



REPORT ON THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE 7TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PARLIAMENTARY CONFEDERATION OF THE AMERICAS (COPA)

Quito, Ecuador
May 29 to June 2, 2006

This is the report on the proceedings of the 7th General Assembly of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA), held in Quito, Ecuador, from May 29 to June 2, 2006, during which participants examined issues related to the role COPA plays in strengthening parliament.

The opening ceremony was presided over by Mr. Alfredo Palacio, Constitutional President of Ecuador; Ambassador Diego Ribadeneira, Vice Chancellor of Ecuador; Mr. Wilfrido Lucero, President of the National Congress; and Deputy Guillermo Landázuri Carrillo, President of COPA.

The Assembly brought together 57 parliamentarians representing 14 states of the hemisphere—Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Haiti, Mexico, Netherlands Antilles, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Québec, the United States, and Venezuela—as well as the president of the Andean Parliament and delegates from the Central American Parliament.

The proceedings of the General Assembly were well covered by national media, which portrayed COPA as a dynamic and well-established international organization in the Americas.

At the conference, the General Assembly adopted rules of procedure for COPA meetings as well as recommendations concerning the respect of human rights and the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries, reiterated the importance of operating in keeping with the principles of independence and equality between countries and of strengthening parliamentary democracy, renewed the mandate of the COPA president, and appointed the members of the new 2006–2007 Executive Committee. COPA also reiterated, via resolution, its determination to initiate negotiations with the Interparliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA) with a view to creating a single organization responsible for interparliamentary dialogue in the Americas.

Given that the central theme of the 7th General Assembly was “Trade Agreements and Economic Development,” working committee participants focused mainly on this issue, reiterating the importance of demanding respect for the principles of national sovereignty, self-determination, and human rights protection. They called upon the parliaments of the Americas to take the measures required to ensure compliance with these principles as essential conditions for maintaining peaceful relations between countries in our hemisphere.

As part of its interparliamentary work, the General Assembly had the opportunity to welcome Nobel Peace Prize candidate Ambassador Jorge Bustamante, who dealt with the theme “Migration Between Mexico and the United States” in his keynote address; Mauricio Pareja, economist and general manager of the Central Bank of Ecuador, who made a presentation entitled “Ecuador: The Dollarization Process and the Challenge



of Reconciling Trade Agreements and Economic Development;" and Juan Carlos Romero Hiks, Constitutional Governor of the State of Guanajuato, Mexico, who addressed the theme "Education: Cultural Trigger for Our Nations."

During the closing plenary session, chaired by Ecuadorian deputy and COPA president Guillermo Landázuri, the Assembly adopted various resolutions further to the recommendations drawn up by the various working groups. Here are the highlights:

- a) **Committee on Education, Culture, Science, and Technology, chaired by Deputy Consuelo Camarena Gómez (Mexico).** The Assembly urged COPA member countries to conduct a study of their laws, projects, and legislative reforms in the area of education in order to develop educational programs that meet the needs of the populations of the Americas. Furthermore, it recommended that a comparative study of national educational be conducted in order to draw conclusions promoting diplomatic communication on education issues that would have a real impact on the parliamentary front in our respective countries. The Assembly also spoke out on cultural diversity and called on the countries of the hemisphere to accede to the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions without delay.
- b) **Committee on Democracy and Peace, chaired by Éric R. Mercier (Québec).** The Assembly expressed its solidarity with the people of Haiti and, in its recommendations, called upon the new government to establish a climate of national dialogue and reconciliation; urged the authorities and the Haitian people to work together to tackle the challenge of ensuring constitutional security and the socioeconomic development the country so desperately needs; and called on the international community to develop, together with the new government, a long term plan for the economic, social, and political development of Haiti. The Assembly also confirmed COPA's desire to take part in the international electoral observation mission during the national election to be held in Mexico on July 2, 2006.
- c) **Committee on Health and Social Protection, temporarily chaired by Deputy Flor Ríos (Venezuela).** The Assembly called on the governments of countries in the Americas to ensure that not only women, but also men and teens, have access to sex education that encourages them to be vigilant and take greater responsibility for their sexual and reproductive health; that these governments set up their own programs to meet the current and future needs of women; and that they recognize the need to extend healthcare coverage to ensure all people have universal access to primary and preventative care.
- d) **Committee on the Economy, Trade, and Trading Blocs, chaired by Juan José García Ochoa (Mexico).** The Assembly urged the governments of countries in the Americas to sign only those international agreements that recognize the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries and recommended they implement new hemispheric trade integration strategies based on a policy of promoting the common interests of participating countries while respecting their differences.



- e) **Committee on Human Rights, Aboriginal Peoples, and Citizen Security**, temporarily chaired by Jean-Pierre Charbonneau (Québec). The Assembly recommended that the governments of countries in the Americas protect the rights of all people regardless of race, gender, or social circumstances so that all can enjoy a decent standard of living, the right to inclusion and to be different, citizen security, the opportunity to take part in politics, and the right to non-discrimination. It also urged them to acknowledge that migration is a growing phenomenon in our hemisphere and that it requires governments to adopt measures guaranteeing full respect for the fundamental rights of migrants who resettle in other countries.
- f) **Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development**, chaired by Deputy Dudley Lucia (Netherlands Antilles). The Assembly recommended that the governments of countries in the Americas seek hemispheric integration based on sustainable development, urged them to promote the creation of an environment and sustainable development continuous learning center for the region's parliamentarians to help them increase their knowledge of these issues, and reminded them of the need to institute measures aimed at helping all countries in the hemisphere develop their own laws on biodiversity and the protection of the ozone layer and international waters.

The general treasurer read COPA's financial report for 2005–2006. He noted that progress had been made regarding the collection of member parliament contributions, which were up 200% over the preceding period, and the Assembly agreed to step up efforts to formalize contributions and clarify its disbursement policy.

The Network of Women Parliamentarians submitted its activity report for 2005–2006, which included information on efforts to strengthen the Network and to organize forums and meetings whose central theme was the improvement of the status of women in the countries of the region.

The Assembly then proceeded to elect and swear in members of the new COPA Executive Committee.

The plenary Assembly unanimously elected Carlos Jiménez Macías, deputy of the Congress of the United States of Mexico, the new president for the period 2006–2007. During his swearing-in, he pledged to strengthen COPA in the hemisphere. This election marks the second time that Mexico will have assumed the COPA presidency as we celebrate our tenth anniversary.

The members of the new Executive Committee are as follows:

Chair	Deputy Carlos Jiménez Macías Chamber of Deputies of Mexico
First Vice Chair	Senator Edda Evangelina Acuña Chamber of Senators of the Province of Buenos Aires
Vice Chairs for North America	Senator Aracely Escalante Jasso, Senate of Mexico Assemblyman Félix Ortiz, New York State



	Assembly
Vice Chair for Central America	Deputy Mariela Peña Pinto Legislative Assembly of El Salvador
Vice Chairs for the Caribbean	Deputy Tubal Páez Hernández, Cuban National Assembly of People's Power of Cuba Deputy Dudley Lucia, Parliament of Netherlands Antilles
Vice Chairs for the Andean Region	Deputy María Iris Varela Rangel, National Assembly of Venezuela Deputy Miriam Garcés, National Congress of Ecuador
Vice Chairs for the Southern Cone	Deputy Miguel Feu Rosa, Chamber of Deputies of Brazil Deputy Zulma Gómez Cáceres, Chamber of Deputies of Paraguay
President of the Network of Women Parliamentarians	Deputy Aparecida Gama Legislative Assembly of Río de Janeiro
Network of Women Parliamentarians	Senator Lucero Saldaña Pérez Senate of Mexico
Treasurer	Deputy Leticia Gutiérrez Corona Chamber of Deputies of Mexico
Former Chairs	
Québec National Assembly	Jean-Pierre Charbonneau, MNA
Senate of Puerto Rico	Senator Kenneth McClintock Hernández
Andean Parliament	Deputy Jhannett Madriz Sotillo
Chamber of Deputies of Brazil	Deputy María José Maninha
National Congress of Ecuador	Deputy Guillermo Landázuri Carrillo
Regional Parliaments and Interparliamentary Organizations	
National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators (NHCSL)	Representative Joseph Miró
Andean Parliament	Deputy Luis Fernando Duque
Amazonian Parliament	Deputy Gerardo Cruz Saavedra
Central American Parliament	Deputy María Esperanza Valle
Latin American Parliament	Deputy Ney Lopes
UNALE (Brazil)	Deputy Liberman Moreno
Mercosur Parliamentary Union	Deputy Celestino Roque Secco
COMCE (Mexico)	Deputy Efraín Villanueva
National Conference of State Legislators (Mexico)	Deputy Pedro Ruiz Higuera



Patagonian Parliament	Deputy Selva Judit Fortsmann
Host Assembly of the First General Assembly	
Québec National Assembly	Pierre Moreau, MNA
First Organization to Coparticipate with COPA	
National Union of State Legislatures of Brazil (UNALE)	Deputy Celestino Roque Secco
Parliaments of United and Federated States	
Legislature of Netherlands Antilles	Senator Pedro Tacho
Chamber of Deputies of Argentina	Deputy Ana Richter
Chamber of Deputies of Brazil	Deputy Iván Valente
Chamber of Deputies of Colombia	Deputy Oscar Darío Pérez
National Assembly of People's Power of Cuba	Deputy Elsa Rojas
Legislative Assembly of El Salvador	Deputy Irma Amaya
Haitian Parliament	Senator Cemephise Gilles
National Congress of Honduras	Deputy Doris Alejandrina Gutiérrez
Chamber of Representatives of Jamaica	Deputy Morais Guy
Congress of the United States of Mexico	Deputy Carlos Jiménez Macías
Chamber of Deputies of Paraguay	Deputy Tolentino Bobadilla Centurión
Legislative Assembly of Panama	Deputy José Olmedo Carreño
Chamber of Deputies of the Dominican Republic	Deputy Minerva Josefina Taváres Mirabal
National Assembly of Suriname	Deputy Ruth Wijdenbosch
Chamber of Senators of Uruguay	Senator Carlos Baraibar
National Assembly of Venezuela	Oscar Figuera
Committee Chairs	
Democracy and Peace	Eric R. Mercier, MNA, Québec National Assembly



Economy, Trade, and Trading Blocs	Deputy Juan José García Ochoa Chamber of Deputies of Mexico
Education, Culture, Science, and Technology	Deputy Consuelo Camarena Gómez Chamber of Deputies of Mexico
Health and Social Protection	Deputy Elsa Rojas National Assembly of People's Power of Cuba
Environment and Sustainable Development	Deputy Dudley Lucia - Legislature of Netherlands Antilles
Human Rights, Aboriginal Peoples, and Citizen Security	Deputy Orlando Fantazzini Chamber of Deputies of Brazil

To conclude the proceedings of the 7th General Assembly, the Quito Declaration was read out loud. Among other main points, it stresses the need for countries to avoid signing international agreements not governed by principles recognizing the independence of states, equality among peoples, the right to self-determination, and the prohibition of interference in the domestic affairs of other countries. It also stressed their obligation to promote peaceful conflict resolution, cooperation, respect of human rights, and solidarity among peoples for the well-being of humanity.

The work of the COPA Assembly clearly established that it is crucial to promote and strengthen representative, participatory democracy in compliance with the principle of non-intervention and most importantly, support all initiatives aimed at strengthening international peace and security without interfering in states' domestic affairs.

It should be mentioned that the Assembly agreed to appoint future COPA presidents as follows: in Mexico in 2006–2007, in Québec in 2007–2008, and in Argentina in 2008–2009. The 8th General Assembly will therefore be held in Mexico in 2007.

Made in Quito, capital of Ecuador, on June 5, 2006

LETICIA GUTIÉRREZ CORONA, DEPUTY
GENERAL TREASURER