

Statement of Francisco O. Mora
Nominee to be the United States Permanent Representative to the
Organization of American States
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
May 18, 2022

Chairman Kaine, Ranking Member Portman, and Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you today as President Biden's nominee to be the United States Permanent Representative to the Organization of American States. I'm deeply grateful to President Biden and Secretary Blinken for the support and confidence they have placed in me.

I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude to members of my family: my wife of 28 years Ivette, and children, Daniella, and Frankie, without whose love and constant support I very likely would not be here today. To my parents watching from home – Nivardo and Mirka – who recently celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary, thank you for your unwavering love and support and for the many sacrifices you made after fleeing from Communist Cuba, so that my brother Jorge and I could have the opportunity to fulfill our dreams and give back to a country that so generously provided for our family.

The countries of the Western Hemisphere are facing unprecedented challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic has wrought incalculable human and economic costs. The climate crisis threatens the health and well-being of people in the Americas. Inequity, corruption, poor governance, public security challenges, irregular migration and democratic backsliding are limiting individuals' ability to build better futures.

The OAS provides the only effective regional forum for coordinating multilaterally on issues that concern our hemisphere. From the climate crisis to supporting marginalized and vulnerable communities, and championing democracy and human rights, the OAS can implement solutions more efficiently and effectively with regional political buy-in.

The participation of the United States at the OAS reinforces our commitment to multilateralism as the most appropriate vehicle to address our shared governance and development challenges, to promote regional economic prosperity, to ensure the safety and security of our peoples, and to hold countries accountable for their treatment of citizens.

The answer to so many of these challenges involves improving governments' ability to effectively provide for their people. I believe democracy is the best system for providing that governance. If confirmed, I am committed to vigorously promoting democracy and human rights at the OAS, the premier regional forum to advocate for our cherished shared values.

As we all know, democratic institutions and civil liberties are under attack throughout the hemisphere. We have witnessed backsliding in many countries and are deeply concerned about the systemic repression and lack of free and fair elections in Nicaragua and Venezuela.

In Cuba, the regime continues to deny its citizens even basic freedoms, as we saw during the July 11 and November 15, 2021, protests and the subsequent mass imprisonment of dissidents, human rights activists and, more recently, children for insisting on their right to live in freedom. The OAS must respond in a concerted way to these massive abuses of human dignity. If confirmed, you can be sure that I will forcefully highlight the struggle of Cubans on the island in their fight for freedom and human rights.

The Inter-American Democratic Charter remains a critical document at the OAS for the defense of democracy in the Americas. If confirmed, I will continue to be a strong advocate for the values and principles enshrined in this and other guiding documents and institutions, such as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, which I will strongly support.

One of my priorities as U.S. Ambassador, if confirmed, would be to continue to advocate for OAS reform consistent with the “OAS Revitalization and Reform Act of 2013.” It is essential this be a shared priority for each member state and OAS leadership – as it is in our collective interest to ensure a strong OAS remains focused on its core competencies. I also want to assure that we will remain committed to advancing the objectives of the “OAS Legislative Engagement Act of 2020.”

If confirmed, I also will work to support the United States’ leadership of the Ninth Summit of the Americas and look forward to working with the OAS to implement our leaders’ commitments at the Summit in Los Angeles in June.

In closing, I would like to underscore the critical importance of the OAS Permanent Council suspending Russia’s Permanent Observer status over its war in Ukraine and gross human rights violations. It sent an important message of our region’s solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Portman, and Members of the Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to appear before you today. If confirmed, I very much look forward to working closely with you and other Members of Congress to advance U.S. interests. I welcome your comments and look forward to answering your questions.