

The Puerto Vallarta Declaration

Last October 9, Ministers of Justice and Attorney Generals from 12 countries met in Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, with the purpose of working out common policy guidelines to fight drug traffic and abuse. The countries represented at the two-day conference were the United States, Belize, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Peru, Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Jamaica and Mexico.

At the inauguration, President Miguel de la Madrid demanded that the struggle against drug smuggling be conceived as a clear and firm international movement and as a harmonious factor that can help ward off "the risk that these problems may come between us." Mexican Attorney General Sergio García Ramírez said the main object of the meeting was to acquire greater knowledge of the issue at hand in order to improve the capacity to combat drug trafficking and consumption.

United States Attorney General Edwin Meese proposed that the United Nations set up a fund to be used in the international struggle against drug trafficking. In his address, Mr. Meese also reprimanded the U.S. press and regreted that there has been irresponsible criticism of Mexico.

Peruvian representative Carlos Blancas Bustamante and Ecuador's Jorge Maldonado Rennella both rejected the use of U.S. soldiers in Latin American countries on the pretext of fighting drug traffic. They said the United States should use its troops to combat the use of drugs in its own territory instead of sending them to other countries to attack drug production.

The document issued at the close of the meeting was released under the name of "The Puerto Vallarta Declaration." Because of its importance for future joint efforts in the struggle against drug abuse, VOICES OF MEXICO reproduces the complete statement:

THE PUERTO VALLARTA DECLARATION

The Ministers of Justice and Attorney Generals (or their representatives) of several countries met on October 8-10, 1986 in Puerto Vallarta, Jalisco, Mexico. Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, United States, Guatemala, Jamaica, Panama, Peru and Venezuela were called together by Mexico because of a mutual

concern for the issues to be dealt with. The purpose of the meeting was to exchange points of view and to stimulate concerted regional actions, all within a framework of respect for each country's regard for its own national rights vis a vis the other countries present or any other country in the international community.

Invitations to the meeting were sent out by Mexican President Miguel de la Madrid to the Heads of State of several American countries, and the event was named "Regional Meeting of Ministers of Justice and Attorney Generals." The representatives acknowledged the Mexican president's initiative and expressed their gratitude for the hospitality of the Mexican government.

A broad examination of the problems of drug trafficking and abuse in the nations represented at the Meeting was made in order to acquire greater insight into its specific characteristics and to strengthen both national and international means of combating the problem. Delegates delivered their presentations without the constraint of a rigid agenda and without intending to adopt resolutions that differed from those adopted by each individual nation. This work-method favored frank and open discussions.

This meeting does not substitute for other forums dedicated to examine the issue of drug traffic and to coordinate actions. Thus, the participants reaffirm the subsistence of previous agreements, methods and mechanisms to study and combat drug traffic and abuse.

The Puerto Vallarta Meeting fulfilled its objectives and allowed the governments represented to carry out an effective examination of the issue. Everyone stressed the prevailing good will and respect for the solutions that each country adopts as an exercise of its sovereignty, as well as the need to favor mutual cooperation according to applicable international and national norms and in accordance with the specific characteristics of these problems.

In view of all this, the governments represented at the Regional Meeting of Ministers of Justice and Attorney Generals decided by consensus to express the following statements:

1. A reiteration of the firm political decision to

forcefully continue in the struggle against the crimes that endanger the health of the peoples represented at this Meeting, and the permanent determination to prevent and correct drug abuse. The gravity and complexity of these problems that cause severe damage to society and its institutions was stressed. It was added that it is necessary to act against this crime against health at different stages, beginning with the planning and financing of the narcotics trade and including consumption of drugs and psychotropics.

2. The unavoidable need for objective in-depth knowledge of the factors that determine or propitiate drug traffic and abuse was recognized. It was stated that an efficient struggle against these problems implies, beyond police and legal measures, a firm and vigorous effort on behalf of social, economic and cultural development, in the belief that this type of factor has a determinant influence on the appearance and development of drug traffic and abuse.

3. The convenience of favoring legitimate coordination of tasks among the region's countries was recognized, taking into account that drug trafficking is an internationally executed crime. In order to achieve this end the countries will adopt the measures that each considers pertinent to effectively share information and provide adequate assistance in penal matters, all within each country's constitutional and legal framework.

4. Taking into account the present characteristics of delinquency against the health of the individual, the family and especially against children and youth, note was taken of legislative and institutional reforms undertaken by different countries. It was considered convenient to further update or modernize national legislation on the matter as well as the means and instruments to apply said legislation, all in the terms that each country considers convenient.

5. It was also noted that several countries lack the necessary resources to strike at these crimes and to correct their causes. Thus, it was considered convenient to favor the use of resources secured by or confiscated from those involved in these delinquent activities in order to support national and international campaigns against drug traffic and abuse. Each participant will review the means and terms of promoting this measure.

6. The convenience of improving technical qualifications and equipment for the development of national campaigns against drug traffic and abuse was emphasized. Thus, participants in the Meeting expressed their willingness to support each other in this respect in accordance to measures allowed for by each nation's legislation.

7. Reports were heard on the significant efforts many nations are carrying out to prevent and remedy drug abuse. Within this framework, it was considered necessary to support broad community mobilization in these countries, respecting prevailing norms and traditions, to develop an awareness of the gravity of the problems under examination and of the need to prevent and eradicate them through the joint effort of different social sectors. The development of this awareness in the family, at schools and at the work place is extremely important.

8. Some of the participants proposed setting up a working group or committee in charge of planning measures to further greater regional cooperation with the purpose of effectively reducing production, trafficking and illicit consumption of drugs and psychotropics. The suggestion was left open with the agreement that it should be acted on as soon as possible, at a future meeting of the region's Ministers of Justice and Attorney Generals represented at Puerto Vallarta.

9. Likewise, the usefulness of meetings such as this was recognized, as they serve to stimulate free and efficient exchange of points of view in an atmosphere of mutual appreciation, harmony and respect. Suggestions were heard for possible future meetings of this type to be convened by the interested countries following consultations with the nations represented at the Puerto Vallarta Meeting, and if such were the case, with other countries of America whose presence would be useful depending on the state of drug trafficking and abuse in these countries.

10. The participants stated their recognition of the efforts made by all to be present at the Puerto Vallarta Meeting, as well as everyone's pertinent expositions. They also confirmed their mutually binding and firm resolve to participate in a common struggle against drug trafficking and abuse.★

Puerto Vallarta, October 10, 1986.

