

**IInd GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE OF THE AMERICAS (COPA)
Río Grande, Puerto Rico
July 19 to 23, 2000**

PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

*The documents referred to are available on the
Website of the Conference (www.copa.qc.ca) or from the Secretariat (1-418-644-2888).
The Conference Proceedings will become available within the next several weeks.*

1. Adoption of the Puerto Rico Parliamentary Declaration and of the recommendations on the themes of the General Assembly

In the Closing Declaration, the parliamentarians of the Americas affirm their support for the objectives of the Summit of the Americas to succeed in creating an integrated economic market of the Americas, and urge the Heads of State and Government of the hemisphere to take all necessary measures to advance the well-being of the populations, particularly of those that are the most vulnerable.

The parliamentarians ask the Heads of State and Government to reinforce the hemispheric integration process through the participation of the parliamentarians of all jurisdictions of the hemisphere and through transparency in the debates on the creation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), and ask to be informed of the state of advancement of the negotiations on the FTAA on a timely basis by the Heads of State and Government.

Finally, the parliamentarians undertake to see to the implementation of the recommendations and of the Parliamentary Declaration of Puerto Rico in their respective parliamentary assemblies, and ask each parliamentary assembly of the hemisphere to hold public consultations on the impacts of the creation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) as soon as possible.

The recommendations include several commitments on the part of parliamentarians concerning the fundamental issues of poverty, corruption, illegal drug trafficking and education. They enjoin the Heads of State and Government to redouble their efforts to eliminate these major obstacles to human development, and to finally raise education for all to its true dimension as an essential lever for collective well-being.

2. The Parliamentary Conference of the Americas becomes the first permanent interparliamentary forum of the hemisphere

The General Assembly proceeded with the adoption of the Guiding Principles of the Conference. These formal rules set out the mission, objectives and operational arrangements of the organization. The Conference is composed of a General Assembly, an Executive Committee and a permanent Secretariat. The Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas is also one of its components.

The Guiding Principles allow for all the parliaments of the unitary and federal States (national parliaments) to be represented on the Executive Committee. The parliaments of the federated States are entitled to one representative for each of the six federations. The ten regional parliaments and interparliamentary organizations of the hemisphere are also each entitled to a seat on the Executive Committee.

Five Vice-Presidents are elected to represent the Conference and to coordinate the work of sub-secretariats established in each of the regions of the Americas. In addition, the President of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas is a Vice-President of the Conference *ex officio*.

3. The women parliamentarians of the Americas group together to improve the status of women in the Americas

The Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas held its first annual meeting on July 20. In the company of guest speakers, the 45 participants from some fifteen countries adopted a recommendation in which they request the recognition and complete respect of all women's rights as an essential condition to the creation of a more just and prosperous society. They underline the positive consequences resulting from the improvement of women's economic rights for society as a whole, by making it possible to substantially reduce poverty and social inequalities. They also call on all legislators, both men and women, to bring discrimination to an end, citing their shared commitment toward the well-being of the populations.

The participants proceeded with the adoption of the Network's Constitution, which defines its objectives and functioning, and they defined its axes of intervention. The Network will concentrate its action on increasing the participation of women in political life by relying on the individual and collective leadership of the members, by increasing awareness on the part of men as well as women, and by aiming toward educational action in order to eliminate stereotypes.

The participants also proceeded with the election of the new Network Executive Committee, now composed of parliamentarians from Brazil, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Honduras, Jamaica, Paraguay, Panama and the Dominican Republic. Ms. Lyse Leduc, of the National Assembly of Québec, was elected President.

4. Election of the Conference Executive Committee, of its President and of its First Vice-President

The participants proceeded with the election of the Conference Executive Committee. Mr. Geraldo Magela Pereira, Deputy of the Federal Congress of Brazil, and Ms. Laura Pavón Jaramillo, Senator of the Federal Congress of Mexico, were elected respectively President and 1st Vice-President of the Conference. The Executive Committee will begin its term of office on October 1, 2000.

5. The Parliamentary Conference of the Americas and the Third Summit of the Americas

Several COPA activities will take place over the next few months. Its Executive Committee and that of the Women's Network will hold meetings from April 17 to 20, 2001, shortly before the Third Summit of the Americas, which will take place in Quebec City from April 20 to 22. As adopted in the Parliamentary Declaration of Puerto Rico, the Heads of State and Government are requested to officially receive the representatives of the Conference in order that the latter may express to them the aspirations and concerns of the populations that they represent concerning the FTAA and other matters related to inter-American cooperation. The conclusions of the Puerto Rico General Assembly will also be presented to them on that occasion. In addition, the Conference intends to provide regular follow-up of the decisions made and orientations adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the Americas.