Central American Forum on Security

Final Report

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Guatemala City

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I. **Background**

The political transformations experienced in Central America and the geopolitical situation at the international level during the 1980s had a significant impact on the re-conceptualization of security. The notion of security, which at that time was inspired by a national security doctrine, began to incorporate concepts of democratic security, regional security and human security. This change became evident in the creation of national and regional security agendas, which included these concepts.

At the national levels, there was a process that encouraged the appearance of new institutional actors with leading roles, such as the police forces and those who administer justice. Also, the role of the armed forces in matters of domestic security was streamlined in countries where an army still existed. At the regional level, the traditional security model of cooperation was substituted by a set of principles, whose main objective was to redefine the conceptual and institutional frameworks of regional security. The new model became known as the *Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America* (TMSDCA) and was signed by the presidents of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama in 1995.

Nevertheless, aside from the conceptual advances and the limited civil nature of the regional agenda, after more than five years of being implemented by Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua, it became evident that the treaty's potential was restricted and flawed; thus a process of evaluation and reform was needed. Moreover, the changes experienced in terms of security following the events of September 11, 2001, fuelled the urgent need of a consultation process to discuss the new challenges of regional and hemispheric security as well as the mechanisms to confront them.

In this regard, based on the mandate of the 2001 Summit of the Americas, the Organization of American States (OAS) is organizing the Special Conference on Hemispheric Security. In the case of the framework treaty, its clauses stipulate that after five years of its entry into force and as a request from two member States, the Central American Security Commission (CSC), which consists of the Vice-Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defence and of the Interior (national security), could convene a meeting for the purpose of assessing and agreeing on the necessary changes for the treaty.

To that end, in July 2002, under the Costa Rican interim presidency (Presidencia Pro-Tempore - PPT) of the Central American Integration System (SICA), an *ad hoc* group consisting of members of the subcommittees of the CSC was created to evaluate and supervise the assessment of the TMSDCA. Under the Costa Rican PPT (July-December 2002), this group met on two occasions, during which the theoretical and the procedural frameworks of the treaty were established and the proposals presented by Costa Rica, regarding its objection of several clauses, were also reviewed.

II. **Summary**

The Central American Forum on Security, convened by the Regional Coordination for Economic and Social Research (CRIES) and the Institute of Education and Sustainable Development (IEPADES) with the collaboration of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and
the Human Security Program of the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (HSP-DFAIT), was carried out in Guatemala City on July 30-31, 2003, with the purpose of creating a space where Central American representatives of non-governmental organizations, social networks, regional and national agencies could dialogue and discuss the new challenges of hemispheric, regional and national security as well as the evaluation and reform of the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America (TMSDCA). The forum promoted an enriching debate and produced a series of recommendations regarding the participation of civil society, which will be presented at the Special Conference on Hemispheric Security on October 27 and 28 in Mexico.  

The general conclusion that was reached at the forum was that, in spite of the advances that the democratic security agenda has made, there still are very important challenges that need to be tackled by diverse national and regional actors, especially as a result of the consequences that the events of 9/11 had on the hemispheric, regional and national security agendas. In this regard, a consensus was reached that the framework treaty and the concept of democratic security are valuable vis-à-vis a process or tendency that is trying to restrict security agendas to the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking. Therefore, it is necessary to promote not only a better implementation of the treaty, but also a process that would correct and improve certain clauses that would guarantee the ratification by Belize, Costa Rica and Panama. This would strengthen the social and political aspects of regional integration, which today are in deficit.

III. The Conceptualization of Hemispheric Security Post 9/11

The concept of regional security is not new in Central America. However, it has been difficult to formulate a security policy due to the various distinct national security agendas, the lack of debate about security issues, lack of coordination between countries of the region and the influence that the United States has to impose its interests at the regional level.

The Latin American security model was shaped by the internal conflicts of the 1980s, when the State resorted to the use of force, suspicion, authoritarianism, repression and punishment instead of preventive measures. Today, the new models promote peace, social participation and constitutional democratic order. For that reason, a security model, which is inclusive, decentralized, open, and which is built on the basis of the participation and security of civil society, is needed. This must be a model based on trust between society and the State.

Security agendas must be designed based on the re-conceptualization of security and the new threats, which differ from old ones in that their nature was military, territorial and of States. Among the new security threats are terrorism, drug trafficking, organized crime, the destruction of the environment and illegal migration. The new security agenda, as a result, needs a multidisciplinary focus and the participation of many sectors in order to decentralize the process of decision-making. To achieve this, however, techniques, such as access to information, analysis, dialogue and the systematization of the prevention process, are needed.

1 The Special Conference on Hemispheric Security was postponed from its original date of May 6-8, 2003.
Nevertheless, due to the consequences of 9/11, the old structures of national security, such as the army, were re-introduced to tackle the new threats like terrorism. The fight against terrorism has become an instrument that allows the return of social control and the persecution of the ideologies of the past in detriment to preventive measures and the respect of human rights. In many Central American countries, the process of transferring power from the army to the police forces had began, but this institution, aside from being weak, tackles the effects of the threat and not the actual threat per se. Therefore, it is important that a hemispheric security agenda includes national and sub-regional proposals that reflect security at all levels.

Prior to 9/11, social participation at the international level was heading towards multilateralism and the cooperation of a series of non-governmental actors, which initiated a process that appeared to be very important. However, the events of 9/11 produced a transformation that made the United States and the global society, according to the Secretary General of the United Nations, the most influential actors in the international system.

In matters of security, however, civil society organizations (CSOs) have yet to include these issues as part of their agendas. There are some precedents dating back to the 1980s, but security concerns were basically limited to the role of the armed forces as political actors and the situation of human rights, leaving the State in charge of security matters. For this reason, civil society needs to become more involved in the creation of a security conceptual framework and the development of an agenda based on this framework and its own interests. Before hand, however, CSOs need to create proposal agendas.

In conclusion, civil society must initiate a consultation process from below and must work with public actors, such as politicians and political parties, to integrate their proposals and recommendations to government plans and nation-wide programs. This is an inclusionary vision that promotes the creation of spaces that allow civil society to participate and discuss issues of security. It is also necessary to discuss security issues with different actors to incorporate their perspectives and create a common security agenda. Lastly, it is important to reintroduce the framework treaty as a mechanism that proposes an integral concept and facilitates the creation of a common security agenda in a context where no alternatives exist.

IV. Conclusions y recommendations

Taking into consideration the events of September 11 and the notion of security at that time, the forum concluded that hemispheric security faces various vulnerabilities and challenges, which include some of the following:

- The lack of preparation or weakening of the police forces in tackling new threats, such as drug trafficking and terrorism.
- The lack of economic growth and the insuperable fight against poverty.
- The weakening of the judicial system and the lack of democratic institutionalization, which result from an anti-democratic political class and a non-participatory civil society.
- The lack of integration in Central America and the lack of consensus about a common political, economic and social vision.
Lastly, the actual events of 9/11 and certain internal conflicts, such as the Colombian conflict, which is perceived as a problem of terrorism and drug trafficking, also constitute a menace for security agendas and the state of hemispheric security.

**Main recommendations**

The principal outcome of the forum was a series of proposals intended for the Special Conference on Security, the discussion of the evaluation and reform of the framework treaty as well as the participation of civil society in this process.

Among the main proposals before the Special Conference on Security are:

1. To examine what the Central American democratic security model can contribute, so that security begins to be perceived from the notion that humans are at the centre and to include concepts of social justice, human rights, freedom and no authoritarianism.
2. To establish and maintain that democracy is part of security
3. To define the roles or designate matters of public defence to the army and human security issues to police forces.
4. To design a new modular architecture for the inter-American system
5. To include mechanisms that encourage the participation of civil society

Similarly, a series of recommendations were made regarding the participation of civil society organizations (CSOs) in tackling issues of security at the hemispheric level. It was recommended that CSOs needed:

1. To strengthen their observer status before the OAS and other hemispheric entities.
2. To promote the creation and the strengthening of coordinating mechanisms that are democratic and inclusive of governments
3. To contribute positively in the follow-up and the evaluation of security issues
4. To propose mechanisms for denunciation and mobilization
5. To promote the creation of a permanent consultation mechanism and a monitoring commission

With regards to the possible contribution in relation to the assessment of the framework treaty, it was concluded that:

1. Central America should keep the spirit of the treaty alive, regardless of hemispheric views, and should make sure that the actions taken comply with the content and the regulations of this instrument.
2. An integral process of evaluation and reform, which includes the identification of issues that need to be evaluated, the definition of the actors that would participate, the creation of required mechanisms and the elaboration of a viable work plan, should be undertaken.
3. Once the evaluation process is concluded, the ratification of the treaty by Belize, Costa Rica and Panama should be encouraged.
4. It is important to include other actors if, conceptually, the broader notion of security will be adopted.
5. It is essential to create peace zones, where armies do not exist. The demilitarization of Central America as a peace zone is needed.

6. It is crucial to promote political will so that the reasonable balance of force complies with the reduction of the armed forces, troops and armaments.

7. Security issues must be demilitarized

8. It is urgent to strengthen confidence measures as well as prevention and conflict resolution mechanisms.

9. There should be a review of defence and national security policies so that they are in accordance with the concept of democratic security.

10. The assessment of the treaty should include its institutionalization

11. It is also important to promote a series of public events to discuss the outcomes of the CRIES project (see appendix)

As for the participation of civil society in the evaluation and the reform of the framework treaty, it is necessary:

1. To disseminate the treaty so that civil society has a better understanding of its importance and thus becomes a protagonist in the process of its examination.

2. To promote the inclusion of security issues in the agenda of the Consultative Committee of the Central American Integration System (CC-SICA)

3. To strengthen the participation of the CC-SICA in security issues and to develop an information and training course about security and a follow-up methodology for its members.

4. To create a Central American civil society Ad Hoc Interim Security Commission that would promote and keep the treaty valid.

In short, it was concluded that the Central American Forum on Security illustrated an extensive exchange of ideas about the accomplishments that could be achieved with the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America. Initiatives such as this forum advance the treaty beyond regional borders and for that reason they should be promoted.
V. List of participants

Aguilera, Gabriel, Vice minister of Foreign Affairs, Guatemala
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Arévalo de León, Bernardo, WSP Internacional, Guatemala
Barahona de Suazo, Yolanda, Honduran Ambassador, Guatemala
Burone, Federico, IDRC, Uruguay
Chamorro, Edgar, SIECA, Guatemala
Cordero, Carlos, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Costa Rica
Cordero, Luis Alberto, Fundación Arias para la Paz, Costa Rica
Córdova, Ricardo, Fundaungo, El Salvador
Duggan, Colleen, IDRC, Canada
Escobar, Claudia, CEG, Guatemala
Escoffery, Raúl, Panamanian Committee of Human Rights (CPDH), Panama
García, Eduardo, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nicaragua
Gomariz, Enrique, GESO, Costa Rica
González, Patricia, WSP-Internacional, Guatemala
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VI. Appendix

Since September 2001, CRIES has been coordinating the project “Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America: Assessment and Reform from Civil Society”, with the collaboration of the Canadian International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The main conclusions and recommendations, which were reached in collaboration with the Centro de Estudios y Acción Social Panameño (CEASPA-Panama), the Fundación del Servicio Exterior para la Paz y la Democracia (FUNPADEM-Costa Rica), the Instituto de Enseñanza para el Desarrollo Sostenible (IEPADES-Guatemala) and Seguridad y Desarrollo (SYD-El Salvador), will be presented a continuation. It is worth noting that these recommendations are intended to improve the implementation of the treaty, to contribute to the evaluation and reform process, and to create mechanisms that allow civil society to participate in the follow-up and evaluation of the treaty. Moreover, these recommendations are aimed at official entities of SICA as well as civil society organizations and networks in order to contribute not only to the modification of the treaty, but also to the development of a broader debate about security as a regional public good.

1. Better implementation

   a. Entities of SICA

   ➢ To create a connectivity program that allows collaboration and cooperation between the Central American Security Commission (CSC), entities of SICA as well as other hemispheric institutions working on security issues.
   ➢ To strengthen coordination mechanisms between the various regional integration entities and to create an institution that monitors and evaluates regional accords, agreements as well as those included in the framework treaty.
   ➢ To provide funds to the CC-SICA, so that it can function and participate in the activities sponsored by the CSC.
   ➢ To diffuse the agendas and activities of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the CSC using the SICA web site.
   ➢ To strengthen the activities of the ad hoc working group established by the CSC to examine the treaty and to develop a plan that would finance the activities of the group on a permanent basis.
   ➢ To encourage the exchange of information and best practices about matters of security between members of the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN), the Central American Court of Justice (CCJ) and civil society representatives.
   ➢ To request that the General Secretariat of the SICA (SG-SICA) develops a program to promote gender equality at the national and regional levels of decision-making.
   ➢ To promote an awareness program about gender in various regional integration organizations and those related to the treaty.
   ➢ To design mechanisms that allow the introduction of gender analysis as a cross section in the projects and programs of the CSC.

   b. Civil Society Organizations and Networks

   ➢ To promote the inclusion of security issues in the agenda of the CC-SICA and to request its coordination with the SG-SICA and the CSC.
To begin monitoring the activities of the CSC to ensure that these are within the democratic framework and that they respect human rights and the rights of citizens.

To develop discussions about gender and security

To design strategies that empower women in areas of security.

2. Evaluation and Reform

With regards to the process, it was suggested:

a. Entities of SICA

- To cooperate in finding and securing funds for the evaluation and reform of the TMSDCA and to allocate specific funds for the participation of civil society organizations and networks.
- To participate in the Regional Working Group on Security
- To disseminate the Regional Working Group’s proposal to regional organizations.
- To channel the Regional Working Group’s proposal to the CSC, through the SG-SICA and the CC-SICA.
- To promote the presentation and discussion of the proposal before the CSC.
- To encourage the ratification of the treaty by Belize, Costa Rica and Panama.

b. Civil Society Organizations and Networks

- To form National Focal Groups, consisting of representatives from the government, the army, the police forces, civil society organizations and networks as well as academia, to carry out a diagnosis about the implementation of the framework treaty in each country and to produce a series of recommendations².
- To promote a series of public debates about the conclusions of the diagnosis and to synthesize them into a national document
- To form a Regional Working Group on Security, consisting of representatives from the National Focal Groups, SICA, particularly the CC-SICA and civil society organizations and networks, to carry out an analysis and produce regional recommendations that include the national results.
- To organize a regional conference to elaborate a proposal for the next meeting of the CSC in 2004.
- To request the CSC to implement a mechanism through which members of the Regional Working Group on Security can present and disseminate the proposal to other members, especially those in the ad hoc working group, which has been assigned to examine the treaty.
- To develop a plan that would finance the process of evaluation and reform of the treaty and to seek out funds from international cooperation agencies.
- To encourage discussions with military sectors, particularly with reference to civic-military relations, the role of the army in Central American democracies and the role of the Conference of the Central American Armed Forces (CFAC) in regional security.

² The national studies conducted as part of the CRIES project could be considered as background documents for this task.
- To promote meetings between representatives of the legislative and judicial powers as well as political parties to discuss issues of security and measures of accountability.
- To advance the equal participation of men and women in National Focal Groups and the Regional Working Group on Security and to include gender in diagnoses and proposals.

In relation to the modifications of the treaty, it was suggested:

- To make it obligatory for governments to inform periodically and publicly the developments of its security agenda at the national and regional levels.
- To advance a re-structuring and strengthening process of the treaty’s institutionalization that includes:
  a. A permanent subcommittee of the CSC that implements and monitors the projects and programs
  b. The creation of a coordinating entity between the subcommittee and the SG-SICA
  c. Regular consultations with the CC-SICA
  d. The expansion of the CSC to include other institutions, such as the Ministries of Planning and Public Service and the Attorney General’s Office, which would depend on the re-conceptualization of security and the agenda that is adopted.

- To re-introduce and give priority to issues of democracy, specially given the existing deficit of regional mechanisms to strengthen and consolidate democratic systems. To include the design and the implementation of a democratic charter or clause.
- To broaden and deepen considerations about human rights
- To include a training course about security issues for government and civil society representatives.
- To create concrete measures of accountability.
- To include and make the transit of highly radioactive material an issue

3. Participation of Civil Society in the Follow-Up and Evaluation

   a. Entities of SICA

   - To create mechanisms that would improve the information deficit regarding security issues.
   - To strengthen the participation of CC-SICA in areas of security

   b. Civil Society Organizations and Networks

   - To create a fund, with the support of international cooperation agencies, to finance the participation of civil society organizations and networks in the follow-up and evaluation of the treaty.
   - To develop and disseminate a methodology to follow-up and evaluate areas of security that include:
     a. The creation of a database consisting of bilateral, regional and hemispheric accords and agreements.
     b. The dissemination of the content of bilateral, regional and hemispheric accords and agreements
     c. The identification and application of performance indicators vis-à-vis bilateral,
regional and hemispheric accords and agreements.

d. The assessment of the impact of official decisions on civil society.
e. The formulation and dissemination of proposals

- To develop an information and training course for members of the CC-SICA regarding security issues and follow-up methodology
- To create an information and communication\(^3\) mechanism about national, regional and hemispheric security, which includes the implementation of training courses for citizens and the media.
- To collaborate in the evaluation of security training courses created by various regional institutions.
- To participate in the Conflict Prevention Program that CRIES is implementing in the region, which includes the identification of possible conflictive areas and the construction of scenarios that allow early warnings for the purpose of finding proactive and preventive strategies to confront them.
- To encourage gender analysis as a cross section in security issues as well as gender equality in the various activities and institutions that are promoted.

\(^3\) Based on the experience with the Observatory of Regional Integration in the Greater Caribbean, CRIES proposes the creation of a Security Observatory, whose main objective would be to monitor the framework treaty as well as issues of regional security.