

## **VICTOR RICO FRONTAURA**

### **(Transcription from webcast)**

I would like to begin my intervention by thanking you for your very kind invitation to participate in this interactive dialogue to discuss a topic so crucial for humanity and the international community. The degree of our commitment, consistency and effectiveness with which we implement RtoP has a direct impact on the lives of human beings. RtoP may be considered a breakthrough for the international community regarding the way in which it understands serenity needed to engage those needing support irrespective of nationality, ideology, religion, ethnicity or class. In this endeavor allow me to highlight the important leadership of Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Ban Ki-moon whose strategy for RtoP shares important guidelines and ideas on a way forward.

The draft concept paper prepared for this informal interactive dialogue states that one of the purposes of this meeting is to reconfirm that RtoP is an evolving principle. In other words RtoP is a principle that develops gradually. Therefore the idea of RtoP as an evolving principle should not be interpreted as an opportunity to broaden the concept to include calamities and threats that endanger citizen security.

However the OAS has few existing mechanisms and mandates that specifically address and prevent the threats expressed in the narrow definition of RtoP. This situation reflects the positive fact that the region did not face those types of atrocities, except for specific periods when specific regions and countries experienced systematic human rights violations – including torture, forced disappearances of persons, massacres of indigenous peoples and peasants - were committed.

The Americas is a peaceful region. The region has a long history of solving interstate conflicts through institutional and legal international mechanisms. Furthermore, the region is experiencing a tendency towards greater political and social inclusion. An opening of the political system to previously excluded actors, voices, and issues. The OAS holds instruments including the inter-American human rights commission, the inter-American court of human rights, and the inter-American democratic charter that define and issue a normative framework for a reason of preventive and defensive approach.

The inter-American human rights system receives individual and collective petitions regarding human rights violations, establishes precautionary and binding measures to protect victims from urgent and potential cases of violations, and organizes country visits to assess the general and human rights conditions of member states. The existence and effectiveness of the inter-American human rights system contributes to a culture of protection and defense of human rights across the region. The inter-American democratic charter explicitly identifies respect for

human rights and fundamental freedoms as one of the essential elements of representative democracy. From a preventive perspective the charter calls upon member states to eliminate all forms of discrimination and diverse forms of intolerance to respect minorities as elements of the strengthening of democracy and citizen participation.

Within pillar 2 of the R2P strategy Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon identified five capacities to be included in assistance programs in order to reduce the likelihood of the genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. This seems to be an appropriate opportunity to share some of the OAS experience and efforts in four of these five areas.

**Indigenous Mediation Capacity:** between 1996 and 2003 the OAS launched in Guatemala the program culture of dialogue, development of resources for peace building in Guatemala to foster conflict prevention and management. The program's goal was to help Guatemala address growing tensions and political disputes related to the implementation of the peace accords. The program lasted 7 years and provided Guatemalans with training on negotiation, mediation, and conflict resolution skills.

**Consensus and Dialogue:** The OAS fostered and coordinated a number of national dialogue processes that were crucial to prevent escalation of political crisis, social conflict, and unconstitutional interruption of democratic order.

**Local Dispute Resolution Capacity:** the inter-American program of legal facilitators brings justice to local communities in a cost-efficient, direct, and humane manner. Currently this program is being implemented in a number of countries: Guatemala, Ecuador, Panama, Nicaragua, and Paraguay.

**Capacity to replicate capacity:** the OAS is creating a roster of mediators, experts and special envoys. In addition the OAS is also systematizing its role on conflict prevention and resolution and presenting them as case studies to include in academic courses and training. Recently, the organization launched a training program on conflict resolution, mediation and dialogue available to member states' government officials. Initially this training is being offered in Guatemala, Haiti and Colombia.

**Some things on the OAS experience in Colombia:** within framework of the OAS mission to support the peace process in Colombia, there are a number of initiatives worth mentioning that resonate with the five capacities identified by the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. Project "We Are All Women" established a dialogue between female victims and aggressors with the purpose of contributing to reconstructing relationships and social integration. Another project was implemented in an Afro-Colombian community located in Valle de Colca to reconstruct on the basis of stories and pictures. This process contributes to collective healing, social cohesion, and interpersonal trust.

Human Rights Community Forum: this is an existing initiative undertaken by one of Medalline's municipalities through which neighbors learned to identify local programs and work with local authorities in their solutions.

Mr. President, since its creation the OAS has accumulated vast experience and developed high-quality expertise in inter- and intra-state conflict prevention, management and resolution. In addition, the inter-American system has developed an effective and legitimate normative and procedural structure to protect and defend human rights. However these two areas are distinct from the prevention of mass atrocities. Even though our region is a peaceful and democratic one, we are facing complex problems with negative and corrosive impacts on democracy. Poverty, inequality, corruption, drug trafficking, and organized crime are some of the challenges that need to be addressed by the member states from a regional perspective to the OAS and other multilateral organizations. In addition, although interstate conflict seems to be on the fall, the arrival of new and recycling of all older issues – natural resources, power disputes, land, environment – seem to be a cause of a tendency of intra-state conflicts. In light of these pressing issues and conflictive causes there needs to be a strategic decision as to identify the conceptual and practical priorities. The OAS is committed to work on these priorities along with other international organizations.