

STATEMENT BY SIR RONALD SANDERS
AMBASSADOR OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUD
AT THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL OF THE OAS
ON 8TH DECEMBER 2021

“OUTCOME OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL’S DELIBERATIONS OF
NOVEMBER 29, 2021, ON THE SITUATION IN NICARAGUA PURSUANT
TO THE RESOLUTION ADOPTED AT THE FIFTY-FIRST REGULAR
SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY”

Mr. Chairman,

Let me join others who have spoken to thank those delegations that have supported this Resolution of which my country is a co-sponsor.

I want to make it clear that, in fulfilment of the mandate given to this Permanent Council, this meeting is continuing to undertake a collective assessment of the situation in Nicaragua, notwithstanding remarks made by one speaker here today.

My delegation wishes to emphasise that “collective assessment” is a process, not an event, and it is not a ‘rushed’ activity as the same speaker suggested today.

Unfortunately, that speaker also accused some countries of determining the outcome of the collective assessment even before it was concluded.

Let me be clear: that collective assessment has been continuous for more than 2 years at several meetings of this Permanent Council and at two General Assemblies of the OAS.

As an important part of the process of collective assessment, we met and heard authoritative reports from highly credible organisations on the situation in Nicaragua on November 29th.

That process of collective assessment includes other steps which are set out in the Articles of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, particularly Articles 18, 19 and 20.

It is important for the credibility of the OAS that we not only adhere to the steps, set out in the Inter-American Democratic Charter, but that we are seen by all to respect our own rules.

My delegation emphasizes that we are not interfering or intervening in the internal affairs of Nicaragua.

We are responding to breaches of our Charters by a member state and of violations of human and political rights and of international law.

I remind this Permanent Council that when we first put the situation in Nicaragua on its agenda, my delegation supported the Nicaraguan government by voting with it.

But even as we were voting with Nicaragua, we cautioned the government, through its visiting Ministers and its diplomatic representatives, that we were concerned about the deteriorating situation concerning human and political rights, and we urged them to remedy it.

We moved, over time, from voting with the Nicaraguan government, to abstaining, and finally to co-sponsorship of the Resolution which we have adopted today.

It is only after more than two years of urging Nicaragua to address the clear violations of the OAS Charters – with no action to do so – that the delegation of Antigua and Barbuda changed its position, giving fair warning at a Permanent Council meeting.

The truth of what I have said is reflected in the records of the meetings of this body.

The peoples of our countries expect all our Governments, including the Government of Nicaragua, to uphold the principles of democracy and representative democracy, and to safeguard their fundamental freedoms, which our governments in their peoples' name, resolved to defend in the binding charters of this Organization.

In the Resolution before us, we continue the process of collective assessment. It is not yet over.

The new dimension to that collective assessment, is our urging to the Government of Nicaragua to accept a high-level good offices mission,

authorized by this Permanent Council, to try to secure agreement on a process that would help the Government to bring itself in conformity with the Inter-American Democratic Charter, and international law.

In other words, we are opening the door to the Nicaragua government to dialogue; to talk; with the hope that the offer will be accepted and that the mandate that we give to a high-level good offices group will be meaningfully and seriously discussed.

I know there may be some delegations that take the view that the good offices mission should have no mandate, except to engage the Nicaraguan government.

But no good offices group would undertake such a mission without terms of reference.

And without such terms of reference, the group would have no guidance from this Permanent Council, nor would there be any benchmarks by which this Council, or the Secretary-General, could measure the group's work.

Mr. Chairman, by the offer of a high-level good offices group, a hand has been extended to the Nicaraguan government.

It is up to the Nicaraguan government to decide if it wishes to accept this Permanent Council's offer, supported by 25 member states, which is proposed in good faith.

Thank you.