



## Remarks En Route to Ft. Lauderdale, Florida

**Secretary Condoleezza Rice**  
En Route to Ft. Lauderdale, Florida  
June 5, 2005

**SECRETARY RICE:** Good morning, every -- well, actually, afternoon, Joel. Great. Are we all set? All right. Looking forward to this meeting of the Organization of American States. As you probably know, the President will have an opportunity to speak to the Organization tomorrow. Today, we will have a session with the ministers where we will have just kind of an informal session and then we'll have the opening inaugural session.

This is a really interesting and important time for the organization -- a new Secretary General with whom I've met, with whom the President has met. It's a time of both opportunity and challenge for the region. Obviously, there are a lot of -- several of the democracies in Latin America are fragile and I think one of the things that we will want to talk about is how to help these fragile democracies to better develop and consolidate their democratic institutions and then be able to deliver the benefits of democracy to their people. And indeed, that's the theme of this session, which is to deliver the benefits of democracy.

I'm certain that there will be many opportunities to discuss the Democracy Charter, the Inter-American Democracy Charter, which is extremely important at this time in giving the Organization of American States a way to address the continued democratic development of the region. So I'm looking forward to talking to my colleagues, talking about both trouble spots and opportunities. I'll also have a chance to hopefully reinforce the importance of free trade, of the Administration's commitment to CAFTA and also to have some discussions about how we might move forward on the Free Trade Area of the Americas.

So it's a pretty broad agenda and I look forward to spending some time with my colleagues. So, questions?

**QUESTION:** If you could discuss in a little bit more detail the mechanisms which you think the OAS can better help these democracies, do you think this will be not something that's imposed but a condition of membership, or is it just if a country wants such intervention?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, first of all, the Charter makes very clear that the Organization of American States is to be an organization of democracies. It's why Cuba does not have a seat at the Organization of American States at this point in time. And so I think it only is natural that there should be some mechanism to help states that are going through challenges through -- to democracy. I'm looking forward to a discussion with my colleagues about what kind of mechanism might work best.

I would note that there, of course, is going to be a discussion of mechanism of the institution, but the institution has intervened in the past. It intervened in Peru. It's used other mechanisms like Friends groups when there have been difficulties in the region. It's also used trusted envoys from time to time. So we need a range of mechanisms, but I think it would be useful to have one that even citizens could appeal to, and we've talked about the possibility of civil society being able to bring concerns to some mechanisms of the Organization of American States and I think that could be very important to move forward.

But I'm looking forward to others' ideas. We, after all, are hosting and I feel an obligation to have this be -- to chair this meeting in a way that everyone feels that their ideas are being listened to and debated and discussed and that this is not somehow a set of ideas that the United States has that are going to be imposed on anyone. This is a very important opportunity for others to talk about how they'd like to see this organization move forward.

**QUESTION:** Do you think you're at a stage yet prior to this meeting in discussion with your colleagues that you may be able to come out with a decision on the mechanism by the time you leave?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, I think we'll have to see. The Organization is going to move forward in any case and I would just note that it was Mr. Insulza himself who talked about the need for some kind of mechanism. He's the one who has talked about the fact that democracy is the way into the Organization of American States and the absence of democracy is the way out. I'm paraphrasing him, but that was the sense of what he was talking about.

So I don't know if we will come out with a specific mechanism but I think there is a felt need throughout the institution to be able to deal with the multiple challenges that we have. And when you look at some of the fragile democracies that there are, it's very clear that the institution needs to be better capable of dealing with them.

**QUESTION:** Madame Secretary, the draft proposal that you all have offered last week, I've spoken to quite a number of ambassadors and others who were quite upset about it, in fact, and don't like the part that says that there should be a mechanism that they believe would have the OAS intervene in the affairs, internal affairs, of another state.

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, let me say again the OAS has intervened in the past. In Peru, the OAS intervened. And we will see what kind of mechanism might be appropriate. The idea of a mechanism has been around for a while. It was mentioned when Mr. Insulza took the Secretary Generalship. I think we have to have a discussion of how the Organization can be effective because it does not have mechanism that help at times of crisis. We have a lot of challenges and this is not a matter of intervening to punish; it is a matter of intervening to try and sustain the development of democratic institutions across the region.

**QUESTION:** Madame Secretary, with so much opposition from ambassadors in the region, would you prefer to have a watered-down version of what you want come out or would you prefer not to get one at all if you can't quite --

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, I'm going in with an open mind. I haven't decided what I want. I think that this is a process and, as I said, I'm going to chair this meeting in a way that gives people an opportunity to speak freely and frankly about how we move this Organization forward. This is a process of the development of the OAS along lines that will make it more effective. I don't expect for one minute that all of the answers about how the OAS is going to move forward are going to come out of this single meeting. We just got a new Secretary General. I think the United States has always been very interested in the OAS but we're showing a renewed interest and energy in it in the way that -- and I think if you talk to Mr. Insulza, the fact that the President asked him to come over and to talk about the OAS is important, the fact that the President himself is coming here is important, although I want to note the President was twice at the OAS in his first term.

So we've thought it an important organization but I don't think all of the answers are going to come out of this single meeting. This is a process of development and the goal is going to be over the next period of time to develop this into an institution that can really deal with the multiple challenges that the region has.

**QUESTION:** Speaking of one crisis point in the region, do you favor the introduction of U.S. troops into Haiti, which some people say would make a real difference there?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I think we have to look at Haiti in the following context: We have a very important breakthrough in Haiti in that we have a UN mission that is led by a regional power in Brazil and in which multiple states of the region are participating, and I think our first goal ought to be to try to make sure that it is working effectively. I think it has been working more effectively than it was at the very beginning. There needed to be some changes to the rules of engagement. I think those were made. Haiti is a very difficult circumstance. You have a lot of gang violence and we are getting ready to move toward elections and those elections are going to be enormously important.

So we're going to be working along the political front to make sure that the political process is moving ahead quickly, we're going to be working along the economic front to try and make sure that we are dealing with the multiple and deep economic problems of Haiti and we'll take a look at the security situation. But I think it would be a mistake to just suddenly decide that the Minustah is not somehow working and therefore needs to be supplanted by some other mechanism. I think these people are working hard. I think the Brazilians are giving good leadership. And we need to look at the new challenges that seem to be arising with these armed gangs, or more active armed gangs -- let me put it that way -- and try to get to the root causes of those. But this has been a breakthrough for the region. You have this mission there and I think that we are by no means at a place that we should abandon this.

**QUESTION:** Secretary Rumsfeld had some sharp words on the Chinese arms buildup the other day. Secretary Powell used to say that relations with China were their best ever, but I wonder if they are not -- we're not going into a period now where maybe relations are more strained.

**SECRETARY RICE:** I think both happen to be true. Relations are at their best ever and the Chinese are engaged in a major military buildup, and that military buildup is concerning. I think the way I've described it is the relationship with China is a positive one but it has mixed element and we've been -- all of us -- very concerned about the Chinese military buildup. I think if you look back, you'll see that that was a lot of the reason that we were so concerned about the EU arms embargo, the potential lifting of the EU arms embargo, because there is a changing military balance in China and we don't -- in the region and we don't want anything to do anything that -- anyone to do anything that would make that situation worse.

We obviously have some differences and concerns with China over economic issues. I've said on a number of occasions that an economy as big as China's has got to be integrated into a rules-based international economic system. And that's why the currency issue is important. That's why intellectual property rights issues are important.

That said, we continue to work with China and are cooperating in the war on terrorism, cooperating in the six-party talks to try to get a hold of the North Korean nuclear issue. We have multiple areas of cooperation with China. China is involved in Haiti through its police activities there.

So in a relationship that is this big and complex, you're always going to have puts and takes, the positives and negatives, and we are going to manage this relationship in a way that increases the chances that China will be a positive, not a negative, force in international politics. But that there is a military buildup underway that is concerning, absolutely.

**QUESTION:** Madame Secretary, on the Rumsfeld trip, a senior Defense official told reporters that the Administration is moving within weeks on a decision on possibly going to the UN to seek sanctions against North Korea. Is that decision pending?

**SECRETARY RICE:** The United States is constantly reviewing what it is going to do to deal with what is a very serious situation, which is the continued North Korean nuclear activities in the face of neighbors who have told the North Koreans that they need to get rid of their nuclear weapons. I think the idea that within weeks we're going to decide one way or another is a little forward leaning, I would say. You know I don't put timelines on things and I think the President, he doesn't put timelines on issues.

So are we examining options? Of course. We've been examining options from the time that I was out in Asia when I said that we would examine what our options are. But I think the President put it very well the other day that we still believe that there is life left in the six-party talks. It is an extremely important accomplishment that all of North Korea's neighbors are united in a common goal of the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and united in the common goal that that means that North Korea has to give up its nuclear weapons. So this has been an important diplomatic accomplishment and we're going to continue to look at it, but of course we'll look at other options, too and the Security Council is always an option.

**QUESTION:** Madame Secretary, Venezuela is holding municipal elections in about two months. Given the concerns about trends in Venezuela that you have expressed, do you think that those elections bear close watching by the international community?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Of course the elections bear close watching. You know, we have a situation now in which elections are closely watched across the continent and across the world because I think there's an understanding that these democratic trends that are underway have to be supported by the international community. Now, elections are more than what happens on the day of the election. It's also a question of access for opposition to press, the absence of a sense of intimidation of opposition. And so all of those things will, of course, be watched. And we've expressed our concerns but, again, I'd just like to make clear that we have a positive agenda for the region, much of -- most of which is not about Venezuela.

**QUESTION:** If I could just go back to Haiti for a second, to what extent is this going to be a major topic in the CARICOM meeting that you're going to be -- sorry -- and the idea of increasing troops, you know, whether it's U.S. or not, do you believe that more UN peacekeepers are needed for security there?

**SECRETARY RICE:** I think we have to look with an open mind at the structure of Minustah. I'm not at the point yet where I can say yes or no, we need more or -- the key, though, is that this has been a breakthrough for the region, that the Brazilians and others have taken responsibility for this and we need to make it work if it has new challenges.

Yes, I'm sure it will be a major issue with the CARICOM because it's not just a matter of what the troop function -- troop presence looks like or the numbers or what the troops are going, but it's also support for the political process and there I would hope we would get more active support for the political process that is going on in Haiti from the CARICOM. And I'll be making that case.

**QUESTION:** Madame Secretary, can I ask you a quick question about Tony Blair talking about Africa and G-8, Tony Blair talking about Africa G-8. I just want to know how high a priority is it for the U.S. Administration. You're clearly not going to sign up to some of the proposals he's putting forward. Will you have something instead that you'll put forward?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, aid to Africa has been important to this Administration since the President started and I just want to review for you that the

\$15 billion AIDS relief program, the Millennium Challenge Account, the fact that we have tripled assistance to Africa, the fact that we've doubled development assistance overall, the \$1 billion famine relief program that the President has, the extension of AGOA which has had tremendous benefit for the African countries, the U.S. commitment to 100 percent debt relief for the poorest countries under HIPC and even a second round of HIPC if necessary, this Administration has been doing this for quite some time and the innovation here that came out of Monterrey, that came out of discussions with the World Bank, that development is a two-way street, that it takes, yes, donor assistance but it also takes good governance and efforts to root out corruption and a willingness to spend on the needs of people for health and education is also at the center of the President's approach.

So I think we have an enormously healthy program of assistance and trade with Africa that has heightened and brought to the fore America's commitment to these issues in ways that has not been the case for a very, very long time. Development assistance was flat, essentially, and it's this President who doubled it. Development assistance to Africa had really not been going up for quite some time. It's this President who tripled it. People talked about AIDS. It's this President who came out with a \$15 billion program. We are the ones who went to the World Bank and said that the poorest countries should not get loans but grants.

So yes, development assistance is very high on the priority list and I think we are going to work with other members of the G-8 to make certain that the approach to African assistance is one that actually works, meaning that, yes, the resources need to be there and we've put lots of new resources in, but there also has got to be a commitment on the part of African countries to spend those resources wisely. So I'm sure they'll have a very good discussion about that.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible.)

**SECRETARY RICE:** I'm planning to go to Africa pretty soon, so get ready. Hopefully, sometime before the fall, before September.

**QUESTION:** Madame Secretary, should you have an opportunity to speak with Foreign Minister Rodriguez of Venezuela today, what will be your message to him?

**SECRETARY RICE:** Well, our message to Venezuela is the same message that we're using to the whole region, which is that this is a region that has developed against what many people thought were insurmountable odds, democratic governments that are now trying to make that democracy really work for people throughout their countries. That requires that if you're democratically elected that you govern democratically as well. It also requires that relations with neighbors be transparent and that there not be efforts to interfere in the activities or the affairs of your neighbors. And that has been our message to Venezuela.

But again, this is not an issue of U.S.-Venezuelan relations. This is a question of what kind of hemisphere do we want to be. And I think we want to be a hemisphere in which there is good governance, free trade, growing economies and neighborly relations, and most importantly where democratic institutions are strong and maturing and delivering for their people. And that's the message of this meeting and it will be the message with whomever I speak.

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