



Puerto Rico Parliamentary Declaration

**Second General Assembly of the Parliamentary Conference of the Americas
Río Grande, Puerto Rico, July 19 to 23, 2000**

WHEREAS the Heads of State and Government of the Americas have set in motion the economic integration process of the hemisphere;

WHEREAS the negotiations toward the establishment of a free trade area of the Americas are seriously under way;

WHEREAS the parliamentarians participating in the Second General Assembly of the Parliamentary Conference of the Americas (COPA) wish all citizens of the Americas to benefit from the positive impacts of this integration process;

WHEREAS poverty is both a cause and an effect of non-universal access to education, corruption generates an economic deficit that hinders the equitable distribution of development and distorts the functioning of democratic institutions, illegal drug trafficking worsens violence, crime and the related social problems, and the negative effects of these interrelated factors hinder human development;

WHEREAS implementation of the plan to create a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) by the year 2005 represents a major challenge to assure that its impacts on the legislative, political, social, economic and cultural lives of the populations of the Americas, particularly the most vulnerable populations, are positive ones;

WHEREAS it is our duty, as the elected and thus legitimate representatives of the populations of the Americas, to see to the defence and promotion of their interests, to work toward improving their living conditions and to ensure equal human development opportunities for all citizens, both female and male;

WHEREAS the situation of the foreign debt in underdeveloped or developing countries is such that their governments cannot invest in the fight against poverty, and as a result, the social differences and differences in the quality of life among the populations of those countries are progressively worsening, thereby preventing the achievement of social justice in the Americas;

WHEREAS the anticipated agreement will require ratification by the parliamentarians of the Americas to go into effect;

WHEREAS the Parliamentary Conference of the Americas (COPA) is an open, autonomous and representative forum, which brings together the assemblies of the unitary, federal and federated States and the regional Parliaments of the hemisphere, all of whom are concerned with the issues and impacts of hemispheric integration and of the planned FTAA;

WHEREAS the Parliamentary Conference of the Americas (COPA) fosters parliamentary dialogue on matters of common interest in connection with the integration process of the Americas, with a view to participating in the building of a regional community founded on peace, democracy and social justice;

We, the women and men representatives of the parliamentary assemblies of the unitary, federal and federated States, regional Parliaments and interparliamentary organizations of the Americas:

AFFIRM our support for the objectives of the Summit of the Americas to successfully create an integrated economic market throughout the Americas, while respecting the existing regional agreements and processes, and ask the Heads of State and Government to take all measures necessary to advance the well-being of the populations, particularly the most vulnerable populations, as the development of the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) proceeds;

REAFFIRM our will to fight poverty, to defend democracy against the serious threats raised by corruption and illegal drug trafficking, and to promote universal access to education, social justice, peace and security in all the countries of the Americas;

URGE the Heads of State and Government of the Americas to combine their resources and redouble their efforts to eliminate the major obstacles to human development that poverty, corruption and illegal drug trafficking have come to represent, and to at last raise education for all to its true dimension as an essential lever for the collective well-being;

URGE the Heads of State and Government and all parliamentarians of the Americas to discuss the means by which to solve the foreign debt problem, so as to enable debtor countries to obtain better conditions of access to increased financial resources, in order to invest in the elimination of poverty;

EXPRESS THE WISH for the hemispheric integration process, which must take into account the level of economic and social development of each country, to be strengthened through the participation of parliamentarians of all jurisdictions of the hemisphere through transparency in the debates on the creation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), and through the ongoing dissemination of the results of the negotiations under way by the Heads of State and Government of the Americas;

ASK that each parliamentary assembly of the hemisphere be officially informed, at the latest six months before the Third Summit of the Americas in April 2001, of the state of advancement of negotiations on the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), by the Heads of State and Government;

COMMIT OURSELVES to make our respective assemblies aware of the need for all parliamentarians of the Americas to participate in the follow-up to the decisions made by the Heads of State and Government of the Americas in the framework of their Summits;

UNDERLINE the importance, in the integration processes of the hemisphere of the Americas, of the regional Parliaments.

COMMIT OURSELVES to see to the implementation of the Puerto Rico Recommendations and Parliamentary Declaration within our respective parliamentary assemblies;

AGREE to transmit the Puerto Rico Parliamentary Declaration to our respective Heads of State and Government, and also to promote its dissemination to the populations of the Americas;

URGE the Heads of State and Government of the Americas to take due note of the Puerto Rico Parliamentary Declaration and of the Recommendations adopted at the Second General Assembly of the Parliamentary Conference of the Americas (COPA) and at the Meeting of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, in the course of their next intergovernmental meetings, and in particular at the Third Summit of the Americas, which is set to take place in Quebec City in 2001;

ASK the Heads of State and Government to officially receive the representatives of the Parliamentary Conference of the Americas (COPA) in order that the latter may present to them the conclusions of their Second General Assembly;

REAFFIRM our commitment, within the Parliamentary Conference of the Americas, (COPA) to further develop the inter-American parliamentary dialogue on the issues of the hemispheric integration process, and on its legislative, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts, and to organize the Third General Assembly of the Conference for that purpose;

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;

ADOPT, for that purpose, the Guiding Principles of the Conference, which set out its mission, its objectives and its rules of operation.