

## **Guiding Principles of the Parliamentary Conference of the Americas**

### **I. Nature**

The Parliamentary Conference of the Americas is a forum which brings together the parliamentary assemblies of the unitary, federal and federated States, regional parliaments and interparliamentary organizations of the Americas.

### **II. Mission**

An initiative of parliamentarians, the Conference fosters dialogue on issues connected with inter-American cooperation and in particular with the Summits of the Heads of State and Government of the Americas and with the process of creation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), while respecting the existing regional integration agreements and processes.

More specifically, the Conference aims to:

- a)** represent to the executive authorities of the Americas the interests and aspirations of the populations of the hemisphere, with regard to the issues and impacts of the hemispheric integration process;
- b)** develop and strengthen parliamentary means of action in the framework of the process of hemispheric integration and globalization;
- c)** provide ongoing follow-up of the decisions and orientations agreed on at the Summits of the Americas, and keep the parliamentary assemblies and governments of the Americas informed on related developments;
- d)** disseminate, to all members of the parliamentary assemblies of the Americas, the legislation, regulations and means of action brought in to solve the problems faced by the populations of the Americas, as well as comparative analyses of these public policies;
- e)** contribute to strengthening parliamentary democracy and to the building of a community of the Americas founded on peace, democracy, social justice and gender equity;
- f)** create a new synergy between the legislative leaders of the different parliamentary assemblies, regional Parliaments and interparliamentary organizations of the hemisphere.

### **III. Components**

The Parliamentary Conference of the Americas is composed of a General Assembly, an Executive Committee and a Secretariat. The Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas is also one of its components.

#### **The General Assembly**

The General Assembly is the principal component of the Conference. It is composed of the delegations of the parliamentary assemblies of the unitary, federal and federated States, regional parliaments and interparliamentary organizations of the Americas.

In particular, its functions include:

- a) debating issues relating to the areas of interest of the Conference;
- b) adopting, on a consensus basis, recommendations expressing its views;
- c) electing the members of the Conference Executive Committee.

The General Assembly holds meetings at regular intervals, at the invitation of a parliamentary assembly of the Americas.

The delegations participating in the General Assemblies must abide by the principles of gender equality and political pluralism. Subject to approval by the Executive Committee, the host assembly decides on the size of the delegations.

#### **The Executive Committee**

The Executive Committee carries out the decisions of the General Assembly. It exercises the decision-making powers of the General Assembly, on a consensus basis, when the latter is not in session.

The Executive Committee decides on the place, date and sets of themes of the General Assemblies.

The Executive Committee is composed of the following persons:

- a) the President of the Conference;
- b) the first Vice-President of the Conference;
- c) the ex-Presidents of the Conference who hold parliamentary office.

It also includes:

- d) one representative for each of the regional parliaments and for each of the interparliamentary organizations;
- e) one representative for each Parliament of the unitary and federal States;
- f) one representative of the parliamentary assemblies of the federated States, within each federation, that are not otherwise represented by an interparliamentary organization on the Executive Committee;
- g) one representative of the parliamentary assembly where the Conference Secretariat is located;
- h) the president and one other representative of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas;
- i) one representative of the host Assembly of the next General Assembly, if the latter is not otherwise represented on the Executive Committee.

The term of office of the Executive Committee members begins at the end of one General Assembly and ends at the conclusion of the following General Assembly.

#### **The Secretariat**

The Secretariat assists the Executive Committee and the President of the Conference in carrying out their duties and deliberations. In addition, in collaboration with the host assemblies, it organizes the General Assemblies of the Conference. The Conference Secretariat is established at the National Assembly of Québec.

Each of the five regions of the Conference shall set up a sub-secretariat, which will work in collaboration with the Conference Secretariat. The Vice-President of each region, with the agreement of the Executive Committee members from his or her region, is responsible for organizing and coordinating the activities of the sub-secretariat for that region.

#### **IV. Offices of President and Vice-President**

##### **Presidency**

The Presidency of the Conference, of its General Assembly and of its Executive Committee is assumed, preferably, by a representative of the host Assembly of the next General Assembly.

The President of the Conference, or in his or her absence the First Vice-President, opens the deliberations of the General Assembly, convenes and chairs the meetings of the Executive Committee, and represents the organization.

The President officially takes office at the latest 90 days after his or her election.

The President's term of office shall end on the earlier of the two following dates:

- a) at the latest, 18 months after the latter has taken office;
- b) or 90 days after the General Assembly following that at which he or she was elected.

#### Vice-Presidency

The General Assembly shall elect a First Vice-President, who shall assume the presidency once the President's term has expired.

Six Vice-Presidents assist the President and the Vice-President of the Conference in fulfilling their duties. The members of the Executive Committee elect five Vice-Presidents from among their number, from each of the five regions of the Americas, namely North America, Central America, the Caribbean, the Andean Region and the Southern Cone, with one vice-presidency being conferred upon the President of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas. Their term of office begins at the end of one General Assembly and ends at the conclusion of the following General Assembly.

#### **V. Official languages**

The official languages of the Conference are: Spanish, English, Portuguese and French.

#### **VI. Entry into effect**

The Guiding Principles as amended at the Second General Assembly, held in Puerto Rico, shall take effect on July 22, 2000.