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FOREWORD

This internship was funded in the summer of 2009 by the Kellogg Institute for International Studies at the University of Notre Dame. I would like to thank Holly Rivers and everyone working at the Kellogg Institute for giving me the unique and marvelous opportunity to work at the most important diplomatic organization in our hemisphere. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to the OAS and all the people I met there, for providing me with the insight information, knowledge, advice and tools required to execute my work.

INTRODUCTION: MY DEPARTMENT AND FUNCTIONS

I worked at the Committee on Inter-American Summits Management and Civil Society Participation in OAS Activities (CISC), which coordinates OAS activities in support of the Summits of the Americas Process as well as activities relating to its follow-up. The CISC also requests and receives inputs from civil society organizations regarding their participation in the Summits Process and promotes the strengthening of relationships between civil society organizations and OAS political bodies¹.

My job consisted in writing weekly reports on a variety of issues ranging from the civil society's perception of the OAS to the composition of other international organizations. However, the bulk of my work concentrated in the latter. My supervisor, Ambassador Sonia Johnny, former Ambassador from Saint Lucia to the OAS, wanted me to find what made other regional groups successful. The idea behind this study was to strengthen the whole Summitry process organized by the OAS. I spent most of time reading a variety of journals on international

¹ CIVIL SOCIETY. SUMMITS OF THE AMERICAS. OAS. < <http://www.summit-americas.org/cs.html> >

relations, trade and politics. I was amazed at the complexity of the whole process behind international summits and the agreements reached at them. Moreover, I had to synthesize this wealth of information in brief summaries that were clear and easy to understand for my supervisor. This proved to be a very challenging task that made the experience at the OAS even more enriching. Finally, every once in a while, I had to opportunity to attend departmental meetings in which I discussed my findings and supported Ambassador Johnny throughout her presentation to the other heads of the department.

THE INTERNS AND THE MOAS

In addition to my daily chores, the Human Resources department organized a series of weekly meetings which served as an opportunity to get to know the other departments and projects within the OAS umbrella. I happened to enjoy this experience a lot because it was a unique opportunity to meet new people with whom I shared the same interest for the region. The group of interns consisted of over seventy women and men coming from all over the world, including undergraduates as well as graduates. The diversity of the group combined with its outspokenness made the meetings something I really looked forward to throughout the week. During these meetings, I had the honor to meet Secretary General Insulza and other higher level OAS staff. Furthermore, the meetings also served as workshops for our final group project: The Model Organization of American States General Assembly (MOAS).² The concept of MOAS was rooted in the idea to familiarize interns with the work of the OAS and its Member States by engaging us in an active learning exercise where, through role-playing, we represented the diplomats and political officials of the thirty-four Member States of the OAS. The country I was assigned to represent was Ecuador, and the issue I was to discuss was counternarcotics policy

² Model OAS General Assembly. [MOAS Website](http://www.moas.oas.org/English/index.html). OAS. <<http://www.moas.oas.org/English/index.html>>

and border control. Therefore, I had to learn Ecuador's position on the issues, and the modus operandi of the OAS during these official meetings. Everything went well during the MOAS. I had a good time looking at how everyone in the interns group transformed into diplomats.

MY MENTOR: SONIA JOHNNY

Ambassador Johnny became a mentor for me. Her vast experience in international relations and law made my daily meetings with her a priceless educational experience. She shared with me her views and experience in the region. Thanks to her contributions, I became more knowledgeable with the Caribbean region and its whole cooperation system. Moreover, she always set time to talk with me and give me career guidance. Her influence was so important, and it made me consider the possibility of going to law school. Ambassador Johnny is a woman I admire, and with whom I will definitely keep in touch. She really marked a before and after in my life.

CUBA'S SUSPENSION AND THE HONDURAN CRISIS

A couple of days before President Zelaya was ousted from Honduras, the OAS General Assembly had its annual meeting in San Pedro Sula. Ironically, the topic of this meeting held in Honduras was moving the region toward a culture of non-violence in which democratic principles are respected. However, the main theme in this meeting was the end to Cuba's forty-seven year suspension from the OAS. This meant Cuba could return as an active member to the OAS if it implements some democratic reforms. Many people within the high ranks of the OAS never expected this event to occur. Suddenly, the hemisphere seemed more united than ever. Nevertheless, the hope of better days in the region lasted few days, because democracy in Latin America became challenged once again.

The coup in Honduras made the OAS even more fascinating. The atmosphere in its corridors had a drastic change. The quiet weekend turned my office into an international crisis center in which member states made critical decisions on how to react to this event. I received numerous emails that gave continuous updates on decisions that were being made behind closed doors. All of a sudden, the OAS became the world's center of attention. The institution that was almost unknown outside our region became responsible for properly reacting to the most important threat to regional democracy in years. Although I did not have the opportunity to see a happy ending, I am very proud to be part of that period in history in which the Caribbean, North, Central and South America rejected a non-democratic government together as one voice.

CONCLUSION

I will never forget this summer at the OAS. Living in DC and working with some of the most influential diplomats in the hemisphere really changed who I am. The OAS is not a perfect institution, but its importance has been continuously reaffirmed. Fortunately, I worked there during one of the most challenging periods for the OAS. I saw the OAS in action, executing the mandates countries entrusted. Moreover, working at the CISC gave me the chance to better understand how difficult it is to make thirty-four nations agree and execute agreements. However, the OAS experience would not have been the same without the amazing people I had the chance to meet: from a group of interns, from which I am confident many political leaders will emerge in the future, to a successful supervisor who patiently guided me through the intertwinings of the OAS. I definitely recommend this opportunity to anyone who has the chance to experience it. I would like to once again thank the Kellogg Institute for giving me the opportunity to work at the place I have dreamed about since I was young.