Q/A)**

- **Mr. John Strand, CEO, Strand Consult, Denmark**

Mr. Strand discussed the impact of Chinese technology on a region like Caribbeans and Latin America. Mr. Strand went on to explain that we live in a digital Society where everything is connected and that telecommunication networks are a horizontal

fundament for our society. He also pointed out that the many devices we're putting on , which is everything from machines to different kind of measure meters can measure a lot of things in our society, and that it is important to stand on top of that fundament.

Mr. Strand explained the use of digital smart cities and smart citizens in the future. These cities are connected to the internet and collect data from various sources, such as cars, smart cities, and smart citizens. For example, a scale in a bathroom is connected to the cloud and allows users to access the information on their phone. This scale costs nothing and can be used to measure weight, weather forecast, and temperature. Other things such as electricity and heating are also connected, such as Central Heating in a house, which is delivered through pipes and automatically sitting meters on radiators. These digital smart cities are becoming more and more common in the future, allowing people to track their daily activities and make informed decisions.

Mr. Strand pointed out that China is moving quickly in the car industry, with 49 car startup companies and electric cars sending data back to the car manufacturer. There is a law requiring car manufacturers to deliver all the data for all the cars to the authorities on the fly all the time, and the official explanation is that if the Chinese government has access to these states, they can help develop and improve the security of these cars. Chinese cars also have microphones in them, the question is... Where does all the collected data go? Where is the cloud located?

✓ **EXTINCTION OF DOMAIN LAW, AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO FIGHT AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS (13:45-14:05) (15-minute presentation/5-minute Q/A)**

- **Mr. Jonathan Riggs, General Secretary of the Ministry of National Security of Panama**

Mr. Riggs explained that the extinction of domain is a criminal prosecution mechanism that deprives criminal organizations of financial resources to weaken their operational structure and generate a balance in the frontal combat against criminal organizations. It is a patrimonial legal consequence consisting of the loss in favor of the state of economic resources that do not enjoy legitimacy or constitutional protection.

The extinction of domain seeks to rebuild the social fabric, rebuild victims and create a balance due to the impact on sustainable human development caused by organized crime. To do this, it is important for the legal system to incorporate the pension law and judicialized operations against organized crime. Operation Neptune, Operation Fisher, Operation Fortress, Operation Quixote have allowed the confiscation of 10 million dollars in a single operation during the year of 2022 and 10.2 million dollars between bank accounts, farms, properties, financial institutions and vehicles are awaiting a judicial decision that allows the use of those funds and resources.

✓ **ILLICIT TRADE (14:05-15:15) (1-hour presentation/10-minute Q/A)**

- **Mr. Alejo Campos, Regional Director, Crime Stoppers Foundation, Americas and Caribbean, Panama**

Mr. Campos opened the panel by explaining that Illicit trade has a major impact on economic issues, tax collection, and national security and defense issues. It is used to finance criminal structures, and terrorism mobilizes products such as cigarettes, alcoholic beverages, and medicines. It also uses other products such as clothing, food, footwear, tires, spare parts for cars, and product counterfeiting. He mentioned that every time we speak, more issues are introduced and the phenomenon of illicit trade becomes more complex. Mr. Campos pointed out that Money laundering through trade is a transaction between legal and commercial documents, where the papers are both for the competent authorities and for the banks on both sides or on the three sides. It is clean and does not generate a suspicious transaction report, and is done by mobilizing products.

- **Mrs. Tayra Barsallo, Director of the Panama Customs Office**

Mrs. Barsallo explained that The National Customs Authority in Panama has advanced the invisible shield project, an information ecosystem that will be concentrated in a single monitoring center to analyze transfer and have the information to prosecute all the different data in the National customs authority. The objective of the project is to fight money laundering, illicit traffic of radioactive material, radio radiation monitoring, air cargo by land and sea, dual-use materials, terrorism, illicit trafficking of illicit substances, intellectual property and other merchandise and other commodities. The monitoring center in Panama is bringing together experts in maritime security, border security, money laundering and compliance to reduce costs and ensure timely information is transmitted to different agencies. To combat these crimes, 16 scanners are distributed in strategic points of the country, and the public-private alliance is contributing to this security strategy. Additionally, the national government has invested in the purchase of equipment and human resources to ensure that all airmail cargo is already scanning 100% of both what comes in and what goes out, giving it security and a guarantee that the merchandise leaving the national territory is safe merchandise.

- **Mrs. Marissa Lasso de la Vega, Director of the Alliance against Contraband of Panama**

Mrs. de la Vega spoke about the alliance against illicit trade, explained that this is a group of companies and brands, unions, associations that have been affected by smuggling, counterfeiting, and illicit trade in general. It has legal status which allows it to sit at a table with the government to fight and defend what is legal trade, safe trade, and protect Panama from being used as a hub logistic wrongly and erroneously. It is growing, with a common goal of being a bridge, a channel of communication with competent authorities, and all those that have to do with the fight against illegal trade. The alliance against illicit trade is a non-profit foundation whose vision and mission is to fight against this scourge of illicit trade. It works in coordination with government institutions to promote safe trade and promote good trade practices, including the issue of parallel imports.

Criminals use new routes, social networks, websites, border blind spots and mail to take advantage of high profits with low risk of being penalized. Consumers are looking for immediacy and the lowest possible price, so this forum is important because it emphasizes the link between illicit trade and organized crime, she mentioned.

- **Hon. Juan Martín Rodríguez, Congressman of Uruguay and Parlatino Secretariat**

Mr. Rodríguez discussed the importance of international cooperation and good practices in order to improve trade. He explained that security today in the 21st century is more a multidimensional issue that should be addressed from a global perspective. This is due to globalization that has made modern society more accessible, but it has also caused new threats, such as economic, environmental, and organized crime threats. To combat these threats, states must act cooperatively to unite in the fight against organized crime, against illicit trade.

✓ **DIGITAL MONEY AND THE IMPACT ON NATIONAL SECURITY (15:15-15:35) (15-minute presentation/5-minute Q/A)**

- **Ambassador Erik Bethel, Distinguished Fellow, Chamber of Digital Commerce; former U.S. Representative to the World Bank**

Ambassador Bethel explained that the world has been awash in cryptocurrency fever, which has profound implications for National Security.

He pointed out that Central Bank digital currencies are official government tender just in a digital form, and the Biden Administration has called for the creation of an U.S. digital

currency.

Central banks are creating digital versions of currencies to promote financial inclusion, collect taxes, help bank the unbanked, and trace illicit financial flows.

The biggest creator of digital currencies in the world is China.

It is estimated that 88.6 billion dollars leave the African continent every year in illicit Capital flight, so digital currencies have a lot of use cases in promoting financial inclusion and tracing illicit financial flows, but they also have national security implications.

✓ **WHY WE NEED ATLANTIC ENGAGEMENT WITH THE AMERICAS AND THE CARIBBEAN (15:35-15:55) (15-minute presentation/5-minute Q/A)**

- **Commissioner Jeremías Urieta, General Director of the AERONAVAL Service, Panama**

Commissioner Urieta from the National Aeronautical Service discussed why Panama considers an Atlantic commitment with America and the Caribbean, as it is a commitment to promote national coexistence at a global level.

He then stressed that illicit maritime traffic includes speedboats, containerized cargo, illegal storage, high-board vessels, fishing boats, recreational boats and LPV semi-submersibles, which are the main modalities and trends used by transnational organized crime to the trafficking of illicit substances during the period of 2022.

✓ **TRANSNATIONAL MIGRATION IN THE DARIE GAP (15:55-16:35) (30-minute presentation/10-minute Q/A)**

- **Mrs. Jussara Ramos, National Migration Office of Panama**

Mrs. Ramos pointed out that the irregular migratory flow has increased significantly since 2009, with 248,000 migrants passing through the Darien from 2009 to 2021. The migratory strategy of the country has had to evolve, with studies on the flow of movements through the airport and a reinforcement by sea to prevent organized crime from using the Hub of the Americas as a tool for trafficking and smuggling. The National Immigration Service has also conducted controlled flow operations to prevent Coyotes from being in the Darién jungle. Migratory security policies implemented in recent years have included visa policies for Cuban citizens and Haitians, as well as irregular flow of Darién people. This has forced the creation of formal and stable procedures for regular migration and a migratory control ticket for air passengers.

- **Mr. Luis Carlos Trejo, Sub-Director of the Border National Service of Panama**

Mr. Trejo pointed out that the Panamanian state is responsible for providing security to everyone who steps on its territory, including the migrant. This includes the 266 square kilometers of border with Colombia, where the Darién plug is located. To do this, the state has put institutions such as the national border service, national air-naval service, National Police and the National Migration Service in place to consolidate and sustain security on the borders of the Republic.