

## **PLENARY SESSION 3**

### ***Summary Report***

#### ***Summary of Plenary Session 3***

<b>Chair:</b>	<b>Mr. Jean-Pierre Charbonneau</b> President of the National Assembly of Québec President of the Parliamentary Conference of the Americas
<b>Rapporteurs:</b>	<b>Mr. Isaac Cohen</b> Director of the Washington bureau of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)
	<b>Mr. André Franco Montoro</b> Member of the Chamber of Deputies of the Federative Republic of Brazil
<b>Master of Ceremonies:</b>	<b>Madam Michaëlle Jean</b> Journalist-announcer for the Radio-Canada news network
<b>Secretary:</b>	<b>Mr. Gaston Bernier</b> National Assembly of Québec

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*Mr. Isaac Cohen is Director of the Washington bureau of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). He was previously responsible for economic affairs for the ECLAC bureau in Mexico. A native of Guatemala, he holds a PhD in political science from the Institut supérieur d'études internationales of the University of Geneva. In addition, he has worked as a consultant to the permanent secretariat of the Central American Central Integration System and to the Central Bank of Guatemala. Mr. Cohen has also served as a professor of political and social sciences at the Autonomous University of Mexico.*

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In his summary of the deliberations of September 19, Mr. Cohen emphasized, among the themes submitted, the leading topics of the day's discussions. The fact that the Quebec City Conference "owes its existence to the return of democracy" in Latin America is the first theme that held the attention of the parliamentarians. It would have been impossible, according to Mr. Cohen, to hold this Conference in the absence of the current democratic context.

The economic concerns expressed by the parliamentarians throughout the discussions and debates constituted the second recurrent element. A lengthy questioning centred around the question of whether economic integration could become an instrument and a motor of prosperity and growth. Indeed, according to Mr. Cohen, this is how integration must be designed; as an instrument of economic growth which, through the creation of jobs, will bring about greater prosperity and an improvement in the population's well-being. Societies that have no growth do not generate employment. In fact, employment remains the only means of raising a person out of poverty.

Nevertheless, job creation will not prove to be productive unless it is based on the education and health of the population. Moreover, during all of the workshops, education took a central place within the concerns of the participants. A cornerstone of equity and justice, it constitutes the veritable key to overcoming the problems of poverty of the population and of productivity in our economies. An educated person earns more, improves his living conditions, increases his productivity and generates more growth. This is the type of integration that we are interested in: an integration that improves growth and makes it possible to overcome poverty. In the case of health, this is also a crucial sector whose budgets are intrinsically linked to unproductive expenditures. As was underlined by Mr. Arias in his opening speech, setting out the principles that inspired the debates, "if we wish to increase social spending within our economies, we must reduce unproductive spending".

Mr. Cohen then recalled that there had also been some discussion of the accountability of parliamentarians toward citizens in the framework of the integration process. They in fact have a duty to ensure the transparency of the process and to give full account to the citizens.

Finally, Mr. Cohen considered that the debates during the Conference were very rich and promising for the future. They reflected what parliamentarians desired for the Americas, namely integration that enhances prosperity. "We do not wish for any other type of integration"; this, according to Mr. Cohen, was the message from Quebec City.

*Mr. André Franco Montoro is President of the Latin-American Parliament's Advisory Committee., and President of the Latin-American Institute. Active in politics since 1955, he has held the successive positions of Member of the Legislative Assembly of São Paulo and then of the Chamber of Representatives of Brazil, federal Senator and Governor of the State of São Paulo. In 1995, he was again elected member of the Chamber of Deputies of his country. A Doctor of Law and of Philosophy, and the author of many publications, he is also a professor at the University of São Paulo, the Catholic University of São Paulo and the University of Brasília. Mr. Montoro has represented Brazil on many occasions at international conventions and conferences.*

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Mr. André Franco Montoro, for his part, sought to put into perspective the role of men and women of politics in the integration under way, by identifying their role according to their parliamentary functions, namely the political or representative function, the legislative or normative function, and finally the function of control or supervision.

Mr. Montoro recalled that the parliaments of the Americas have concerned themselves greatly with integration, referring here not only to the process of liberalization of trade, but also to cultural, political and social integration, which are equally important facets of the process.

In order to deal with these issues, in the context of their functions as representatives of the peoples, the parliamentarians created a series of international parliamentary organizations. These enabled them to work toward economic, cultural, social and political integration of the countries of Latin America and also made it possible to attack the greatest problem in Latin America, namely the fight against poverty. Mr. Montoro underlined that it was through the creation of jobs that the States of the Americas will succeed in overcoming this problem of extreme poverty and, more precisely, through the creation of small businesses, support to family farming operations, the creation of cooperatives, tourism development, preservation of the environment and awareness building about the importance of education.



The rapporteur also underlined that the parliaments must take inspiration from the example of Mercosur which, following the pressures exerted by parliamentarians, had to set up a representative forum of civil society so that employers, academics, women and young people could participate in the process of regional integration. It is in this way that the parliamentarians exercised their function of representatives of the population.

In the exercising of their legislative function, parliamentarians approve and adopt international treaties. They have the possibility of thereby influencing the integration processes by adopting the proposed agreements, by refusing to do so, or by proposing amendments. Also, it is their duty to harmonize the legislative frameworks to ensure greater coherence between them and to facilitate the implementation of the integration process.

However, according to Mr. Montoro, of all parliamentary activities, it is the control function that is the most important, and it can be exercised in five ways: 1) budgetary control through voting on budget priorities; 2) the fight against corruption, which requires transparency, indictments and respected sanctions; 3) the defence of Human Rights, particularly through Human Rights Commissions, in order that rights may be respected and violators sanctioned; 4) the control of military spending, which has not decreased despite the end of the Cold War; and 5) the solving of the problem of the foreign debt, the interest on which cuts away an increasingly large share of the national budgets.

In reality, according to Mr. Montoro, there is a mandate that is all-inclusive: it is that of the defence of democracy, which he describes as the “royal path”, but of a democracy that is at the same time social, participatory and pluralistic. He concluded by mentioning that the Conference remained the best example of what had to be done for the integration of the Americas, and thanked President Charbonneau for having called together the parliamentarians at this assembly.