



PERMANENT THEMATIC WORKING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, CULTURE, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

RECOMMENDATION

WHEREAS Article 16 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter declares that “Education is key to strengthening democratic institutions, promoting the development of human potential, alleviating poverty, and fostering greater understanding among our peoples”;

WHEREAS in order to attain the aforementioned objectives, “it is essential that a quality education be available to all, including girls and women, rural inhabitants, and minorities”;

WHEREAS during the first Summit of the Americas, held in Miami in 1994, the Heads of State and government agreed to provide a primary education to all by 2010, to provide access to secondary education to 75% of young people, to reduce inequalities, and to put an end to illiteracy, and these commitments were reiterated during the Summits of Santiago in 1998 and Quebec City in 2001.

WHEREAS only 54% of Latin American youth currently reach secondary school;

WHEREAS it is important to increase investment in the education sector;

WHEREAS liberalizing trade in services might reduce the power of States to enact legislation in the education sector;

WHEREAS the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) provides the basis on which the FTAA text will be discussed, and the draft proposal of the FTTA agreement on investment draws on the provisions of Chapter 11 (on investments) of NAFTA;

WHEREAS the World Trade Organization has defined education and healthcare as public services and the Miami Ministerial Declaration, in paragraph 10, specifies that “the results of the negotiations must be WTO-compliant,” and, in consequence whereof, the liberalization of trade in services may possibly reduce the authority of States to legislate in the area of education;

RECALLING the recommendation adopted during the first meeting of the Permanent Thematic Working Committee on Education, Culture, Science and Technology, held in November 2002 in Ixtapan de la Sal, Mexico, which affirmed that education is a national responsibility of States and that education is a tool for preserving the national identity and social cohesion of a people;

WE, the representatives of the Congresses and Parliamentary Assemblies of the unitary, federal, federated, and associated states, regional parliaments, and interparliamentary organizations meeting in Caracas, Venezuela, for the Fifth General Assembly of COPA hereby:

COMMIT OURSELVES to having our respective parliaments recognize the right of all the young boys and girls of the Americas to a quality primary and secondary public education system that is free, universal, and non-discriminatory and to work to prevent any type of trade liberalization that could restrict this right;

COMMIT OURSELVES to promoting, within our societies, reflection on the issues surrounding the liberalization of our public education systems;

COMMIT OURSELVES to becoming more deeply informed of the current status of FTAA negotiations as well as any multilateral rounds—particularly those surrounding the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS)—so as to assess their potential impact on public education systems;

PETITION our respective governments to inform us of trade-related objectives, positions, and commitments having an impact on public education systems;

REQUEST that all the Parliamentary Assemblies in the hemisphere be provided with the opportunity to discuss and debate in greater depth the contents of the international agreement leading to the creation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas in those areas falling under their constitutional jurisdiction;

COMMIT OURSELVES to taking the necessary actions in order to guarantee that education services continue to be offered by the government and that education issues be eliminated from the texts of the FTAA and WTO agreements.

REITERATE the request made to the Heads of State and government of the Americas that a guaranteed minimum 6% of GDP be allocated for the education sector through gradual increases, while taking into consideration the conditions and needs of each country;

COMMIT OURSELVES to strive, in each of our countries, to develop science and technology, both of which are essential to the process of perfecting and developing education systems;

DEMAND that the governments of the hemisphere develop specific projects to assist in resolving problems related to literacy, intercultural education, and respect for cultural and linguistic diversity;

DEMAND that any future Agreement to create some sort of trade liberalization treaty exclude provisions that could be used or interpreted to justify undertaking groundless legal action against the governments of the Americas.