



**BY-LAWS OF  
COPA ELECTORAL  
OBSERVATION MISSIONS**

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### **ART. 1 AIMS**

The electoral observation missions of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA) have the following aims:

- a. To testify impartially, to the voters and to the international community, as to the conduct of the electoral process (presidential and legislative elections, referendums) and to certify their legality through electoral observation.
- b. To contribute to the consolidation of democracy and to the strengthening of democracy in the Americas.
- c. To rigorously observe the democratic process with the goal of assisting in fostering a climate of trust, security and credibility.
- d. To contribute, in the respect of the sovereignty of the states and keeping with the national legislation in force, to ensuring the transparency and integrity of the electoral process.
- e. To encourage broad-based participation by voters in the election.
- f. To establish COPA as a major player in the area of consolidating parliamentary democracy at the international level.

### **ART. 2 PROVISIONS FOR ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSIONS**

#### **2.1 Origin and processing of applications**

Any application for an electoral observation mission to be sent under the auspices of COPA must be submitted in writing to the President of COPA two (2) months before the election is to be held.

In order to be considered, any application must receive the approval in writing of the governmental authorities responsible for foreign affairs of the applicant State.

The electoral processes concerned shall be presidential and legislative elections, as well as referendums, should the need arise.

Once the COPA President has received an application for electoral observation submitted in due form, the President shall refer to the Board of the COPA Committee on Democracy and Peace, who shall verify the following aspects: evaluation of the political situation of the applicant State, diagnosis of the preparations (logistics, security, communications) and evaluation of the electoral management structure (election commission, electoral tribunal, etc.).

The Committee Board shall formulate a recommendation to the COPA President, who shall decide whether or not to send an electoral observation mission, and shall define the mandate conferred upon the members of the mission.

The applicants shall be informed in writing of this decision.

## **2.2 Process for the designation of parliamentary observers**

Upon recommendation by the Board of the Committee on Democracy and Peace, the COPA President shall choose certain parliamentary assemblies, according to geographic distribution, who will be invited to designate observer parliamentarians. The choice of parliamentary assemblies must also respect the principle of rotation.

The Committee Board shall set the number of parliamentarians to participate in the electoral observation mission.

The participation of parliamentary observers is dependent on their travel and accommodation expenses being covered by the parliamentary assemblies to which they belong.

A COPA electoral observation mission must be composed of at least three parliamentarians from at least three different States, to ensure the multilateral character of the mission.

The COPA President shall inform the authorities of the host State of the names of the parliamentarians who are members of the electoral observation mission.

## **2.3 Coordination of the observation mission**

Upon recommendation by the Committee Board, the COPA President shall designate the mission officials: the mission leader, responsible for the overall operations of the mission and for media relations, and the rapporteur, responsible for recording the observations of the mission members and for drafting the final report.

## **2.4 Briefing of parliamentary observers**

The Board of the Committee on Democracy and Peace shall take measures to enable the parliamentary observers to acquire a basic knowledge of the host State, of its constitutional and electoral system, and of current political events. It shall also ensure their training as electoral observers.

The personal preparations of each observer (passport, visa, vaccines, etc.) is the responsibility of the parliamentary assembly to which the member belongs.

## **2.5 Deployment of the observation mission**

The parliamentary members of the electoral observation mission must meet with the political, administrative and electoral officials within the host State, in order to obtain a maximum of information so as to establish a reading of the situation that is as objective as possible.

They must deploy themselves so as to cover the largest possible number of polling stations over the widest possible territory.

In observing the vote, they shall carefully record their observations on the conduct of voting operations, devoting particular attention to the counting of the ballots.

For reasons of security and integrity of the observation mission, the mission leader shall ensure that the parliamentary members of the electoral observation mission shall always move around in groups of at least two.

## **2.6 Observation process**

The Board of the Committee on Democracy and Peace shall provide members of the electoral observation mission with the principles, codes of conduct and elements of observation to be applied during the electoral operations, and shall provide to them any relevant information documents to assist them in properly fulfilling their duties.

## **2.7 Association with other organizations**

In order to ensure optimal deployment of its members, the leader of the mission may decide to collaborate with other international electoral observation missions.

## **2.8 Conclusions and media coverage of the electoral observation mission**

A press release shall be issued in the days following the vote, relating the general conclusions of the observation mission.

The Board of the Committee on Democracy and Peace shall ensure that the COPA electoral observation mission prepares a summary of the observations and records its conclusions in a mission report.

Following approval by the COPA President, this report shall be transmitted to the officials of the host State of the electoral observation mission, as well as to the media, within thirty days of the official end of the mission. Afterwards, this report shall be officially submitted at the following COPA General Assembly.

### **ART. 3 SPECIFIC DUTIES OF THE SECRETARIAT OF THE COMMITTEE ON DEMOCRACY AND PEACE**

The Secretariat of the Committee on Democracy and Peace shall:

- a. Establish relations with the officials of the host State in order to have the COPA members accredited as international observers of the process under way, and to ensure the independence and security of the mission during the process.
- b. Coordinate and supervise the duties of organizing, administration and logistics of the mission.

### **ART. 4 RULES OF CONDUCT FOR COPA OBSERVERS**

Each observer must comply with the following rules of conduct at all times:

- a. Act with independence and impartiality.
- b. Be thorough and record all relevant circumstances.
- c. Abstain from any action that could hinder the conduct of operations.
- d. Avoid placing oneself in situations of conflict of interest.
- e. Record any request for contestation or interpretation of the electoral rules by the personnel of the polling stations or by voters, while avoiding taking any position.
- f. Draft the report accurately.

**These By-Laws were adopted on May 11, 2005, at the Plenary Session of the VI<sup>th</sup> COPA General Assembly, Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil.**

**These By-Laws were modified on September 18, 2009, at the Plenary Session of the IX<sup>th</sup> COPA General Assembly, Salta, Argentina.**