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**DEPARTMENT AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (DTOC)
ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OEA)**

**XLVIII (VIRTUAL) MEETING OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS
FOR THE CONTROL OF MONEY LAUNDERING
June 30, 2020
Washington D.C. – USA.**

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**OPENING REMARKS BY AMBASSADOR JAMES LAMBERT
OAS SECRETARY FOR HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS**



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Mr. Javier Augusto Sarmiento Olarte, Vice Minister of Criminal Policy and Restorative Justice of the Ministry of Justice and Law (MINJUS) of Colombia, and President of the Group of Experts for the Control of Money Laundering (GELAVEX).

Mrs. Farah Urrutia, OAS Secretary for Multidimensional Security (SMS).

National delegates to the Group of Experts for the Control of Money Laundering (GELAVEX).

Experts from the entities of the Joint Summit Working Group, including the OAS, the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), as well as from the Inter-American Center of Tax Administrations (CIAT), who will share their knowledge and experiences during this session.

I would like to warmly welcome you to this Forty-Eighth Special Session of GELAVEX, organized jointly between the Department against Transnational Organized Crime (DDOT) and the Summits of the Americas Secretariat.

Since its inception in 1994, the Summits of the Americas Process has played a substantive role in the construction of the hemispheric agenda, becoming a privileged forum to address the issues of greatest relevance in the region.

In order to strengthen national capacities to confront and respond to the different modalities of transnational organized crime, including money laundering, the "Lima Commitment: Democratic Governance against Corruption", adopted by the leaders of the Hemisphere, the 37 mandate contemplates the adoption of measures to "Promoting the broadest possible cooperation among judicial, police, and prosecutorial authorities, financial intelligence units, and administrative authorities in investigations and procedures related to offenses of corruption, money laundering, and transnational bribery and corruption."

In this way and taking as reference the information registered by the States in the online platform of the Follow-up Mechanism and Implementation of the Lima Commitment, requests for technical assistance and international cooperation of various kinds related to the prevention and fight against corruption were made in areas related to the identification of transnational bribery cases, development of legislation related to asset recovery, models for the investigation of tax evasion and fraud, creation of public registries of final beneficiaries, as well as analysis of associated corruption cases to money laundering.

The call to strengthen the fight against transnational organized crime was extended to the JSWG organizations, established in mandate 44 of the Lima Commitment, which establishes the need to: "Promoting transparency in the exchange of tax information and requesting that the Joint Summit



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Working Group (JSWG) consider strengthening cooperation in this area among our States consistent with the existing international framework.”

In response to this priority, in September 2019, the Secretary of Summits of the Americas and the DDOT organized a policy dialogue on "Money Laundering and its Relationship with Corruption Investigations," which allowed for an analysis of the challenges in implementation of financial investigation strategies related to money laundering, as well as the role of international cooperation in the development of measures and strategies in the recovery of assets derived from corruption.

On this occasion, this Special Session is aimed at "Cooperation in investigations and procedures related to corruption, tax crimes, and associated money laundering", and seeks to present the role of international cooperation organizations, including those of the JSWG, to Member States in matters of investigation and prosecution of these crimes.

This meeting coincides with the recent transfer of the Presidency of the Summits of the Americas Process from the Government of Peru to the Government of the United States, who will lead the process of the IX Summit of the Americas scheduled for the fall of 2021.

The management of the crisis by the governments of the region, and their impact on socio-economic, governance and security issues will possibly define to a great extent the topics to be addressed for the next Summit.

The exceptional conditions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic will affect not only how criminal networks operate, but also the nature of law-enforcement efforts to counter these networks.

We hope that from the deliberations that arose during this special session, conclusions and / or recommendations relevant to GELAVEX will be generated, which can be considered at its next plenary in the fourth quarter of 2020, in order to be taken into account for its strategic plans, promoting the development of tools for the use of Member States to prevent and counteract money laundering resulting from corruption and tax crimes.

We appreciate your participation and I wish you a productive dialogue.