**Statement of Leandro Rizzuto**
**Nominee to be U.S. Permanent Representative to the Organization of American States**
**Senate Foreign Relations Committee**

Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Shaheen, distinguished Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am deeply honored by President Trump’s nomination to serve as the United States’ Permanent Representative to the Organization of American States (OAS), and I appreciate the confidence placed in me by Secretary Rubio.

Should I be confirmed, I would approach this role with a clear mission: to advance American interests, defend our values, and ensure that our engagement in our hemisphere is strategic, accountable, and focused on achieving results for the American people. This is a moment that calls for clarity—not compromise. As Secretary Rubio has said, a stable and prosperous Western Hemisphere is crucial to advancing President Trump’s strategic priorities.

My extensive background as a business executive equips me to provide fresh perspectives that advance U.S. interests effectively and efficiently. From a young age, I started in our family business, Conair Corp, and achieved immense success leading and directing global operations, securing growth in over 125 countries and overseeing the manufacturing of over 100 million appliances per year. I personally led efforts in securing a grant of over 25 U.S. Patents. Throughout my career, I engaged with industry associations, ultimately being elected as chairman of the Professional Beauty Association by my peers and competitors.

My commitment to not accepting the status quo, my extensive business background, and my focus on family and community, underpin my dedication to the mission that potentially awaits me at the OAS.

I was honored to serve my country as U.S. Consul General, Bermuda. I tackled significant challenges, such as the suspension of U.S. mail when the COVID-19 pandemic halted American Airlines flights. By collaborating with my staff at the State Department and colleagues at the U.S. Postal Service, we restored mail services to Bermuda and 13 other countries within weeks. The impact of this accomplishment was underscored by the tragic death of a local resident who died while waiting for medication.

When my term ended, Premier Burt and 3 former Premiers each invited my wife and I to their homes to say thank you for the job done. Indeed, having been married for 38 years and raising three lovely daughters is a testament to my belief in the institution of marriage, love of family and country. We proudly consider ourselves Patriotic Americans.

With that moral clarity, I see in our region the consequences of failed leadership and unchecked authoritarianism — from the collapse of governance in Haiti, to the totalitarian regimes in Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba. These conditions fuel illegal immigration, stymy economic progress, and threaten the security and sovereignty of the United States and our neighbors.

We must continue to hold autocrats accountable and remain resolute in our commitment to support those who risk their lives to defend freedom and democracy. Secretary Rubio’s nomination of Rosa María Payá to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, for example, reflects that commitment.

If confirmed, I will further these efforts by focusing on four priorities:

**First, Securing Borders and Stabilizing the Region:**

OAS member states must respect each other’s sovereignty. If confirmed, I will prioritize efforts to foster border enforcement amongst member countries. As affirmed in the OAS Charter and the Inter-American Democratic Charter, the rule of law and effective territorial control are fundamental pillars for peace, security, and democratic stability across our hemisphere.

**Second, Trade:**

There is great opportunity to leverage the OAS as a platform to promote trade. The benefits would bring economic prosperity resulting in the reduction of illegal immigration. Increasing trade with member countries would be a win for these nations and our hemisphere.

**Third, Countering Communist Influence:**

The CCP continues to advance its interests through strategic loans and investments, and influence in international institutions. We must promote U.S. investments in our region as a better alternative and expose CCP manipulation within multilateral systems and OAS member states.

**Finally, Reforming and Re-focusing the OAS to Deliver Results:**

With bipartisan support from this Committee and member states, I will work to reduce bureaucracy, push for needed reforms, and ensure that our funding aligns with U.S. interests. If confirmed, I will support our priorities at the OAS General Assembly in June and the Summit of the Americas in December.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, Members of the Committee: our engagement in the Americas must reflect who we are: a nation of laws, strength, and liberty. I believe deeply in the promise of the Inter-American system—but only if we insist that it lives up to its core mission and purpose.

If given the opportunity, I will work to protect American citizens, promote democratic values, and ensure that our leadership at the OAS is worthy of the people we serve. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you. I look forward to your questions.