



PARLIAMENTARY CONFEDERATION OF THE AMERICAS (COPA)

XI MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES BRASÍLIA, BRAZIL MARCH 23, 2004

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

On March 23, 2004, the eleventh meeting of the Executive Committee of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA) took place, the morning session being held in the Hall of the Constitution, Justice and Drafting Committee, and the afternoon session in the Nereu Ramos Auditorium, at the Chamber of Deputies, in Brasília, in the Federative Republic of Brazil. This meeting was attended by representatives from the congresses and parliamentary assemblies of the following countries: Argentina, Brazil, Canada (Québec), Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, Netherlands Antilles, United States of America and Venezuela, as well as delegates from regional parliaments and interparliamentary organizations. The regional parliaments represented included the Andean Parliament, the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN), the Indigenous Parliament and the Latin-American Parliament (PARLATINO). The interparliamentary organizations included the National Union of State Legislatures (UNALE) of Brazil, and the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) of the United States. The meeting was also attended by the coordinators of the technical secretariats of Québec, Mexico and Brazil. The participants discussed the agenda presented below, which was unanimously approved by those present, following the presentation of amendments, discussions and deliberations.

- 1) Official opening;
 - 2) Follow-up on items pending from the V General Assembly of COPA, held in Caracas in November 2003;
 - 3) COPA strategic planning;
 - 4) COPA Magazine;
 - 5) Setting the date for the next General Assembly;
 - 6) Other matters.
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- 1) Official opening – Deliberations began in the Hall of the Constitution, Justice and Drafting Committee at the Chamber of Deputies, in the presence of the following persons: Federal Representative João Paulo Cunha, President of the Chamber of Deputies, Federal Representative Ney Lopes, President of PARLATINO, Senator Carlos Mateos, President of the Congress of Paraguay, Senator Seris Shessarenko, representing the President of the National Congress of Brazil, Representative Guillermo Landázuri, President of the Congress of Ecuador, and Federal

Representative Maria José Maninha, President of COPA. The above mentioned parliamentarians each took the floor, mentioning that Brazil was pleased to host this meeting among parliamentarians of the Americas. They underlined the importance of such a meeting, in view of the similar situations faced by legislative assemblies, particularly as regards the plan for a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). At the conclusion of this first part of the meeting, in the presence of the members of the Executive Committee, the national parliamentarians and the dignitaries specially invited to the opening of the session, Representative Maninha, who chaired the deliberations, welcomed the participants and reiterated the political commitments made in Puebla, Mexico, when she began her term of office. She delivered a lengthy speech on current political events worldwide, emphasizing terrorism and the recent event that occurred in Spain. She pointed out that COPA plays a very important role and that it should take up challenges, particularly in the context of the discussions about the creation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas, since the legislators of the Americas will have greater involvement in political decision-making in their capacity as free parliamentarians, in order that they may fulfill their constitutional mission. Next, the floor was given to Ambassador José Carlos Macedo Soares, of the Department of External Relations of Brazil. He spoke of the current state of negotiations of the plan for a Free Trade Area of the Americas. Mr. Soares informed participants, providing details on the progress of negotiations conducted recently in the city of Puebla, Mexico, mentioning that certain problems remain regarding various items on the FTAA agenda. Following this, there was a lively discussion among the participants and the speaker about the environment and the problems experienced by certain countries in the current round of negotiations, more particularly in the sectors of agriculture and government procurement.

Following the main conference, the session was adjourned for the mid-day meal. In the afternoon, the session resumed, this time in the Nereu Ramos Auditorium, according to the approved agenda, with a discussion of the first item. Representative Ileana Rogel of El Salvador, President of the Network of Women Parliamentarians, asked to speak in order to inform the participants of a meeting to be held by the Network on a separate schedule so that the two meetings would not overlap. On account of the delay, President Maninha proposed to discuss immediately the follow-up on pending items. She arranged the panel for the deliberations by inviting the members of the executive secretariats of Brazil, Mexico and Québec, respectively, to participate. They began the discussion of the agenda items listed above, giving the floor to the speakers registered, allowing them to benefit from their right to speak. A moment was set aside during the meeting for a presentation by Rede Brasil, a non-governmental organization, which requested that an item be added to the COPA program, namely reforming the International Monetary Fund (IMF), access to information within that organization, and national and interparliamentary regulations on credit operations of the World Bank and the Interamerican Development Bank (IDB). The next item on the agenda was COPA's strategic plan. President Maninha raised this topic by presenting to the participants copies of a document on this topic, which was read, giving rise to a lively discussion, and which was then approved. During the discussion, it was mentioned that the organizational phase of COPA's major event had already begun, namely the next General Assembly, to be held in Foz do Iguaçu, in the State of Parana, and that steps had already been taken with the State government to obtain full support concerning the holding of the event, as well as support from sponsors. During the discussion, the new date of the General Assembly was approved. It will take place in May 2005, in view of the difficulty of holding a conference in November 2004, because of general elections

being held in several countries, and because of the parliamentary break beginning in December of the same year. Representative Ileana Rogel of El Salvador then spoke on the topics to be covered at the next General Assembly, namely assessing the impact of the FTAA on our countries and of the need for dialogue with other organizations to ensure a broader discussion of this topic. Representative Jimenez of Mexico spoke of the current situation and the increased role that parliamentarians may play in their respective regions, as key stakeholders on central issues currently being discussed, primarily wherever FTAA events are being held, so as to increase our scope of action. He then spoke of the need for the taking of office for the position of COPA president to occur automatically. Senator Aracely Escalante, of Mexico, then presented a document on her activities. Next, Representative Leticia Gutiérrez, of Mexico, in her capacity as treasurer, presented the draft budget of COPA for discussion and approval by the participants. She passed the document around the table, with the purpose of providing it afterwards to all members of the Executive Committee. The Mexican parliamentarian stated that it was necessary to explain COPA's forms of financing, not only for the General Assembly, but also for its operations, and that it was necessary to establish a mandatory system of membership dues. Representative Joseph Miro, of the United States, pointed out that it would be quite difficult to speak about COPA's strategic plan and financing, in view of the organizational and budgetary problems, and that it was impossible to discuss a financial support plan in the United States, on account of the problem of representation of parliamentarians. Being unable to represent their parliaments or their country, many of them attend only on an individual basis, and this was the case of Mr. Miro. As a representative of an American state, he pointed out that many issues handled by COPA were considered as under the jurisdiction of the federal government, and of the federal legislators. Representative Maninha again took the floor and explained the political function of COPA representatives and the organization's budget, since this was the best opportunity to participate and discuss membership of national and state-level organizations, and to develop a permanent financial solution for the organization. MNA Christos Sirros of Québec stated that the point was to present a draft budget and explain it to all parliamentarians of the Americas, but that COPA should make an effort to collect dues, by sending letters to the member parliaments. Senator Efrain Gonzales, of the United States, spoke about the participation of the NCSL in COPA; at this point in the agenda, the following participants took the floor: Representative Pierre Moreau, of Québec, Ivan Vasques, of Ecuador, and Ricardo Ulcuango, of Ecuador. Next, the reports of the thematic committees were presented. Representative Cabello Gil, of Mexico, of the Committee on Democracy and Peace, spoke about the electoral observation seminar that did not take place, and about the problems that he had experienced concerning travel for the representatives of the Arias Foundation, because of the lack of a budget to cover airline tickets and per diems. He proposed signing an agreement with the Arias Foundation, at a date to be determined, and spoke about upcoming missions to be conducted by the Committee, in connection with the elections in Panama, the Dominican Republic and the United States. Next, a resolution was approved regarding a regulation on electoral observation missions. The following persons took the floor: MNA Jacques Côté, of Québec, Representative Maninha, Representative Tubal Paez, of Cuba, Representative Jhannett Madriz, of the Andean Parliament and ex-president of COPA, Representative Joseph Miro, of the United States, and Representative Carlos Jiménez Macías, of Mexico. Finally, Representative Cabello Gil, President of the Committee on Democracy and Peace, stated that it was necessary to set criteria to be observed to participate in an electoral observation

mission, and he added that it was important to conduct a seminar in order to provide more training for legislators who will be called on to participate in this process.

Another item on the agenda was the discussion of the COPA Magazine. Representative Maninha spoke about its content, and asked all parliamentarians to distribute this magazine to their fellow parliamentarians, in an effort to broaden its circulation. The meeting of the Executive Committee continued, this time in the Interlegis chambers, on March 24, 2004. Representative Maninha read out a document sent in by a Haitian senator, concerning the situation being experienced by that country and the current serious institutional crisis. Following this, a resolution on the situation in Haiti was adopted. It was agreed that the document should be sent to the main international organizations and to the countries of the Americas. The motion was read by MNA Christos Sirros of Québec. He was interrupted by Representative Tubal Paez, who spoke about his position in relation with Haiti, and requested that in the document, UN intervention in the conflict should be invoked, since there is an interest on the part of Cuba, and as many professionals from that country possess relevant expertise. He proposed an addition to the motion, which was presented to the table. Finally, President Maninha suggested that the next Executive Committee meeting should be held in Panama, in June 2004, in conjunction with the FTAA negotiations meeting, according to the approved schedule of meetings. As a last item on the agenda, namely other matters, Representative Ricardo Ulcuango of the Indigenous Parliament took the floor to put forward an invitation to an event at that Parliament which will take place in June 2004, in Quito, Ecuador, and transmitted the invitation to President Maninha. As this completed all items on the agenda, the President closed the meeting, with the proviso that this report of proceedings be drafted and then duly signed.