

Statement by Mr. Miguel R. San Juan
Confirmation Hearing on Nomination to serve as
United States Executive Director of the Inter-American Development Bank
U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee
July 17, 2008

Chairman Menendez, Senator Lugar, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored that President Bush has nominated me to serve as the United States Executive Director of the Inter-American Development Bank. I am grateful to have the support of the President and Secretary Paulson and the privilege of your consideration.

I would like to introduce members of my family sitting in the audience, my wife Lucia, and my sons Migue, Marcus and Maximo. My family continues to support me, as a full partner in my quest for public service.

I have long held aspirations of working in the public sector, especially in a capacity dealing with the Americas. Further, I believe strongly in the Inter-American Development Bank's mission. I look forward to having this opportunity to state my objectives as a candidate for the position, as well as to answering any questions regarding my experience and qualifications.

By the good graces of many, my family and I reunited in Houston, Texas after many years of separation following our departure from Cuba. I feel extremely fortunate that my career in economic development has given me an opportunity to give back to the country that welcomed us with open arms so many years ago. I am very eager to apply the lessons I learned at one of the nation's premier chamber organizations in service to the United States and another region dear to my heart, Latin America and the Caribbean.

Vicious cycles of poverty and crime pose an ongoing threat to the region's vast potential. The words of Nobel Laureate Octavio Paz come to mind: "América no es tanto una tradición que continuar, como un futuro que realizar." America is not so much a tradition to continue, as a future to realize. If Latin America is to realize the future it deserves, it must overcome these longstanding obstacles. There are, however, signs of hope and progress everywhere.

I believe the IDB plays a critical role in accelerating economic and social development in the region. In so doing, it also fosters hemispheric and global security. And at a critical point in the hemisphere's history, the IDB constitutes a force that can hold the region together, while others threaten to tear it apart.

Another area on which I hope to focus is the development of small to medium size industries in the region. President Bush has stated the relevance of SMEs to the health of this nation's economy. The same logic applies to the whole of the Americas. Today's SME's are tomorrow's multinationals. They are the seeds that create jobs and economic prosperity. To stimulate their growth in the region, I advocate increased cooperation and coordination between the IDB and Chambers of Commerce throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

Above all, I view the principal role of the IDB Executive Director as representing the United States.

In closing, I want to acknowledge my family as the bedrock of my value system. We are hard-working, God-fearing people who keep and treasure our immigrant roots. Public service allows us to give back some of the many blessings that have come our way.

Mr. Chairman, Senator Lugar, Senators, Members of the Committee, I respectfully ask for your favorable consideration of my nomination and stand ready to respond to any questions that you may have. Thank you.