



**STATUTES OF THE PARLIAMENTARY
CONFEDERATION
OF AMERICA**

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TITLE I - NATURE AND OBJECTIVES

CHAPTER I - NATURE

Article 1 Nature

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

When COPA is mentioned in the following provisions, it refers to the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas.

CHAPTER II - OBJECTIVES

Article 2 Objectives

COPA, created at the initiative of parliamentarians of the Americas, promotes the enrichment of interparliamentary dialogue through the networking of the parliamentary assemblies of the Americas and the adoption of measures to ensure that the Americas remain a zone of peace where the principles of representative and participatory democracy, social justice, the protection of human rights, gender equality, and the forms of economic integration or complementarity that are most appropriate for member countries or groups of countries.

COPA carries out all its activities in strict compliance with the fundamental principles of international coexistence enshrined in Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations.

COPA pursues the following objectives:

- I.- To promote to the executive bodies of the Americas the interests and aspirations of the peoples of the Americas with regard to the challenges presented by an increasingly interdependent world;
- II.- to develop and strengthen contacts with congresses and parliamentary assemblies with a view to encouraging them to follow up on COPA's recommendations;
- III.- disseminate to the congresses and parliamentary assemblies of the Americas the means of action approved by COPA to resolve the problems facing the peoples of the Americas;
- IV. Promote the creation of synergy and ongoing communication among the members of the various congresses, parliamentary assemblies, regional parliaments, and interparliamentary organizations of the Americas;
- V.- promote the development and implementation of public policies that address the causes and effects of emerging and strategic issues in the Americas and that encourage reflection, cooperation, and the exchange of experiences on matters of major interest to participating congresses and parliamentary assemblies;
- VI. encourage, as a matter of priority and in accordance with the conditions set out in our statutes, the participation of all parliamentary congresses and assemblies of the Americas in Article 1 above;

VII.- promote capacity building, exchanges, and ongoing cooperation with interparliamentary organizations and with congresses and parliamentary assemblies around the world, always with a view to achieving COPA's objectives and mission.

CHAPTER III - SCOPE OF POWERS

Article 3 Scope of Powers

COPA recognizes and supports the sovereignty of the unitary, federal, federated, and associated states of the Americas. The recommendations and statutes of COPA cannot take precedence over or contravene the constitutions or laws of the unitary, federal, federated, and associated states of the Americas.

TITLE II - MEMBERS

CHAPTER I - ADMISSION, RIGHTS, AND OBLIGATIONS

Article 4 Members

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

Article 5 Admission

The decision to admit congresses and parliamentary assemblies of unitary, federal, federated, and associated states, regional parliaments, and interparliamentary organizations of the Americas shall be made by the General Assembly, upon recommendation of the Executive Committee.

Article 6 Rights of Members

The rights of COPA members are as follows:

- I. the right to speak at the General Assembly;
- II. to participate in the Executive Committee, in accordance with the procedure set out in these bylaws;
- III.- exercise the right to speak on all decisions concerning COPA;
- IV.- exercise any other rights arising from these statutes.

Article 7 Obligations of members

The obligations of COPA members are as follows:

- I. to participate in General Assembly meetings;
- II. to make an annual contribution towards COPA's expenses, as determined by the Executive Committee;
- III.- assume the responsibilities conferred by holding office on the Executive Committee;
- IV.- perform any other duties arising from the decisions of the General Assembly and the Executive Committee, as well as from the provisions of the statutes.

CHAPTER II - PARTICIPATING PARLIAMENTARIANS

Article 8 Definition

To be a participating parliamentarian of COPA, one must be a sitting parliamentarian in one's jurisdiction.

CHAPTER III - PERMANENT OBSERVERS

Article 9 Permanent observers

Parliamentary congresses and assemblies of unitary, federal, federated, and associated states, regional parliaments, and interparliamentary organizations from other continents may apply to become permanent observers to COPA by submitting a written request to the Executive Secretariat.

Article 10 Admission

The decision to admit congresses and parliamentary assemblies of unitary, federal, federated, and associated states, regional parliaments, and interparliamentary organizations as permanent observer members shall be taken by the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Executive Committee.

Article 11 Rights of permanent observers

Permanent observers may attend the proceedings of the General Assembly. They shall have the right to speak with the permission of the Chair, but shall not be entitled to vote. The Executive Secretariat shall coordinate the participation in the proceedings, accreditation, and requests of permanent observers in order to inform the Chair and regional secretariats in a timely manner.

Article 12 Obligations of permanent observers

Permanent observers are required to pay the registration fees associated with the activities in which they participate, where applicable, as specified in Article 50 of these Statutes.

TITLE III - ORGANIZATION

CHAPTER I - STRUCTURE

Article 13 Composition

COPA is composed of the following bodies:

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

CHAPTER II - GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Article 14 Composition and Powers

The General Assembly, the supreme body of COPA, is composed of delegations from congresses, parliamentary assemblies of unitary, federal, federated, and associated states, regional parliaments, and interparliamentary organizations of the Americas, and its functions are as follows:

- I. to debate issues related to COPA's areas of interest;
- II. to approve recommendations that express COPA's views. Consensus is sought in decision-making.
- III. To ratify the appointment of Executive Committee members.
- IV.- to elect, from among the members of the Executive Committee and on the recommendation of the Executive Committee, the President, the First Vice-President, and the Regional Vice-Presidents; and to elect, on the recommendation of the Executive Committee, the Treasurer;
- V.- to adopt the COPA budget and the proportional contributions of congresses, parliamentary assemblies, regional parliaments, and interparliamentary organizations, on the recommendation of the Executive Committee;
- VI. to amend the organization's statutes, on the recommendation of the Executive Committee;
- VII.- to ratify any agreement or convention concluded between COPA and other organizations, on the recommendation of the Executive Committee;
- VIII.- to decide on the admission of congresses and parliamentary assemblies of unitary, federal, federated, and associated states, regional parliaments, and interparliamentary organizations of the Americas, upon recommendation of the Executive Committee;

- IX.- to decide on the admission of any other parliamentary congress or assembly of unitary, federal, federated, and associated states, regional parliaments, and interparliamentary organizations of the world as permanent observers, upon the recommendation of the Executive Committee;
- X.- to contribute to the capacity building of its members through the creation of working groups and the organization of seminars and training workshops;
- XI.- to perform any other function conferred upon it by these statutes.

Article 15 Composition of delegations

The competent authorities of each congress or parliamentary assembly of unitary, federal, federated, and associated states, regional parliaments, and interparliamentary organizations of the Americas shall determine the composition of their respective delegations, in accordance with the criteria established in these statutes.

Article 16 Gender equity and pluralism

Delegations participating in General Assemblies shall respect the principles of gender equality and political pluralism.

Article 17 Size of delegations

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

Article 18 Frequency of meetings

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

Article 19 Date and place of meetings

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

Article 20 Voting

The General Assembly shall adopt its recommendations by consensus.

If consensus cannot be reached, recommendations shall be adopted by a two-thirds majority vote of the delegations present.

Each delegation present shall have one vote.

If a delegation disagrees, it has the right to record a dissenting opinion in the minutes.

Article 21 Responsibilities of delegations

Each delegation shall inform its congress or parliamentary assembly of the recommendations adopted by the General Assembly and shall oversee their implementation through the appropriate

legislative mechanisms and/or procedures; it shall inform, where appropriate, the relevant bodies of the State or region it represents, its government, and civil society. It shall promote their implementation.

CHAPTER III - EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Article 22 Composition

The organizational and administrative activities of COPA are the responsibility of the Executive Committee, which is composed of:

- I.- the president, the first vice-president, the vice-presidents, the treasurer, and the outgoing president, who perform parliamentary functions;
- II.- one parliamentarian from one of the congresses or parliamentary assemblies of the federated and associated states that are not otherwise represented by an interparliamentary organization on the Executive Committee;
- III.- four parliamentarians representing a regional parliament and/or an interparliamentary organization;
- IV.- the President of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas and the Vice-President of that Network;
- V.- one parliamentarian from the host congress or assembly of the next General Assembly, if that congress or parliamentary assembly is not otherwise represented on the Executive Committee;
- VI. the Executive Secretary and the representative of each COPA regional secretariat.

Only parliamentarians representing a parliamentary assembly, congress, regional parliament, or interparliamentary organization that has paid its annual contribution to COPA's expenses may attend Executive Committee meetings and stand for election as President, First Vice-President, Regional Vice-President, or Treasurer of COPA.

Article 23 Term of office

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 end at the end of the second General Assembly following that of their appointment. Their term of office may be renewed once, with the exception of the President and First Vice-President, whose terms of office are not renewable.

Article 24 Appointment of Members

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

Article 25 Vacancies

In the event of the death, resignation, incapacity, or termination of the parliamentary functions of a member of the Executive Committee, the competent authorities of the congress or parliamentary assembly that he or she represents shall appoint his or her replacement, subject to Articles 32, 35, and 39.

Article 26 Frequency of meetings

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

The Executive Committee may also hold extraordinary meetings when the Chair deems it necessary or when at least 25% of its members submit a written request to the Chair.

In urgent cases, if authorized by the President and Vice-Presidents, extraordinary meetings of the Executive Committee may be held by conference call or by any means of telecommunication recommended by the Executive Secretariat.

Article 27 Quorum

The quorum of the Executive Committee shall be one-third of its members representing at least three regions.

Article 28 Powers

The Executive Committee shall have the following functions:

- I. to exercise, by consensus, the powers conferred upon it by the General Assembly and to ensure that its decisions are carried out;
- II. to determine the venue, date, and agenda of General Assemblies in conjunction with the host congress or parliamentary assembly;
- III. to adopt the rules of procedure of the General Assembly;
- IV.- to recommend the adoption of the COPA budget and the proportional contributions of congresses, parliamentary assemblies, regional parliaments, and interparliamentary organizations;
- V.- to form *ad hoc* thematic working groups and define their operating rules;
- VI.- to propose to the General Assembly the implementation of capacity-building activities and the organization of seminars and training workshops;

- VII.- to recommend to the General Assembly the admission of congresses and parliamentary assemblies of unitary, federal, federated, and associated states, regional parliaments, and interparliamentary organizations of the Americas;
- VIII.- to approve the list of organizations invited as *ad hoc* observers to the General Assembly;
- IX.- to decide on the organization by COPA of any other interparliamentary event;
- X.- to submit to the General Assembly any proposal it deems useful for the proper functioning of COPA;
- XI.- to take decisions *ad referendum* on behalf of the General Assembly in extraordinary and urgent situations;
- XII. to propose draft amendments to the statutes to the General Assembly;
- XIII. to propose candidates for the positions of President, First Vice-President, Regional Vice-Presidents, and Treasurer to the General Assembly;
- XIV.- to approve the organization's financial report;
- XV.- to perform any other function conferred upon it by these bylaws.

CHAPTER IV - PRESIDENCY

Article 29 Presidency

The presidency of COPA shall be held by a congress or parliamentary assembly of a unitary, federal, federated, or associated state, a regional parliament, or an interparliamentary organization of the Americas that is a member of COPA, which shall designate its representative, subject to Article 32.

Article 30 Powers

The chair shall have the following duties:

- I. to convene, open, and preside over the proceedings of the General Assembly;
- II. to convene and chair the meetings of the Executive Committee;
- III.- to represent COPA and, where appropriate, to propose from among the members of the Executive Committee, preferably from among the vice-presidents and regional vice-presidents, those who will represent COPA at certain international interparliamentary meetings or other meetings, forums or activities of a parliamentary nature, of organizations with which COPA maintains ongoing participation, anywhere in the world;
- IV.- to ensure compliance with the organization's bylaws and to decide on any matter not covered by the bylaws;
- V.- to supervise the secretariats.

Article 31 Term of office

The Chair may not hold two positions simultaneously within the Executive Committee.

When the presidency is held by a parliamentarian from a state that is not the seat of any of the regional secretariats, the said president shall appoint a technical secretary to serve as his or her direct contact. The technical secretary shall be a person who is well acquainted with the objectives, statutes, and functioning of COPA.

Article 32 Vacancies

In the event of the death, resignation, incapacity, or termination of the parliamentary functions of the President, the Congress or Parliamentary Assembly holding the Presidency shall appoint a replacement.

In this case, the new President shall assume office until the end of the term.

CHAPTER V - FIRST VICE-PRESIDENCY

Article 33 Responsibilities

The first vice president assists the president in his or her duties.

Article 34 Term

The First Vice-Chair shall be held by the representative of the Congress or Parliamentary Assembly who will assume the Chair during the subsequent term of office.

His or her term of office may not be renewed.

The first vice-president may not hold two positions simultaneously on the Executive Committee.

Article 35 Vacancies

In the event of death, resignation, incapacity, or termination of parliamentary functions of the first vice-president, the Congress or Parliamentary Assembly holding the first vice-presidency shall appoint a replacement.

CHAPTER VI - VICE-PRESIDENTS

Article 36 Vice-Presidencies

COPA has eleven Vice-Presidents. Ten of the vice-presidencies are allocated to representatives from each of the five regions of the Americas, namely: two to representatives from North America, two to representatives from Central America, two to representatives from the Caribbean, two to representatives from the Andean Region, and two to representatives from the Southern Cone; the eleventh is allocated to the President of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas.

Article 37 Duties

The vice-presidents shall have the following duties:

- I. Assist the President and First Vice President in the exercise of their duties;
- II. representing and promoting COPA in their respective regions and coordinating work there;
- III. to ensure that the final resolutions of COPA approved at the end of each General Assembly are supported by the national congresses, with a view to their implementation;
- IV.- to perform any other function conferred upon them by these bylaws.

Article 38 Term of office

Their term of office may be renewed.

Vice-Presidents may not hold two positions simultaneously within the Executive Committee.

Article 39 Vacancies

In the event of the death, resignation, incapacity, or termination of the parliamentary functions of a regional vice-president, the congress or parliamentary assembly that holds the said regional vice-presidency shall appoint his or her replacement.

CHAPTER VII - SECRETARIATS

Article 40 Structure and functioning of the Secretariats

The COPA Executive Secretariat has its headquarters in Quebec. The regional secretariats are located in Brazil and Mexico.

The Executive Secretariat and the regional secretariats shall submit a report on their activities at each meeting of the Executive Committee. The Executive Secretariat shall directly assist the President and First Vice-President. It shall coordinate the follow-up and implementation of resolutions and decisions adopted by the Executive Committee and the General Assembly. It shall inform the President, First Vice-President, Regional Vice-Presidents, and Regional Secretariats in a timely manner of any changes in the composition of the Executive Committee.

The Executive Secretariat has the following responsibilities:

- I.- to coordinate the administrative activities of the regional secretariats;
- II. to support the Presidency in its representative functions and tasks;
- III. to follow up on the resolutions and decisions of the Executive Committee and the General Assembly;
- IV. to prepare the minutes and proceedings of the meetings of the Executive Committee and the General Assembly;
- V. prepare reports on the administration of the Presidency and the Executive Secretariat;
- VI. to prepare and monitor COPA's budget in collaboration with the treasury;
- VII. coordinate the election observation mission program;
- VIII. Support ad hoc thematic working groups in carrying out their mandates and coordinating their work;
- IX. to administer the management of COPA's website and social media in collaboration with the regional secretariats;
- X. Compiling and updating the database;
- XI. Coordinate the sending of invitations for COPA's statutory and ad hoc activities;
- XII. ensuring the translation of official texts into French and English.

The regional secretariats have the following responsibilities:

- I. to provide institutional support to the Executive Secretariat and the Presidency;
- II. to ensure the translation of official texts into Spanish and Portuguese;
- III. to share notices of statutory and ad hoc activities in the regions under their responsibility, and to publicize the work of COPA;
- IV. support the Executive Secretariat in compiling and updating the database;

- V. promote COPA activities within the framework of their bilateral and multilateral activities and through their respective communication channels.

Article 41 Relationship with the Vice-Presidencies

COPA's regional secretariats shall maintain close relations with the vice-presidencies of the regions for which they are responsible, in order to support them in their tasks of convening meetings and disseminating COPA's work. They shall also encourage the congresses and parliamentary assemblies of the regions for which they are responsible to participate in COPA's activities.

During Executive Committee meetings and the General Assembly, the Executive Secretariat shall directly assist the presidency.

CHAPTER VIII - NETWORK OF WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE AMERICAS

Article 42 Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas

The Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas is an autonomous body with regard to decisions that concern it. Its objectives are to advance the pursuit of gender equality, preserve women's achievements, and ensure that states respect women's rights.

The Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas is an integral part of COPA and plays a guiding role in matters and programs relating to women.

The Network's Secretariat is hosted by the National Assembly of Quebec.

CHAPTER IX – AD HOC THEMATIC WORKING GROUPS

Article 43 Ad Hoc Thematic Working Groups

Ad hoc thematic working groups are established on the recommendation of the Executive Committee and endorsed by the General Assembly.

The themes of the *ad hoc* working groups must be consistent with COPA's priorities and objectives and comply with Article 2 of these Bylaws. They must also address issues common to the Americas and be approved by the General Assembly, upon recommendation of the Executive Committee. Working groups begin their work at the end of the General Assembly during which they were created. Their mandate ends at the end of the General Assembly following the one in which they were created. Their mandate may be renewed for one additional General Assembly.

Working groups have the following responsibilities:

- I.- to meet with their members at least once a year;
- II.- to present a progress report on their work and activities to the Executive Committee and the General Assembly;
- III.- propose the adoption of recommendations or resolutions to the Executive Committee, once their mandate has been completed, for adoption by the General Assembly.

TITLE IV- TREASURY AND NATURE OF FINANCING

CHAPTER I - TREASURY

Article 44 Treasury

The treasurer shall be a parliamentarian from the territory in which the COPA Executive Secretariat is located.

Article 45 Duties

The treasurer shall perform his or her duties in consultation with the chair and the Executive Committee and in accordance with the standards proposed and approved by the Executive Committee.

He or she shall have the following responsibilities in particular:

- I. proposing a draft budget to the Executive Committee and reporting to it on its implementation;
- II.- ensure the application of operating rules and standards concerning the control and allocation of resources;
- III.- Ensure that the books and accounting documents required for the implementation of the budget are kept;
- IV.- present, at each General Assembly, a financial report detailing the contributions paid by members and the expenses incurred by the organization. The report must be approved in advance by the Executive Committee;

V.- to sign, jointly with the President, withdrawals of funds and securities, receipts, and other payment orders that involve obligations and disbursements, and to assume responsibility for controlling COPA's securities and funds.

Article 46 Term

The Treasurer shall take office in accordance with the provisions of Article 23.

Article 47 Vacancies

In the event of the death, resignation, or termination of the parliamentary duties of a treasurer, the Executive Committee shall elect a new treasurer from among its members at its next meeting.

In the event of a transitional period, the presidency shall manage the day-to-day affairs of the Treasury, namely the payment of financial support to a host convention or parliamentary assembly for the organization of a statutory COPA activity and the collection of annual contributions. The conference or parliamentary assembly responsible for the Treasury, as assigned under Article 44 of the Bylaws, shall ensure that an interim representative is appointed to guarantee the payment or collection of sums authorized by the President into the bank account. This representative shall be ratified by the Executive Committee. If the President is unable to perform his or her duties, the Vice President shall replace him or her in the management of the day-to-day affairs of the Treasury.

The Treasurer shall grant access to the COPA bank account to the Executive Secretariat.

CHAPTER II – NATURE OF FINANCING

Article 48 Contributions

COPA's institutional resources come from the annual contributions paid by its members and from various extraordinary contributions.

Article 49 Criteria

The amount of annual contributions is determined according to criteria based on the principles of proportionality of assembly size, fairness, and transparency.

These resources are included in the annual budget approved for this purpose by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Treasury and the Executive Committee.

Article 50 Contributions from permanent observers

In order to participate in COPA activities as permanent observers, parliamentary congresses or assemblies from other regions of the world must pay the host parliamentary congress or assembly the registration fees for the activities.

TITLE V - MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Article 51 Official languages of the organization

The official languages of COPA are Spanish, English, Portuguese, and French.

Article 52 Electronic dissemination body la COPA

COPA has a website hosted by the Executive Secretariat on which notices of its activities, resolutions, and other documents approved by the Executive Committee and the General Assembly are published.

TITLE VI - AMENDMENT OF THE STATUTES

Article 53 Procedures

Any proposal to amend the Statutes must be submitted in writing to the President at least one month before a General Assembly, through the Executive Secretariat, which shall immediately communicate it to the members of the Executive Committee. The review and examination of this proposed amendment shall be automatically included on the agenda of the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

After studying the recommendation issued by the Executive Committee, the General Assembly shall decide on each proposed amendment, preferably by consensus.

In the event that consensus cannot be reached, a proposal for amendment may be adopted by a qualified majority of two-thirds of the delegations present.

Each delegation present shall have one vote.

Article 54 Entry into force of the statutes

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

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