

CLOSING SESSION

Summary of the Closing Session

Speakers:

Mr. Edgard Leblanc Fils

President of the Senate of the Republic of Haiti

Honorary Co-President of the Conference

Mr. José Sarney

President of the Federative Republic of Brazil (1985-1990)

President of the Senate of the Federative Republic of Brazil (1995-1996) Senator of the Federative

Republic of Brazil

Honorary Co-President of the Conference

Mr. Jean-Pierre Charbonneau

President of the National Assembly of Québec

President of the Parliamentary Conference of the Americas

(The speech by *Madam Violeta Barrios de Chamorro*, Ex-President of the Republic of Nicaragua and the message from *Mr. George E. Pataki*, Governor of the State of New York and President of the Council of State Governments, are annexed hereto.)

Master of Ceremonies: Madam Michaëlle Jean

Journalist-announcer for the Radio-Canada news network

Secretary:

Mr. Gaston Bernier

National Assembly of Québec

Mr. Edgard Leblanc Fils is President of the Senate of the Republic of Haiti. He pursued his university studies at the Institut Supérieur des Cadres Politiques et Administratifs in Port-au-Prince. He holds a degree in civil engineering and another in public administration. He held various positions within the Transport Division of the Department of Public Works, Transport and Communications, before being elected in 1995 as Senator of the Republic for the region of Grand'Anse. Since 1995, he has been President of the Senate and of the National Assembly of the Republic of Haiti. Since 1996, Mr. Leblanc has also been President of the Haitian section of the International Assembly of French-Speaking Parliamentarians (AIPLF).

The President of the Haitian Senate and Honorary Co-President of the Conference referred to the changes that have occurred in the Americas over the past two decades, which place them today at a

crossroads, as well as to the requirements, obstacles and conditions for the achievement of the integration of the Americas.

Among the important changes that have taken place within the Americas over the past two decades, Mr. Leblanc mentioned: Canada's joining of the Organization of American States (OAS); the broadening of the fields of interest of this organization, which now range from the monitoring of elections to the strengthening of democratic institutions; the appearance of the concept of integrated development, more representative of the political and socioeconomic reality of the countries of the hemisphere; the decision not to grant recognition to governments arising out of a coup d'État; the inclusion of a developing country in an existing agreement between two industrialized countries; the formation of Mercosur, which breathes new energy into the regional integration process; and the emergence of groups of small countries within the Americas.

Mr. Leblanc affirmed that overall, we would have good reason to be optimistic in light of such developments. However, he recalled that we will also have to face major challenges. The Americas present considerable contrasts regarding the size of the different States, the degree of development of their economies and the working conditions that prevail. How can these economies, which present such wide disparities, be integrated into a single bloc, and how can the benefits of this integration be divided so that all may benefit from them?

The globalization of the economy gives rise to global problems for which solutions will have to be found which require a sharing of responsibilities and solidarity between advanced countries and developing countries. The Americas need a new pact that can make the international economic flows more equitable, and that can allow the control of financial speculation and democratize communications. In this regard, parliaments are called on to bring to bear the full weight of their influence and their representativity in order for such a pact to be sanctioned.

It must be ensured that all citizens can participate in the management of the *Res publica*, to ensure that they benefit from rapid and concrete results in terms of the improvement of their living conditions; we must work to transform political ethics and defend the fundamental human rights (health, education, etc.), so as to finally arrive at an open and meaningful dialogue between States, whatever their differences and disparities, and toward a common political agenda. In short, the

countries of the hemisphere should redouble their efforts to overcome all difficulties that arise on the path toward development, democratization and Human Rights.

Mr. José Sarney is a Senator of the Federative Republic of Brazil. Mr. Sarney began his political career in 1958, when he was elected to the federal Chamber of Deputies. In 1966, he became Governor of the State of Maranhão. A Senator from 1971 to 1985, he was President of the Republic until 1990. He represented Brazil at many international conventions, including the Conferences of the Interparliamentary Union in Tokyo (1973), Madrid (1974) and London (1975). In addition, he was Vice-President of the Interparliamentary Union and President of the Research Institute and Council of Congress (1971-1983). Elected to the Senate for the period 1995-1999, Mr. Sarney presided over that institution in 1995 and 1996. An attorney and a graduate of the Law Faculty of Maranhão, he is also a professor and a journalist by training. A member of the Brazilian Academy of Letters since 1981, Mr. Sarney has published works as an author and as a poet, and has also received many awards.

Mr. José Sarney, honorary Co-president of the Conference, maintained that continental integration must be seen as a means and not as an end in itself. It must be based on a more profound and important motivation than mere competitiveness between markets. The integration of the Americas must include a political, cultural, scientific and technical integration, as well as the search for a community of nations such as what seems to be taking shape in Europe. This process, which must be explained to the peoples by the Parliaments, must lead to a more just society, a society within which the gaps are reduced as much as possible, a society free of epidemics, malnutrition, poverty and misery.

Under the pressure of technological developments, the world is becoming globalized. There is a need to point out certain dangers resulting from this. For example, some industrial or commercial enterprises are much more powerful than the State, and can therefore avoid its control. There is also a trend toward the formation of cartels and toward the domination of knowledge which can lead to the emergence of new inequalities, which must be avoided. Thus, the most technologically advanced

countries should avoid dominating the countries more dependent on these technologies, which are therefore more susceptible to cultural servitude.

In this context, parliamentarians and Parliaments must accompany the integration process so as to incorporate in it their vision of human problems and of the social rights that they must defend in the framework of their duties and debates. It is important that the Free Trade Area of the Americas be the instrument for the construction of the ideals of the Americas. For the rest, the speaker called for the self-monitoring of the representatives of the people and for an unparalleled moral conscience. Referring to Québec's motto, "*Je me souviens*", Mr. Sarney urged parliamentarians not to forget what constitutes the foundation of their work, namely to strive to improve the quality of life of the populations.

Finally, Senator Sarney stated that he was pleased with the success of the Conference, as the participants had concluded that there was a need to form a Follow-up Committee with a mandate to continue the dialogue and to carry through concretely with everything that was said during the meeting.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Charbonneau is President of the National Assembly of Québec and President of the Parliamentary Conference of the Americas. He holds a B.A. in criminology from the Université de Montréal. From 1968 to 1976, he was an investigative journalist for the print and electronic media. Elected as Member of the National Assembly for the Parti Québécois in Verchères in 1976, he was reelected in 1981, and in 1985, became parliamentary assistant to the Prime Minister, and then President of the Committee on Education and the Work Force and President of the Committee on Labour and the Economy. He resigned as MNA in 1989 to work in Africa, in the field of international aid. From 1992 to 1994, he was President of Oxfam-Québec, an international cooperation organization. Elected MNA for Borduas in September 1994, on March 12 1996, he became the President of the National Assembly. He is also Vice-President of the International Assembly of French-Speaking Parliamentarians (AIPLF), and in 1996 he was President of the Eastern Regional Conference of the Council of State Governments (ERC/CSG). He has published

two books, La filière canadienne (1975) and L'Option (1978 - as co-author).

The President of the National Assembly of Québec recalled the historic nature of the Conference, underlining with pride the results achieved, and particularly the text of the Closing Declaration. He recalled that it was the efforts toward rapprochement and the seriousness of the discussions that made it possible to obtain the desired results, despite the many different points of view or varying sensitivities on a certain number of issues.

It is because the parliamentarians of the National Assembly of Québec believe in the importance of dialogue that they took the initiative of organizing this Conference. Through this dialogue, what we sought was not unanimity at any cost, but rather to bring us closer together.

During this meeting, the parliamentarians succeeded in reflecting the concerns and hopes of the people whom they represent, and they also agreed on the need to continue the dialogue by creating a Conference Follow-up Committee. Furthermore, the parliamentarians will hold another meeting around 1999.

It is appropriate to recall that the holding of this Conference imposes duties upon the parliamentarians, one of the most important of which consists in informing the citizens and in having them participate in the developments under way. Also, the Members of Parliament and Senators who were present in Québec will transmit the Closing Declaration to their Heads of State and Government who, at the Summit of the Americas in 1994, had expressed the wish to see an intensification of the interparliamentary dialogue. Now that this dialogue is under way, they will have to take it into account in the framework of their future meetings and in their actions.

President Charbonneau reiterated that the National Assembly of Québec would support inter-American interparliamentary dialogue. After expressing his sincere gratitude to all the participants for the enthusiasm with which they responded to his invitation, he voiced the hope that the collective project that had just been initiated in Quebec City would be the prelude to a fruitful and lasting

relationship among the parliamentarians of the Americas.