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**Committee on Education, Culture, Science and Technology**  
**22nd meeting of the Executive Committee of COPA**  
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**General proposal of themes for the Committee on Education, Culture, Science and Technology in view of the General Assembly of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas to be held in Québec City, Canada**

Since its formation, the Committee on Education, Culture, Science and Technology of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas has been concerned with the participation, development and progress of all countries within the Confederation. In keeping with its principles and seeking to work actively and responsibly, the Committee is dedicated to defending and promoting areas that fall within its purview in terms of education, culture, youth, science and technology.

This is the backdrop against which I had the honour of being named chair of the Committee to pursue the objectives proposed by the Confederation. This is an important position that brings with it great responsibility in terms of the promotion, development and progress of peoples in the Americas.

The Committee I am heading has always debated and analyzed in depth themes that directly and indirectly affect the present and future of cultures and societies, governments and their peoples, as well as the men and women who are the foundation of diversity and cultural plurality in the Americas, while maintaining the vision of the future that characterizes the Confederation.

The Committee on Education, Culture, Science and Technology is also committed to defending equality, a commitment we are united behind. I am proud and happy to share the vision of the new president of COPA, Jacques Chagnon, who has chosen the priorities of reducing infant mortality, increasing the number of high school graduates among students over 25, eliminating pay inequity between men and women and protecting water resources. For our peoples, these are major, intersecting challenges that require attention from all sides, from the viewpoint of gender equality and respect for the basic rights of women on both continents, an effort I wholeheartedly support.

To help our continents progress in view of the preceding, the Committee must immediately address three important themes in the area of education, which I encourage you to work together on in order to implement concrete measures, but above all to reach major agreements.

Given the ongoing evolution of education and culture and our countries' great interest in them, our first theme is and will remain the worrisome issue of young people in the

Americas dropping out of school. The right to education is a basic human right that members of the Committee on Education, Culture, Science and Technology are committed to defending. It does not just involve access to a teaching institution, but also the right to a quality education that provides individuals with concrete learning experiences for the purpose of completing their basic education.

This is a theme that the Committee on Education, Culture, Science and Technology has been working on for a long time, and we must continue to do so, particularly now that the honourable president of COPA and **president** of the National Assembly of Québec, Jacques Chagnon, has made it one of the foundations of his work plan that we, the Committee, believe to be very important. We must continue the work that has been started, and this is why the Committee will base its analysis on an excerpt from the work plan: **“Make sure the State has a dropout prevention plan, school reintegration program and/or an action plan to increase school enrolment rates.”** We are confident and convinced that we will be able to promote and put in place significant mechanisms that will benefit our nations.

**Commentaire [m1]:** Note du traducteur: Le texte fr. Indique que M. Chagnon est vice-président de l'Assemblée nationale (SVP valider)

The second theme is water, the vital liquid. Water is a key factor in analyzing environmental safety. It maintains natural functions, protects the life cycle, the water cycle, and the biosphere, and ensures the well-being, recreation, pleasure, production processes and conservation of ecosystems for various human activities. It also improves economic security by generating development opportunities, and is a pre-requisite for food security since it allows for the production of sufficient quantities of healthy, nutritious and culturally accepted foods.

While no one is sheltered from climate change, semi-arid and arid regions in poor countries—where precipitation and water flow are concentrated over certain months and vary considerably from year to year—are the most vulnerable. Water usage is driven by population changes, food consumption, politics, the economy, lifestyle and consumption priorities. Developing countries will continue to build urban areas given the current population explosion, which will increase usage. Water recycling and desalination are two methods that will facilitate water supply in semi-arid and arid regions.

One third of the urban water supply in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and more than half the water supply in Asia are intermittent during drought periods, hindering the quality of water in the resupply systems. Water consumption increases based on demographic evolution, economic growth, lifestyle changes and the expansion of water supply systems.

These issues have existed for centuries and have worsened over time. Future generations will be the most affected, which is why we must promote **“the protection of water resources by integrating awareness programs into fundamental educational programs in the Americas,”** thereby creating a water culture.

The third and last theme, but by no means the least, was the subject of major agreements at our last Assembly, and was an issue that we must continue to promote at all cost: the role of parliamentary channels as a tool for strengthening democratic processes. It is still necessary to implement pertinent regulations allowing the use of parliamentary channels as a means of reinforcing democracy in the Americas. This is the point of view of the parliamentarians of the Americas, based on the observation that transparency and

accountability in the exercising of political power and in public communication are fundamental aspects of modern democratic systems. Parliamentary television doesn't just play an informative role; it also provides educational, cultural and civic information. The coverage of the work of the assemblies also obliges public officials to demonstrate greater commitment to carrying out their duties.

In this context, we, the members of the **Parliamentary** Confederation of the Americas, undertake to continue strengthening democracy and transparency in all our operations; to maintain public communication channels; to take the necessary initiative to legislate and to create venues for public communications that bring citizens closer to the political process, foster cultural vitality, and enable the dissemination of information that promotes citizens' development; and to facilitate the communication of information accessible to an audience comprising all layers and age groups of society. At our next meeting, we should evaluate our progress in terms of establishing a communications policy that promotes the expression of opinions, dialogue and bridging between parliamentarians and the electorate, as well as our achievements in terms of the funding of infrastructure to facilitate the transmission of channel content and allow for full accessibility. We must also continue to work on an agreement regarding the ongoing exchange of experiences among American parliamentary channels.

This is how we will achieve our objective of becoming a permanent forum for dealing with these important issues on an ongoing basis.

As such, our proposals for the next General Assembly of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas, to be held in Québec City, will focus on three main statements. For this forum, we invite all member countries to unite in developing methods for promoting awareness of and action on the following priority issues:

- The State as promoter of educational reintegration and stay-in-school programs
- The protection of water resources through the integration of awareness programs into fundamental educational programs in the Americas
- Promotion, creation and development of parliamentary channels, major accountability tools for parliaments in the Americas.