



PARLIAMENTARY DECLARATION OF IXTAPAN DE LA SAL, MEXICO

IV General Assembly of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA)

November 24 to 27, 2002

WHEREAS the deliberations and conclusions of the previous General Assemblies of COPA, held in Quebec, Puerto Rico and Rio de Janeiro;

WHEREAS the content of the Quito Ministerial Declaration, of November 1, 2002;

WHEREAS the Declaration of principles of the first Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Americas that establishes a partnership for development and prosperity whose three components are democracy, free trade and sustained development;

WHEREAS in most of the countries of the hemisphere, the integration process, within the globalization framework, has generated positive effects, but at the same time, has contributed to marginalization, to the rupture in the productive structures and, especially, to the deterioration of the agricultural sector;

WHEREAS the current economic integration raises an enormous challenge to States and Governments, who are concerned about cultural diversity which is an inestimable heritage for humanity;

WHEREAS the current ecological problems and their interrelation with social problems throughout the past century are the result of the industrial expansion, the increase in social explosion and the emergence of the consumer society;

WHEREAS the congresses, parliaments and assemblies, in which political representation is essentially expressed, are the targets of permanent criticism and all many questionings;

WHEREAS the role of the legislative bodies of the unitary, federal, federated and associated States, of the regional parliaments and the interparliamentary organisations, in which the people's representation is vested, should be much more important in the negotiations carried out on issues regarding free trade agreements;

WHEREAS within the framework of integration processes, education and vocational training are indispensable to ensure strong democratic institutions development, the elimination of poverty and the reduction of criminality;

WHEREAS the process of integration may limit the capacity of States to offer public health care services and to guarantee access for all to medication;

WHEREAS the current enormous concern about public security in the hemisphere, due to the increase in criminal activities and its effects on social peace and stability, which are necessary to strengthen a continental project based on development and prosperity;

WHEREAS the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas, as an open and pluralistic forum dedicated to the discussion of political problems regarding the Americas, is deeply concerned about the building of a stable, democratic and just hemisphere;

WE, member parliamentarians of COPA, gathered in Ixtapan de la Sal, State of Mexico, Mexico, after having extensively deliberated on several specific issues that have been a source of concern to all the legislative bodies of the hemisphere:

REAFFIRM our deepest interest in the fulfilment of the objectives set out at the Summit of the Americas towards the creation of an equitable integrated economic market of the countries of the hemisphere;

UNDERLINE the need that this integration process be taken into account not only from an economic perspective, but that it should take into account the need to counteract production and consumption models that affect the environment and hinder the development of small and medium-size businesses;

DEMAND that our governments intensify the fight against poverty and marginalization, and further the respect of cultural diversity that should be promoted through international agreements and instruments whose approval must precede the creation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas;

URGE the members of the executive bodies of our countries to allocate more resources to the functioning of the health care systems and to prevent international trade norms from restricting the States' capacity to offer better health care services;

RECOMMEND that, within our parliamentary assemblies, be promoted the adoption of a proposition to support the "hemispheric cooperation program", whose objective is to allow the less resourceful countries to take a more active part in the negotiations of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas;

URGE the allocation of a minimum of 6% of GDP for the education sector and to maintain a progressive increase while taking into account the conditions and needs of each country;

AFFIRM that it is indispensable to assure the recognition on the international scene, and particularly in the Americas, of the role of Parliaments in supporting and promoting culture through legislation and other means of parliamentary action;

RATIFY our conviction that it is important that all the Governments of the Americas sign adherence to the Kyoto Protocol;

REQUIRE that the local governments apply the Agenda 21;

DEMAND as well that our governments intensify the struggle against poverty in all its forms and implement education policies to make the population aware of the significance of protecting the environment, as well as of applying technology to improve the quality of life;

REAFFIRM the importance of the premise “Nothing is agreed until everything is agreed”, meaning to say that if the demands that make the process equitable are not met, the coming into effect of the FTAA cannot prosper;

STATE that to bridge the democratic gap and for the parliaments of the Americas to exercise their power, it is necessary that the parliamentary representatives be admitted to the debates regarding the FTAA negotiations, through the recognition of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA) and its specialized organizations. If this were not to happen, the national congresses that form part of COPA would not be sufficiently informed to ratify trade agreements;

DEMAND the immediate elimination of all subsidies and protectionist measures used by some countries, that seriously distort the trade of agricultural products to the detriment of the less developed countries;

RECOGNIZE that there will be no true integration between unequal countries, unless compensatory measures are established to overcome the existing asymmetries between the different countries. Integration is not synonym of domination, but rather cooperation, balanced and harmonious development between the different peoples of the Americas;

REAFFIRM our decision to continue fighting against all forms of discrimination and violence against women anywhere in the world;

DEMAND that be guaranteed and provided legal protection to women while working fervently so that constitutional precepts, treaties, agreements and current laws that keep watch, protect, and promote the human rights of women and that pursue gender equity be respected and that be promoted, as well, laws that prevent, penalise and eradicate violence against women;

RECOMMEND that a forum on fiscal policy be carried out to analyze the convenience and the possibility of harmonizing tax regulations in order to coordinate macroeconomic policies in the region, since this aspect of the integration is essential to its success;

DECLARE that it is necessary to implement public safety policies in each country on the basis of a broad international cooperation, to promote a better institutional development and a more efficient struggle against criminal activities;

INSIST that the legislative bodies implement the reforms improving their functioning in order to be better able to face the criticisms they are subject of;

URGE our respective Assemblies to take a more active part in the monitoring of the negotiations and decisions taken by the Heads of State and Government of the Americas within the framework of the Summits.

This declaration, as well, is composed of the recommendations adopted *in extenso* by the six thematic committees and the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas which held meetings during the IV General Assembly of COPA.