



## **V GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PARLIAMENTARY CONFEDERATION OF THE AMERICAS**

**CARACAS, BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA  
NOVEMBER 23-27, 2003**

### **PERMANENT THEMATIC WORKING COMMITTEE ON THE FTAA, ECONOMY, TRADE, LABOUR, AND MIGRATION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY CONFEDERATION OF THE AMERICAS (COPA)**

#### **DECLARATION**

##### **WHEREAS:**

One of the key missions of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA) is to represent, to the governing authorities, the interests and aspirations of the populations of the hemisphere as regards the impacts arising out of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) negotiation process, while contributing to the strengthening of parliamentary democracy and to the creation of a community of the Americas founded on peace, democracy, social justice and gender equality;

The Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA) includes among its objectives that of promoting peace, tolerance, solidarity, cooperation and integration among the peoples of the hemisphere, the unrestricted respect of sovereignty, and the consolidation of a pluralistic and democratic system of government. For these reasons, it has decided to promote the holding of high-level meetings to provide for broad discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) for developing countries;

The democratically elected Heads of State and Government of the Americas, when they gathered in Québec City for the Third Summit, made a commitment regarding hemispheric integration and regarding national and collective responsibility, for the purpose of improving the economic well-being and security of our peoples;

Provision must be made for greater involvement by the parliamentarians of the Americas, as the legitimate representatives of their peoples, to encourage discussion and monitoring of the FTAA negotiations, from the parliamentary viewpoint and from that of civil society.

The Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas' (COPA) 4th General Assembly, held in Ixtapan de la Sal, Mexico, in November 2002, judged that the FTAA text under study gives considerable rights to investors, thereby limiting and placing undesirable conditions on the ability of parliamentarians to enact legislation based on the concerns of their fellow citizens;

At the same meeting, the COPA Assembly recommended that the organization participate actively in the Ministerial Meetings and Summits held by the Heads of State and Government of the Americas, acting through its Executive Committee or, if necessary, in concert with the permanent thematic working committee concerned;

At that meeting, the Heads of State and Government of the Americas were urged to set up a transparent negotiation process and, in this respect, to give account to the parliamentary assemblies throughout the process;

The member parliamentarians of COPA gathered at the V General Assembly of COPA in Caracas, in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in order to analyze the proposals aimed at consolidating the Parliament of the Americas and examining the impacts of the FTAA;

### **BE IT RESOLVED:**

**First.** To enjoin the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA) to prepare, for the parliaments, a strategy for attendance and active participation in the international FTAA negotiation forums, including a plan for dissemination and for citizen participation, so as to facilitate the consultation process that the parliamentarians should follow in connection with the most important issues surrounding this agreement currently being negotiated.

**Second.** To encourage the member parliamentarians of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA) to broadly disseminate the results of these meetings with the aim of informing parliaments on the status of the negotiations and of demonstrating to them the need to participate in them, and to monitor them more closely, since they are the legitimate representative bodies of the peoples, as regards the evaluation, supervision and monitoring of the negotiations.

**Third.** To seek the support of international technical organizations for the design of a system for the monitoring and examination of the FTAA negotiations, with the aim of providing the negotiators and parliaments with a decision process that corresponds to the interests of the nations that they represent, in accordance with the provisions of the Hemispheric Cooperation Program of the Quito Ministerial Declaration of 2002.

**Fourth.** To call upon the sub-regional integration organizations of Latin America and the Caribbean to refine their plans on an urgent basis in order to be able to move forward with agreements to reinforce a common position among blocks by December 2004, and thus to strengthen their negotiating power in relation to the FTAA.

**Fifth.** To propose to those parliaments which thus far do not have a body or committee responsible for examining the FTAA negotiations, that they create one in order to maintain a participation and monitoring of the negotiations and an exchange of information with their citizens and with the other parliaments of the hemisphere.

**Sixth.** To create, within the framework of COPA, interparliamentary committees to represent the regions of North America, Central America, the Caribbean, the Andes and the countries of MERCOSUR, in order to improve the implementation of the participation strategies indicated in this declaration. In this regard, the agreement concluded between the Joint

Parliamentary Committee of MERCOSUR and the Andean Parliament, for the creation of a permanent liaison mechanism between those two organizations, is acknowledged.

**Seventh.** To recall the necessity of including, in the FTAA, clauses which permit the adoption of policies that take into account the asymmetry characterizing the levels of economic development of countries, as set out in the declaration adopted at the Trade Ministers' Meeting held in November 2003.

**Eighth.** To ask the parliaments to include the treatment of the issue of gender equality in all FTAA negotiation processes. The same applies to the marginalization of indigenous peoples and other vulnerable groups.

**Ninth.** To encourage the governments to provide all information relating to the FTAA negotiation process in a timely manner, so as to facilitate the active participation of parliaments.

**Tenth.** To ask COPA for a study of the effects of the public foreign debt on the ability to finance the economic and social development programs of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean that are necessary to facilitate fair and dignified inclusion, in solidarity, in the free trade process.

**Eleventh.** To propose an agreement whereby the international financial community, which holds the foreign debt of Latin America and the Caribbean, shall devote a portion of that debt to the financing of the economic and social development programs of our countries, programs which are necessary for the creation of an economic and social investment capacity liable to guarantee greater well-being and to increase the ability of our countries to take up the challenges that they face.

**Twelfth.** To insist that the negotiation process make room for both the respect and the preservation of cultural diversity, which constitutes an inestimable wealth of heritage for humanity, as practical issues forming part of the negotiations; by giving priority to education and job training to guarantee the strengthening of democratic institutions.

**Thirteenth.** To ask the parliaments to include the theme of science and technology as a fundamental component of the negotiations, with the aim of changing the conditions that foster the competitiveness and productivity of the countries, thus giving them the possibility to better integrate at the global level. Furthermore, to verify the potential effects of applying additional intellectual property rules, in developing countries, on the economic and social rights of the peoples.

**Fourteenth.** To closely examine the limitations on the ability of parliaments to enact legislation that might stem from the FTAA agreements, particularly as regards the link between the state and foreign investors, expropriations, environmental standards, the treatment given to vulnerable groups, the development of policies to encourage the implementation of initiatives aimed at minorities and the questioning of decisions handed down by the national judiciary systems, as well as by a dispute settlement organization and by private arbitration mechanisms.

**Fifteenth.** To recommend to the parliaments and regional integration organizations that they incorporate, in particular, the effect of FTAA standards on the following issues:

- a. subsidies aimed toward agriculture;
- b. consumer protection;
- c. conservation of resources threatened with extinction, beginning with the respect of the ecological balance of our hemisphere;
- d. maintaining public order, health and the fundamental interests of society;
- e. maintaining the power of direct taxation;
- f. control of access to domestic resources of which there are limited reserves;
- g. the unrestricted respect of the sovereignty of our peoples;
- h. preserving the capacity of the smaller economies so that they may maintain a joint bargaining position.

**Sixteenth.** Present this declaration at the meeting of the Trade Negotiations Committee (TNC) meeting scheduled to take place in Puebla, Mexico in early 2004.

**Seventeenth.** Acknowledge the efforts undertaken by the COPA President's office, the technical and logistical staff of the Andean parliament, and the COPA technical secretariats with a view to organizing the V General Assembly, and thank the Venezuelan people for their hospitality.

**Eighteenth.** Emphasize the importance and appropriateness of holding, in compliance with the laws of each country, popular consultations or referendums for the purpose of approving or rejecting the FTAA Agreement.

For broadcast and publication.

Prepared in Caracas, Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, November 26, 2003.