



**STATUTES OF THE PARLIAMENTARY
CONFEDERATION OF THE AMERICAS**

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TITLE I - NATURE AND OBJECTIVES

CHAPTER I - NATURE

Section 1 Nature

The Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas is an organization that brings together the congresses and parliamentary assemblies of the unitary, federal, federated and associated States, the regional parliaments and the interparliamentary organizations of the Americas.

Whenever COPA is mentioned in any of the following provisions, it shall mean the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas

CHAPTER II - OBJECTIVES

Section 2 Objectives

Created on the initiative of the parliamentarians of the Americas, COPA encourages networking between the parliamentary assemblies as a means of enriching interparliamentary dialogue, and fosters the adoption of measures to ensure that our continent remains a peaceful zone founded on the principles of representative and participative democracy and social justice, the protection of individual rights, gender equity and the forms of economic integration or complementarity that best suit our respective countries or groups of countries.

In all of its activities, COPA observes the strictest compliance with the fundamental principles of international coexistence enshrined in section 2 of the United Nations Charter.

COPA shall pursue the following objectives:

- I.- Promoting before the executive bodies of the Americas the interests and aspirations of our populations with regard to the issues facing our continent in an increasingly interdependent world;
- II.- Developing and reinforcing contact with the congresses and parliamentary assemblies to encourage them to fully carry out all COPA recommendations;
- III.- Disseminating, to congresses and parliamentary assemblies of the Americas, the means of action approved by COPA to solve the problems with which the populations of the Americas are confronted;
- IV.- Fostering the creation of a synergetic relationship and permanent communication between the members of the different congresses, parliamentary assemblies, regional parliaments and interparliamentary organizations of the continent;
- V.- Promoting the development and implementation of public policies that have an impact on the causes and effects of poverty in the countries of the Americas and are conducive to encouraging reflection, cooperation and the sharing of experiences on issues of major interest to the participating congresses and parliamentary assemblies;

- VI.- Fostering, in consultation with the parties involved in a conflict, the adoption of measures to resolve the differences that exist between countries in our continent, taking into consideration the legitimate interests of the States directly involved;
- VII.- Encouraging first and foremost, the participation of all the congresses and parliamentary assemblies referred to in section 1 above, in keeping with the conditions set out in our Statutes;
- VIII.- Fostering dialogue and ongoing cooperation with parliamentary organizations and congresses or parliamentary assemblies around the world, always in keeping with COPA's objectives and mission.

CHAPTER III - SCOPE OF POWERS

Section 3 Scope of powers

COPA recognizes and supports the sovereignty of unitary, federal, federated and associated States of the Americas. The recommendations and statutes of COPA shall not have precedence or go against the constitutions or laws of unitary, federal, federated and associated States of the Americas.

TITLE II - MEMBERS

CHAPTER I - ADMISSION, RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS

Section 4 Members

The congresses and parliamentary assemblies of unitary, federal, federated and associated States, the regional parliaments and the interparliamentary organizations of the Americas are members of COPA.

Section 5 Admission

The General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Executive Committee, shall decide whether a congress or parliamentary assembly of unitary, federal, federated and associated States, a regional parliament and an interparliamentary organization of the Americas may be admitted.

Section 6 Rights of the members

The rights of the members of COPA are as follows:

- I.- Taking the floor during the General Assembly;
- II.- Taking part in the Executive Committee in accordance with the procedure prescribed in these Statutes;
- III.- Exercising its right to speak on all decisions concerning COPA;
- IV.- Exercising any other right stemming from these Statutes.

Section 7 Obligations of the members

The obligations of the members of COPA are as follows:

- I.- Attending the proceedings of the General Assembly;
- II.- Providing an annual contribution for defraying the expenses of COPA, the amount of which shall be determined by the Executive Committee;
- III.- Assuming the responsibilities conferred by the exercise of a position on the Executive Committee;
- IV.- Discharging any other obligation stemming from the decisions of the General Assembly and the Executive Committee as well as the provisions of these Statutes.

CHAPTER II - PARTICIPATING PARLIAMENTARIANS

Section 8 Definition

In order to be a participating parliamentarian of COPA, one must be a parliamentarian currently in office.

CHAPTER III – PERMANENT OBSERVERS

Section 9 Permanent observers

Congresses and parliamentary assemblies of unitary, federal, federated and associated states, regional parliaments and interparliamentary organizations of other continents may become permanent observers within COPA; to do so, they must address a written application to the Executive Secretariat.

Section 10 Admission

The General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Executive Committee, shall decide whether a congress, a parliamentary assembly of a unitary, federal, federated or associated State, a regional parliament or an interparliamentary organization may be admitted as a permanent observer.

Section 11 Rights of the permanent observers

Permanent observers may attend the proceedings of the General Assembly, the Executive Committee and the Permanent Thematic Committees. They have the right to speak with the authorization of the presiding officer, but not the right to vote. The Executive Secretariat shall co-ordinate their participation in proceedings, their accreditation and any requests they make, and shall at the appropriate time inform the Presidency and the Regional Secretariats.

Section 12 Obligations of the permanent observers

Permanent observers shall make an annual contribution, as specified in section 49 of these Statutes.

TITLE III - ORGANIZATION

CHAPTER I - STRUCTURE

Section 13 Composition

COPA is composed of the following bodies:

- I.- General Assembly;
- II.- Executive Committee;
- III.- Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas;
- IV.- Permanent Thematic Working Committees;
- V.- Executive Secretariat and Regional Secretariats.

CHAPTER II - GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Section 14 Composition and attributions

The General Assembly, supreme decision-making body of COPA, shall be composed of the delegations of the congresses and parliamentary assemblies of unitary, federal, federated and associated States, the regional parliaments and the interparliamentary organizations of the Americas. Its functions shall include:

- I.- Debating issues connected with the fields of interest of COPA;
- II.- Approving, on a consensus basis, recommendations expressing the views of COPA;
- III.- Confirming the appointment of members of the Executive Committee;
- IV.- Electing, from among the members of the Executive Committee, upon a motion of the Executive Committee, the President, the First Vice-President and the Regional Vice-Presidents; and electing, upon a motion of the Executive Committee, the Treasurer;
- V.- Adopting the budget of COPA and the proportional contributions from congresses, parliamentary assemblies, regional parliaments and interparliamentary organizations, upon recommendation by the Executive Committee;
- VI.- Amending the Statutes of the organization, upon a motion of the Executive Committee;
- VII.- Ratifying any agreement or convention concluded between COPA and other organizations;
- VIII.- Ruling on the admission of congresses and parliamentary assemblies of unitary, federal, federated and associated States, regional parliaments and interparliamentary organizations of the Americas, on the recommendation of the Executive Committee;

IX.- Ruling on the admission as permanent observers of any other congress or parliamentary assembly of unitary, federal, federated and associated States, regional parliaments and interparliamentary organizations in the world, on the recommendation of the Executive Committee;

X.- Exercising any other function conferred on it by these Statutes.

Section 15 Composition of delegations

The competent authorities of each congress and parliamentary assembly of unitary, federal, federated and associated States, regional parliament and interparliamentary organization of the Americas shall determine the composition of their delegation in compliance with the criteria established in these Statutes.

Section 16 Gender equity and pluralism

The delegations participating in the General Assemblies must respect the principles of gender equity and political pluralism.

Section 17 Size of delegations

The host congress or parliamentary assembly shall decide, with the approval of the Executive Committee, on the size of the delegations.

Section 18 Frequency of meetings

The General Assembly shall meet once a year at the invitation of a congress or a parliamentary assembly of the Americas.

Section 19 Date and place of meetings

The Executive Committee and the host congress or parliamentary assembly shall jointly determine the place, date and agenda of the General Assembly and of the meeting of the Executive Committee.

Section 20 Vote

The General Assembly shall adopt its recommendations by consensus.

In the event that a consensus cannot be reached, any question may be resolved by means of a qualified vote of two thirds of the delegations present.

Each of the delegations present shall be entitled to one vote.

In the event that a delegation does not agree, it shall have the right to have its divergent opinion recorded.

Section 21 Responsibilities of delegations

Each delegation shall inform its congress or parliamentary assembly of the recommendations adopted by the General Assembly; if applicable, it shall also inform the relevant bodies of the State or Region that it represents, its government and civil society of such recommendations. It shall see to the promotion of the implementation thereof.

CHAPTER III - EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Section 22 Composition

The organizational and administrative activities of COPA are the responsibility of the Executive Committee, which shall consist of:

- I.- The President, the First Vice-President, the Vice-Presidents, the Treasurer and Ex-Presidents of who hold parliamentary office;
- II.- One parliamentarian per parliament for the unitary and federal States;
- III.- One parliamentarian from one of the congresses or parliamentary assemblies of the federated and associated States, for each federation, if those congresses or assemblies are not otherwise represented by an interparliamentary organization on the Executive Committee;
- IV.- One parliamentarian per regional parliament and one per interparliamentary organization;
- V.- The President of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas and one other parliamentarian member of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas;
- VI.- One parliamentarian from the host congress or parliamentary assembly of the next General Assembly, if this host congress or parliamentary assembly is not otherwise represented on the Executive Committee;
- VII.- One parliamentarian of the first provincial interparliamentary organization associated with COPA;
- VIII.- One parliamentarian from the first host parliamentary assembly;
- IX.- The Chairs of the Permanent Thematic Working Committees of COPA;
- X.- The Executive Secretary and the representative of each COPA Regional Secretariat.

Only parliamentarians representing a parliamentary assembly, a congress, a regional parliament, or an interparliamentary organization that has paid its annual contribution for the expenses of COPA will be able to take part in Executive Committee meetings and present their candidacies for the positions of President, First Vice-President or Regional Vice-President of COPA.

Section 23 Term of office

The members of the Executive Committee shall officially take office at the end of the General Assembly during which their appointment was confirmed and their term of office shall expire at the end of the second General Assembly following that of their appointment. Their term shall not exceed two years and shall be renewable.

Section 24 Designation of members

The competent authorities of the congresses and parliamentary assemblies of the unitary, federal, federated and associated States, the regional parliaments and the interparliamentary organizations of the Americas that have a seat on the Executive Committee shall appoint the parliamentarian or parliamentarians that represent them.

Section 25 Vacancies

In the event of death, resignation, incapacity or departure from parliamentary office of a member of the Executive Committee, the competent authorities of the congress or parliamentary assembly that he or she represents shall designate a replacement, subject to sections 32, 35 and 39.

Section 26 Frequency of meetings

The Executive Committee may hold regular and special meetings, always subject to previous notice. Regular meetings shall be preferably held once a year, and prior to the General Assembly.

The Executive Committee shall hold a special meeting whenever the President deems it necessary, or whenever at least 25 % of its members request such a meeting of the President in writing.

In an emergency situation, the Executive Committee's special meetings may be held by conference call or by any other means of telecommunication if the President and Vice-Presidents decide so.

Section 27 Quorum

The quorum of the Executive Committee is formed by a third of its members representing at least three regions.

Section 28 Attributions

The attributions of the Executive Committee shall include the following:

- I.- Exercising, by consensus, the powers conferred by the General Assembly and taking charge of the execution of its decisions;
- II.- Determining the place, date and agenda of the General Assemblies jointly with the host congress or parliamentary assembly;
- III.- Adopting the rules of procedure of the General Assembly;
- IV.- Recommending the adoption of the budget of COPA and the proportional contributions from congresses, parliamentary assemblies, regional parliaments and interparliamentary organizations;
- V.- Defining the operational rules of the Permanent Thematic Working Committees;
- VI.- Recommending to the General Assembly the admission of congresses and parliamentary assemblies of unitary, federal, federated and associated States, the regional parliaments and interparliamentary organizations of the Americas;
- VII.- Approving the list of organizations invited as *ad hoc* observers to the General Assembly and to the meetings of the Executive Committee;
- VIII.- Deciding on the organization, by COPA, of any other interparliamentary event;

- IX.- Submitting to the General Assembly any motion that it deems useful to the efficient operation of COPA;
- X.- Making decisions *ad referendum* on behalf of the General Assembly during special or emergency situations;
- XI.- Proposing to the General Assembly draft amendments to the Statutes;
- XII.- Proposing to the General Assembly the candidates to the offices of President, First Vice-President, Regional Vice-Presidents and Treasurer;
- XIII.- Approving, upon a motion of the President, the financial statements of the Organization;
- XIV.- Exercising any other function conferred on it by these Statutes.

CHAPTER IV - PRESIDENCY

Section 29 Presidency

COPA's presidency is held by a COPA-member congress or parliamentary assembly of the unitary, federal, federated and associated States, the regional parliaments and the interparliamentary organizations of the Americas, which designates its representative subject to section 32.

Section 30 Attributions

The duties of the President shall include the following:

- I.- Convening, opening and chairing the deliberations of the General Assembly;
- II. Convening and chairing the meetings of the Executive Committee;
- III.- Taking charge of representing COPA and, if applicable, proposing from among the members of the Executive Committee, and preferably from among the former Presidents, those persons who will represent COPA at certain international interparliamentary meetings or at other meetings, forums or activities of a parliamentary nature held by organizations with which COPA maintains close ties world-wide;
- IV.- Ensuring compliance with the organization's Statutes and deciding on any issue that is not set out under the Statutes;
- V.- Supervising the Secretariats;
- VI.- Appointing the necessary personnel for the organization of the General Assembly;
- VII.- Proposing the agendas of the General Assembly and the Executive Committee meetings.

Section 31 Term of office

The President shall take office at the end of the General Assembly during which his or her appointment was confirmed by the General Assembly.

His or her term of office shall expire at the end of the second General Assembly following that of his or her appointment.

The President may not hold more than one position simultaneously on the Executive Committee.

A term as President shall not exceed two years.

Section 32 Vacancies

In the event of death, resignation, incapacity or departure from parliamentary office of the President, the congress or parliamentary assembly that holds the presidency shall designate his or her replacement.

The new President shall, if applicable, assume the duties of that position for the remainder of the existing term of office.

CHAPTER V - FIRST VICE-PRESIDENCY

Section 33 Attributions

The First Vice-President shall assist the President in his or her duties.

Section 34 Term of office

The first vice-presidency shall be held by the representative of the congress or parliamentary assembly that will assume the presidency during the subsequent mandate.

The First Vice-President shall officially take office at the end of the General Assembly during which he or she was elected.

His or her term of office shall expire at the end of the second General Assembly following that of his or her election and shall not be renewable. It shall not exceed two years.

The First Vice-President may not hold more than one position simultaneously on the Executive Committee.

Section 35 Vacancies

In the event of death, resignation, incapacity or departure from parliamentary office of the First Vice-President, the congress or parliamentary assembly that assumes the first vice-presidency shall designate his or her replacement.

CHAPTER VI - VICE-PRESIDENCIES

Section 36 Vice-presidencies

COPA shall have eleven Vice-Presidents. Ten of the vice-presidencies shall be conferred upon representatives from each of the five regions of the Americas, namely two for North America, two for Central America, two for the Caribbean, two for the Andean Region and two for the Southern Cone, the eleventh shall be conferred upon the President of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas.

In the event that a region is not represented, the Executive Committee may designate the Regional Vice-President on a *pro tempore* basis.

Section 37 Attributions

The duties of the Vice-Presidents shall include the following:

- I.- Assisting the President and the First Vice-President in carrying out their duties;
- II.- Representing COPA and coordinating the work performed in their respective regions;
- III.- Exercising any other function conferred on them by these Statutes.

Section 38 Term of office

The Regional Vice-Presidents shall officially take office at the end of the General Assembly during which they were elected.

Their terms of office shall expire at the end of the second General Assembly following that of their election and shall be renewable only once.

The Vice-Presidents may not hold more than one position simultaneously on the Executive Committee.

Section 39 Vacancies

In the event of death, resignation, incapacity or departure from parliamentary office of a Regional Vice-President, the Executive Committee shall elect, at its first meeting, a new Regional Vice-President from among its members.

CHAPTER VII - SECRETARIATS

Section 40 Structure and operation of the Secretariats

COPA's Executive Secretariat shall have its head office in Mexico. The Regional Secretariats shall be situated in Brazil and Québec.

The Executive Secretariat and Regional Secretariats shall present a report of their activities at each meeting of the Executive Committee. The Executive Secretariat shall directly assist the President and the First Vice-President. The Executive Secretariat shall co-ordinate the follow-up on and the application of resolutions adopted by the Executive Committee and General Assembly. It shall inform at the appropriate time the President, the First Vice-President and the Regional Secretariats of changes in the composition of the Executive Committee or Permanent Thematic Committees, and of the work done by permanent observers.

If the President is a parliamentarian from a country that is not the seat of a regional secretariat, he or she shall appoint a technical secretary to serve as a direct contact, who shall be highly familiar with the objectives, statutes and functioning of COPA.

Section 41 Relationship with the vice-presidencies

COPA Regional Secretariats shall maintain close ties with the Vice-Presidents of the regions they are responsible for, support those Vice-Presidents as they convene meetings and disseminate COPA's work. They shall also encourage the regional congresses and parliamentary assemblies they are responsible for to participate in COPA activities.

During Executive Committee meetings and General Assemblies, the Executive Secretariat shall directly assist the President.

CHAPTER VIII - NETWORK OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE AMERICAS

Section 42 Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas

The Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas shall be an autonomous body with respect to the decisions of concern to it. Its objectives shall be to make progress in the quest for gender equity, to preserve the gains achieved by women and to ensure the respect of their rights by States.

The Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas shall be an integral part of COPA, and shall play a guiding role with respect to women's issues or programs relating to women.

CHAPTER IX – PERMANENT THEMATIC WORKING COMMITTEES

Section 43 Permanent Thematic Working Committees

The six Permanent Thematic Working Committees are charged with pursuing analysis of and broadening understanding of the subjects coming within their scope of action that are included in COPA's action plan. They shall meet at least once a year.

The six Permanent Thematic Working Committees of COPA are:

- I.- The Committee on Democracy and Peace, which examines issues relating to the strengthening and promotion of democracy and the rule of law, current political and parliamentary events, as well as electoral observation missions and the promotion of peace in the Americas;

- II.- The Committee on Economy, Trade, Labour, Competitiveness and Trading Blocs, which examines economic and trade-related issues, including all aspects of the economic integration of the Americas, investment policies, labour issues, as well as issues relating to agriculture, fishing, natural resource use, and tourism;
- III.- The Committee on Education, Culture, Science and Technology, which examines issues relating to education, youth, science and technology, the promotion of culture, the defence of cultural diversity, and the preservation of linguistic heritage in the Americas;
- IV.- The Committee on Health and Social Protection, which examines issues relating to health, social protection measures, and anti-poverty policies;
- V.- The Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development, which examines issues relating to environmental quality, the preservation of biodiversity, sustainable resource use and urban development, as well as issues relating to the management of environmental disasters;
- VI.- The Committee on Human Rights, Aboriginal Peoples, and Citizen Security, which examines the status of human rights, in particular the rights of the Aboriginal peoples, Afro-Americans and refugees, as well as issues relating to migrations and the promotion of the security of citizens in the Americas.

TITLE IV – TREASURY AND FINANCING METHODS

CHAPTER I – TREASURY

Section 44 Treasury

The Treasurer shall be a parliamentarian coming from the territory where is located the Executive Secretariat of COPA.

Section 45 Attributions

The Treasurer shall exercise the duties of office in consultation with the presidency and the Executive Committee according to the standards proposed and approved by the Executive Committee.

His or her duties shall include:

- I.- Presenting a draft budget to the Executive Committee and inform the Executive Committee on its implementation;
- II.- Proposing rules of procedure and standards for overseeing and managing resources, and seeing to the implementation of those rules and standards;
- III.- Performing bookkeeping and maintain the accounting records required to implement the budget;
- IV.- Presenting, at each General Assembly, a financial statement that reports on the contributions paid by members and the expenditures made by the organization. This statement must first be approved by the Executive Committee;

V.- Co-signing, with the President, withdrawals of funds and securities, receipts and other payment orders involving commitments and disbursements, and assuming responsibility for COPA's securities and funds.

Section 46 Term of office

The Treasurer shall officially take office at the end of the General Assembly during which he or she was elected. His or her term of office shall expire at the end of the second General Assembly following that of his or her election and shall be renewable. It shall not exceed two years.

Section 46 (bis) Vacancies

In the event of death, resignation or departure from parliamentary office of the Treasurer, the Executive Committee shall elect, at its next meeting, a new Treasurer from among its members on a proposal by the Parliament or assembly responsible for the Treasury.

CHAPTER II –FINANCING METHODS

Section 47 Contributions

COPA's institutional resources come from contributions paid annually by its members and from various special contributions.

Section 48 Criteria

The amount of the annual contributions shall be determined using criteria based on the principles of proportionality, equity and transparency.

Those resources shall be included in the annual budget approved for that purpose by the General Assembly on a proposal by the Treasury and the Executive Committee.

Section 49 Observer contributions

To be invited to take part in COPA activities as permanent observers, congresses or parliamentary assemblies from other parts of the globe must pay the annual contribution proposed by the Executive Committee and approved by the General Assembly.

TITLE V - VARIOUS PROVISIONS

Section 50 Official languages of the Organization

The official languages of COPA shall be: Spanish, English, Portuguese and French.

Section 51 Internet site of COPA

The COPA website, maintained by the Québec Secretariat, shall post upcoming events as well as resolutions and documents approved by the Executive Committee and the General Assembly.

TITLE VI - MODIFICATION OF THE STATUTES

Section 52 Method

Any motion to amend the Statutes must be submitted in writing at least one month before a General Assembly to the Presidency through the Executive Secretariat, which shall immediately transmit it to the members of the Executive Committee. The examination of such a motion to amend shall be entered automatically on the agenda of the next Executive Committee meeting.

After having studied the recommendation issued by the Executive Committee, the General Assembly shall pronounce itself on each motion, preferably by consensus.

In the event that a consensus cannot be reached, a qualified vote of two thirds of the delegations present shall allow a motion to amend to be adopted.

Each delegation present has the right to one vote.

Section 53 Entry into force of the Statutes

The Statutes of COPA shall enter into force on the day following their approval by the General Assembly.

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