



**PARLIAMENTARY CONFEDERATION OF THE AMERICAS  
VII GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
QUITO, ECUADOR, FROM MAY 29 TO JUNE 3, 2006**

**Committee on Economy, Trade, Labor,  
and Trading Blocs**

**DECLARATION**

The 2nd Committee of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas, meeting in Quito, Ecuador from May 31 to June 3, 2006, to exchange points of view and discuss issues of common interest concerning the socioeconomic integration and development of the peoples of the Americas, hereby issues this declaration while taking into account the following considerations:

**CONSIDERATIONS**

When first founded, COPA undertook to help advance the integration process in the Americas through parliamentary assemblies, a commitment that, at the time, referred almost exclusively to the creation of a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).

But today, this integration process has ground to a halt due to the uncompromising stance of the U.S. on issues such as the abolition of farm subsidies, limitations on intellectual property, and preferential access for products from poor countries, regions, or sectors.

At the same time, interest in a number of regional integration initiatives has grown, such as the initiatives of the South American Community of Nations, formed and supported by MERCOSUR and the Andean Community, as well as those of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) and bilateral trade agreements or treaties with the U.S., which together constitute a highly diversified selection of agreements and alliances.

Given current economic and political conditions, which are conducive to amicable relations and substantive agreements capable of broadening economic and social development perspectives for our peoples, we claim the democratic right of the citizenry in each of our countries to determine the type of agreements and integration it considers most suitable.

We believe that, in pursuing the objective of regional and inter-American integration or the conclusion of bilateral trade agreements, we must seek to do more than simply eliminate barriers to trade and foreign investment. This process must include a social action component focused on developing our respective countries and building a climate of cooperation among our peoples, with the goal of ensuring our citizens the highest possible level of equality and wellbeing.

We must continue working toward a new model of integration for the Americas, with the key objective of developing policies to establish mechanisms for countries in the region to join together, reduce existing asymmetries, and promote the development of the entire region in order to address as a unified front the challenges of globalization.

But this process must also be democratic in form, since to date the public has been virtually excluded from consultations on economic and integration policies in our region. COPA plays a crucial role in this respect as an organization well positioned to encourage parliaments to do what it takes to give the public a voice in the integration process in the Americas.

## **DECLARATION**

Free trade and integration agreements must account for the asymmetries and inequalities among countries and provide for programs to help ensure economic convergence by fostering development in the least-advanced nations. Any country signing a trade agreement should benefit therefrom.

Free trade and integration agreements must provide for specific economic compensation mechanisms, such as preferential deadlines and conditions, facilitated market access, and development funds.

Negotiations for free trade agreements must bring to light any nontariff barriers and transform them as appropriate into additional protective measures of benefit to the weakest economies.

These agreements must recognize the poorest countries' right to protect sectors of their economies of strategic importance to their development and vital to their sovereignty, such as agriculture, which is essential to food independence, as well as their right to support production in these critical sectors without accusations of unfair competition.

These agreements must recognize countries' right to protect services that assure fundamental social rights, such as education, health care, and social security, as well as natural resources indispensable to survival, such as water.

These agreements must recognize countries' right to exercise sovereignty with regard to biodiversity, natural products, public health care, and cultural heritage, notwithstanding any intellectual property, trade, or investment regulations.

These agreements must establish the primacy of complementarity over free competition between countries to promote cooperation in terms of development, trade, and productive investment during discussions in order to compensate for countries' deficiencies, meet their real needs, and improve citizenry quality of life.

These agreements must account for the social and environmental dimension inherent in all economic processes. As parliamentarians, we cannot support free trade and integration agreements that fail to provide concrete improvements with regard to gender equality, human rights, and rights with respect to labor, the environment, and culture.

Any agreement of this nature engaging the responsibility of signatory states must leave room for the democratic dimension, i.e., they must contain provisions on social inclusion, as well as the public's right to take part in the process, be consulted, and pronounce on the outcome of negotiations. Parliaments must be able to take permanent part in all regional or inter-American integration processes, which must strengthen or create zones of social representation in important decisions affecting how this process is to come about.