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**STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF GUATEMALA, AMBASSADOR FERNANDO CARRERA CASTRO, DURING THE OPEN BRIEFING OF THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL ON PEACE AND SECURITY IN AFRICA: DRUG TRAFFICKING IN SAHEL AND WEST AFRICA**

(18 December, 2013)

Mr. President,

I am pleased to once more be in a session of the Security Council, when Guatemala is 12 days from concluding its tenure as an elected member for the biennium 2011-2012. Let me begin by thanking Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon; Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime, Yuri Fedotov; and SRSG for West Africa, Said Djinnit, for their respective briefings. We also thank Ambassador Gérard Araud of France, who exercises the Presidency of the Council for this month, for his lucid concept paper.

What is most striking from that paper are the important similarities which affect North Africa and Central America as regions that are gravely affected in their condition as countries of transit between the markets of production and consumption of illicit drugs. In the case of the Mesoamerican territory we are referring to 90% of the drugs which move from the South to the North of the American continent. This situation of transit countries has given rise to the proliferation of narco-trafficking organizations accompanied by much criminal violence and especially violent homicides in our territory, although fortunately in the past three years we have achieved an important reduction in their incidence, due to the strengthening of our security and justice institutions.

Undoubtedly, the engine of the drug trade is the same globally, be it in producing, consuming or transit countries: I refer to the enormous profits generated by the trade of illicit drugs. The corrosive power of the important financial flows originates in the consuming countries. Equally important is the trafficking of arms originating in the consuming countries that reach transit and producing countries. That is why it is not an exaggeration to state that the trafficking of arms and the illegal financial flows from the North to the South are undermining the foundations of democratic institutions, not only in West Africa and the Sahel, but also, with important differences of degree, in our region.

Up to now, the response framework at the global level has been based on a prohibitionist approach regarding the market of drugs, which utilizes as its principal strategy repression and interdiction through the criminal justice system. From Guatemala's perspective, and with the support of other countries of the region and the rest of the world who share this view, we seek a new model to address the global drug problem, centered on regulation, public health, lowering harm and wellbeing of citizens, all based on the respect of human rights. We therefore need to move from partial and inefficient responses towards an integrated response which provides us with better results, and for this there is a need to have a broad discussion at the global level to seek alternatives to the existing response, which has failed in providing more and better results. It is with this objective that in our Hemisphere the Declaration of Antigua Guatemala, emanating from the General Assembly of the Organization of American States, and adopted in June of 2013, has marked a milestone, launching an inter-governmental debate on the drug problem in the Americas, and which continues to deepen in

regional forums such as the Inter-American Commission against the Abuse of Drugs and the Pan American Health Organization.

It is clear that to confront this scourge cooperation is necessary, just as the concept paper suggests, and as was stated in the Presidential Statement issued by this Council on 21 February of last year, under the Presidency of Togo. We note that in West Africa and in the Sahel region there is ample intraregional cooperation, promoted especially by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). In the Americas we also count with numerous mechanisms of intraregional cooperation, under the aegis of Organization of American States and the already mentioned IACAD. On the other hand, in spite of the enormous commonalities between both regions in this matter, there is little or no cooperation between different regions of the world, a situation which in our view should be addressed, since, for example, West Africa and the Americas have much to learn from each others' accumulated experiences through an open dialogue. Needless to say, this South-South cooperation should be complemented with a good dosage of cooperation provided by the principal consuming countries.

In order to move this inter-regional dialogue forward, Guatemala affirms its readiness to support the engagement between the Americas and West Africa and the Sahel Region, with a view to identify and develop jointly new policies and strategies to address the global drug problem.

We can all agree that combating the trafficking of illicit drugs is a major challenge for all of humanity, which must be addressed decisively. Indeed, the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem mandated by the General Assembly to be held in 2016 (Resolution 67/193) will offer an exceptional opportunity to deal with the matter.

Mr. President,

As stated at the beginning, Guatemala will conclude its mandate in a few days. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to bid farewell, and say that it has been a privilege to be able to contribute to the noble and irreplaceable task of this Council to maintain international peace and security. The Council has been much criticized for its obvious shortcomings, its inequitable composition, and its insufficiently transparent working methods. Many of those criticisms have merit, and there is little doubt that this Organ needs to adapt to the new global realities. We ourselves have expressed specific ideas on the matter which we have set out in other venues. But, for now, the Security Council is the only thing we have in the multilateral setting to maintain an international order that, in spite of all its imperfections, has been able to avoid major global conflagrations, and at the same time has managed to mitigate and often overcome conflicts of limited geographical scope. It has been a source of profound satisfaction for my country to be part, for the very first time, of this Organ, and we trust that in a not too distant future we will return. We believe in all due modesty that we have made a contribution to the collective work of the Council, and we leave enriched for the experience.

Thank you very much.