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*Election
Committee
(see
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TEXT OF STATEMENT BY SECRETARY OF STATE CHRISTIAN A. HERTER AT THE SIXTH MEETING OF CONSULTATION OF AMERICAN FOREIGN MINISTERS AT SAN JOSE, COSTA, RICA, AUGUST 18, REGARDING THE CHARGES BROUGHT BY VENEZUELA AGAINST THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Mr. Chairman:

I wish, in the first place, to associate myself with my other colleagues in their expressions of satisfaction that we are holding our meetings in this universally admired country of Costa Rica. The shining example of freedom and democracy given us by Costa Rica and its people and their well-known devotion to the principles of inter-American cooperation are an important stimulus to constructive deliberations here.

My delegation has listened carefully to the statements which have been made before this meeting by the Foreign Ministers of Venezuela and the Dominican Republic and the other foreign ministers who have spoken. We have also given full study to the report of the committee appointed to investigate the charges of the Venezuelan Government against the Dominican Government. We are impressed by the thoroughness, impartiality and high sense of responsibility with which the committee carried out its task and prepared its report. We find that the evidence brought out in the report is convincing and the conclusions arrived at by the committee are well founded. We believe, in short, that there is a firm basis for the finding that the Government of the Dominican Republic has engaged in grave acts against the sovereignty of Venezuela. These acts merit the condemnation of this meeting. They have created a situation within the scope of Article 6 of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, calling for the taking of appropriate action for the maintenance of peace and security in the Hemisphere. The matter before this meeting of foreign ministers involves specific actions of one American Government against another American Government contrary to the principles that govern the relations of the American states as expressed in solemn treaty obligations. This meeting of consultation should clearly and unequivocally express condemnation of such conduct and take decisions which will give adequate expression to this opinion.

There is, moreover, Mr. Chairman, a larger responsibility facing the member governments of the Organization of American States. That is the responsibility for making clear that the Organization will effectively enforce the principles it has adopted and give full support to the maintenance of a system of law among the American states.

In the view of the United States, Mr. Chairman, this meeting is confronted with the solemn duty of insuring that

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principles of the Rio Treaty and of the Charter of the Organization of American States, with respect to nonaggression and nonintervention, be not violated, especially when such violation would endanger the security of any American state. This meeting by its action should make unmistakably clear that the Organization of American States is effectively carrying out its purposes essential to the individual and collective security of our various republics.

In addition to the developments referred to in the investigating committee's report, my delegation believes that an important aspect associated with the subject of this meeting is that discussed by the Inter-American Peace Committee in its report of June 6, 1960. The committee found that international tensions in the Caribbean area had been aggravated by "flagrant and widespread violations of human rights in the Dominican Republic", and stated that these tensions would continue to increase so long as these violations persisted.

The question now arises, Mr. Chairman, as to how best the ministers here present can formulate and adopt a constructive plan of action. There has been some sentiment here for the application of all the sanctions provided for in Article 8 of the Treaty of Rio de Janeiro with the exception of the last one, namely, the use of armed force. Without entering into any debate over questions of whether such action would be affected by the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations with respect to enforcement action by regional agencies, I wish to pose the question as to whether or not this is really the most effective means of achieving our aims.

First of all, let us be very clear as to our intent. The intent of this meeting of consultation is not alone to stop the type of action which I have condemned in my statement but also to create a situation within the Dominican Republic whereby that country can be brought back into respected membership in the American community, and its citizens permitted to enjoy the benefits of representative democracy as set forth in the Declaration of Santiago. If this is our intent, is the application of sanctions at this time the best means of achieving this end? I have serious doubts. My delegation feels that there is another approach which could constitute a practical means of preventing a recurrence of these acts that led to the calling of this consultative meeting. It might be called a preliminary approach, which might well offer a better opportunity. This is to recommend, with the full force of this meeting of foreign ministers, that the Dominican Republic agree to receive a special committee of this body in the Dominican Republic to assure that, within a specific and reasonable period of time, free elections by a people, who in fact shall have had the right of free expression and free assembly, be held under the supervision of the committee itself, subject to appropriate safeguards to assure observance of principles in conformity with the Declaration of Santiago.

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There are numerous precedents for the holding of elections under international supervision.

From the remarks made by some of the speakers who have preceded me, notably the distinguished Foreign Minister of Argentina, I am encouraged to think that this idea will receive a favorable response on the part of this meeting.

For the success of this proposal, it is essential that the powers of the committee--and they must be real -- be clearly set forth and accepted. This is necessary to forestall any attempt to obstruct or water down the creation of the necessary conditions for genuinely free elections. Accordingly if the proposal I am making commends itself to my colleagues, I would suggest that the resolution to be adopted at this meeting include a clear statement of the necessary powers, immunities and rights essential to the proper functioning of the OAS Supervisory Committee. This statement would be included in the proposal to be given to the Dominican Government.

Should this offer be accepted by the Dominican Republic, this meeting of consultation will have the satisfaction of knowing that it has taken the best possible step to achieve its objective by orderly and peaceful change.

If, however, this offer should be refused, we should then consider what measures under Article 8 of the Rio Treaty might be most effectively applied in order to bring about acceptance of this proposal by the Dominican Government. Sanctions in these circumstances would pass beyond the purely punitive stage and have a specific and constructive aim.

We are responsible representatives of responsible countries in an organization which has responsibility for the whole of the Americas. It behooves us in this capacity to think soberly and deeply as to the decision and courses of action we adopt here. It is our duty to our peoples and to the principles which animate this organization to try to assure that what we do here now will in the future turn out to be a constructive contribution to the peace, liberty and well-being of the peoples of the Americas.

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State--RD, Wash., D.C.