



Report of activities

November 2010 - September 2011

Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development

Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas

September 2011
Québec City, Canada



MP CARITINA SAÉNZ VARGAS,
President of the Committee on Environment and
Sustainable Development
Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA)





REPORT OF ACTIVITIES

NOVEMBER 2010 – SEPTEMBER 2011

Since its establishment, the Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA) has drawn on the invaluable work of many legislators, who have facilitated, through concrete proposals, the study and enactment of legislation to protect the environment and promote sustainable development everywhere in the Americas.

Like all of you, I belong to a party that has made environmental protection and restoration a priority. So, it is an honour for me to head a group that does such valuable work. As president of our Committee, I am pleased to present you with the first report on our activities, which covers the period from November 2010 to September 2011.

Even though our work involves all subjects directly or indirectly related to the environment and sustainable development, the focus this year has been on water resources—and the work themes chosen reflect that: **Legislating for a Greener America: Productivity and Climate Change, Comprehensive Water Management and Protecting Water Resources.**

Furthermore, it was decided at our third work session held during the 11th General Assembly of COPA in Québec City that the subject would be examined from the following angle: **Water Resources and Climate Change.**

There is no doubt that “protecting water resources implies the need for both environmental and social measures,” as stated in the work plan presented by COPA President, Jacques Chagnon. The members of our Committee therefore decided to give priority to the preservation and sustainable use of water resources in 2011.

We are adamant that significant progress in this area can only be achieved if we continue to work in close collaboration with legislators throughout the Americas, all the while keeping in mind that water is an essential element of life and that our role includes ensuring legislation gets adopted to protect water resources. Laws passed must guarantee that adequate quantities of water are accessible to all. This is why it is important that we work together to ensure a comprehensive water management approach for the Americas.

Aware of the importance of sharing success stories and developing new environmental legislation proposals that integrate sustainable development ideas at our congresses,





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Committee members met at two work sessions—one in Mar del Plata, Argentina, and the other in Asunción, Paraguay. Following is a brief summary of these work sessions including approved resolutions and photos.

In addition, the Committee's work plan for 2011 was presented at COPA's 12th Executive Committee Meeting held last March in Toluca and Villa Victoria in the State of Mexico. Among other things, it proposed holding a second work session in Asunción, Paraguay.

Given that one of the Millennium Development Goals—central to all others—concerns the rational use and comprehensive management of water resources, we are pleased this was chosen as our principal work theme for 2011.

As a matter of fact, it is as a follow-up to the work plan approved at COPA's 12th Executive Committee Meeting that the meetings were held and that this annual report is being presented.

It is important to stress that completion of this report doesn't mean our job is over. Quite to the contrary, much work is still required. All interested legislators must be encouraged to take part in this undertaking in order to strengthen our commitment and facilitate the adoption of legislation for the judicious use, exploitation and protection of natural resources. We owe this to the citizens we represent today and to future generations.



FIRST ORDINARY SESSION NOVEMBER 2010, MAR DEL PLATA, ARGENTINA

The Committee's first work session was held last November in conjunction with the **10th General Assembly of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA)** in Mar del Plata, Argentina. The theme was **Legislating for a Greener America: Productivity and Climate Change**.



A total of 42 parliamentarians from eight countries took part. A number of different resolutions were adopted and sent through diplomatic channels to organizers of the 16th Conference of the Parties (COP-16) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change held in Cancun, Mexico, in December 2010.

Below are the resolutions that were adopted:





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PARLIAMENTARY CONFEDERATION OF THE AMERICAS (COPA)

10th GENERAL ASSEMBLY, MAR DEL PLATA, ARGENTINA

NOVEMBER 15–20, 2010

Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development

Resolution

Legislating for a greener America: productivity and climate change

We, the parliamentarians of the Americas gathered in Mar del Plata, Argentina, for the 10th General Assembly of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas,

Aware of the importance of preserving a green America that is able to maintain an environmental balance despite the world economic crisis;

Acknowledging the global scale of climate change and the efforts made by international organizations and certain governments to encourage public policies aimed at sustainable development;

Considering the climate-change-induced natural catastrophes and weather events that have occurred across the continent and the world, their effects on socio-economic development and human health, and the irreversible damage they have caused around the globe and especially in developing countries, less developed countries and small island states;

Emphasizing the determination of COPA member parliaments to promote the development of appropriate legislation to solve the serious problems posed by climate change and environmental degradation;

Convinced that climate change has a planet-wide, long-term impact that must be addressed with vision and leadership, two key qualities in sustainable development policy planning;





Looking ahead with keen interest to the proceedings of the COP 16 to be held in December of this year in Cancún and the agreements to come out of it;

RESOLVE TO

Reiterate our call to developed countries that they take the lead in reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by setting ambitious targets while implementing aid plans and granting sufficient financial and technical assistance to enable developing countries to adapt to climate change and to development, in keeping with the principles and provisions of the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol;

Exhort all governments to develop, under the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol, an anti-climate-change instrument that is exhaustive, fair and binding, includes all countries in a significant way and is based on the Copenhagen Accord and the Bali Road Map;

Call on parliamentarians of the Americas to urge their governments to set ambitious and measurable GHG emission reduction targets and to implement national reduction measures that are adapted to the realities of their respective countries;

Press governments to implement, in their respective countries, appropriate mitigation measures that can be submitted to international verification according to the guidelines approved by the Conference of the Parties;

Exhort governments to work together to reinforce their capacity to adapt to climate change and to reduce the risk of disasters in developing countries, particularly in less developed countries and in the small island states that are more vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, for example by creating a climate change adaptation network for the Americas;

Exhort COPA member legislators to acknowledge (1) the central role of technology in climate change response, (2) the need for technological advancement and for cooperation between the region's countries in disseminating existing technologies, and (3) the development, deployment and transfer of innovative technologies;

Underscore the importance of achieving equilibrium between climate change and economic and development models that are more environment-friendly and more conducive to maintaining a balance between humankind and the environment.

(2010-11-18)





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N.B. The resolutions approved by the members of this Committee were sent to the Chancellery of Mexico and the organizers of the COP-16 held in Cancun, Mexico, last December. This initiative aimed to inform representatives of the governments and participants of the COP-16 present of the points of view of legislators from the Americas regarding these issues of significant international importance. It also aimed to guarantee these opinions would be considered when promoting public policy for sustainable water use that will enable us to define environmental policies to help our respective countries and governments resolve problems related to climate change.





APPROVAL OF 2011 WORK PLAN MARCH 2011, STATE OF MEXICO

The Committee submitted its work plan for 2011 at the **12th Executive Committee Meeting of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA)** held from March 8 to 11 in Toluca and Villa Victoria in the State of Mexico. The work plan proposed holding a second work session in Asunción, Paraguay, to examine the theme **Protecting Water Resources** in greater depth. The proposal was supported by Senator Zulma Gómez of the National Congress of Paraguay.

The work plan was approved unanimously by the President and approximately 50 parliamentarians from 17 countries from across the Americas and by the Mexican legislators present at the meeting. This paved the way for the second work session and the adoption of the environmental protection and sustainable development themes the Committee wished to be included on the agenda for the next assembly.

Legislators of the Americas participating in this session reiterated their commitment to protecting our planet. The work plan includes a detailed definition of this commitment and the themes fundamental to environmental protection and sustainable development in the Americas. These include climate change and global warming as well as their impact on biodiversity conservation. Our work in 2011 will focus, however, on comprehensive water management and the preservation of water resources.

This is a huge challenge and legislators from the Americas must work together and keep in mind that water is an essential element of life—and that it is our role to help put in place legislation to preserve water resources. Coordinating our efforts is key to setting the stage for **the Americas to unite for comprehensive water management.**



SECOND ORDINARY SESSION MAY 2011, ASUNCIÓN, PARAGUAY

In accordance with the commitments in the 2011 work plan of COPA's Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development, approved during the 12th meeting of the Executive Committee of the same organization, held in March of this year, the second ordinary work session explored the theme **Protecting Water Resources: Problems and Possible Alternatives for Water Supply**. This session was hosted by the National Congress of Paraguay.



The work sessions held on May 12 and 14 brought together Executive Members of the Committee and were presided by Senator Zulma R. Gómez and the author of this report, in our respective qualities as Vice-President and President. Oscar González Daher, Speaker of the Paraguayan Senate, and Dr Jaime Collado, a Mexican conference speaker, participated in the May 12 activities. The May 14 activities provided an opportunity to evaluate the previous day's work and to prepare a report for COPA executives containing the resolutions unanimously approved during the second ordinary work session.





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The plenary assembly held on May 13 was attended by 23 parliamentarians from six countries (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Paraguay, Canada and Mexico) and two internationally renowned speakers—Minister Oscar Rivas, Secretary of the Environment for Paraguay, and Dr Jaime Collado, Vice-President of the Mexican National Committee for the International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage. A number of Paraguayan university professors and researchers also attended the meeting.





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During the first half of the plenary assembly, the President of the National Congress of Paraguay, Senator Oscar González Daher, extended a word of welcome to the participants of the second ordinary session and expressed his hope that it would result in valuable work being accomplished.



Following this, Senator Zulma R. Gómez Cáceres, COPA's First Vice-President and Vice-President of the Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development, and André Drolet, Member of the National Assembly of Québec (replacing COPA President Jacques Chagon), took turns speaking.





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Next, as President of the Committee, I welcomed participants to the meeting—the first organized outside our general assemblies. After verifying that the quorum was respected, I declared the plenary assembly officially open. Committee Secretary and Colombian Senator Milton A. Rodríguez Sarmiento read the agenda aloud and it was unanimously adopted.



The theme of the second ordinary work session was **Protecting Water Resources: Problems and Possible Alternatives for Water Supply**. The session started with a lecture entitled **Reinforcing Hydraulic Structures** by Minister Oscar Rivas. This was followed by a lecture by Dr Jaime Collado entitled **A Solution for Harvesting and Reusing Water**. A question and answer period ensued in which both legislators and university representatives were invited to participate.





Dr. Jaime Collado

Representatives of the Paraguayan Senate then gave their presentations. Senator Víctor Bernal Garay, Chair of the Committee on Energy, Natural resources, Population, Environment, Production and Sustainable Development, and Senator Fernando Silva Facetti, Chair of the National Committee for the Preservation of Natural Resources, each presented their points of view on this issue of water scarcity and the importance of passing legislation to deal with this important problem. In their opinion, measures must be adopted to ensure the responsible use of water resources and guarantee that adequate quantities are accessible to all. These presentations were followed by a question and answer period.





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During the second half of the plenary assembly, there were presentations by several legislators including: MNA André Drolet (Québec), Senator Milton Rodríguez (Colombia), Deputy Estela De Micheli (Argentina), Deputy Leandro Altolaquirre (Argentina), Deputy Paes Landim (Brazil), Senator Eduardo Nava Bolaños (Mexico), Senator Norma Esparza Herrera (Mexico), Deputy Luis Mauri (Argentina), Senator Zulma Gómez (Paraguay), as well as the author of this report. Another question and answer period was held following this.



Resolutions were then drawn up and suggestions approved during the day, integrated into them. A vote was held on the resolutions and they were unanimously adopted, which means they will be presented at COPA's next General Assembly to be held in September in Québec City in Canada. Finally, as all points on the agenda had been discussed, the assembly was declared closed. All Executive Members were invited to attend a meeting the following day (May 14) to prepare a report.



As part of the second ordinary work session, Senator Oscar González Daher, President of the National Congress, and Senator Zulma Gómez Cáceres, COPA's First Vice-President, invited everyone to a welcome dinner on May 12 on the premises of the National Congress of Paraguay.





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At the close of the May 13 plenary assembly, Dr Federico Franco Gómez, Vice-President of the Republic of Paraguay, and his wife, Deputy Emilia Alfaro de Franco, Vice-President of the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, held a dinner for COPA parliamentarians to mark the bicentennial year of Paraguay. The activity took place in the conference room of the vice-presidency of the Republic of Paraguay.





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PARLIAMENTARY CONFEDERATION OF THE AMERICAS
Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development
May 13th 2011

Resolution:

We, the parliamentarians of the Americas gathered on the occasion of the **second ordinary meeting of the Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA) in Asunción, Paraguay,**

Aware of the importance of moving toward a more sustainable America in order to encourage greater environmental awareness and thus strengthen citizen involvement and commitment, and of the exigency of promoting responsible media coverage in light of the media's considerable influence in modern society;

Acknowledging that environmental education at an early age is essential to changing attitudes toward conservation and sustainable development, and that the dissemination of information is necessary in order to foster a sense of environmental responsibility throughout our continent;

Aware that access to safe drinking water is one of the most serious problems facing humanity today and that water management must be regarded as essential to surmounting the challenges ahead;

Reacting to the damaging effects of climate change observed around the globe, which threaten energy, transport, infrastructure and food security, by calling for the prevention of shortages of goods and services;

Highlighting the importance of their legislative work and especially of the role they can play in guiding the development of an aid scheme based on broader interparliamentary collaboration in water management and more seamless environmental legislation;

Convinced that climate change will have a long-term global impact and that it must be addressed in a responsible manner, and wishing to help shape legislation to support pro-sustainable development public policy;





The Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development deemed it appropriate to adopt the following:

RESOLUTIONS

Propose dedicated legislation to support our governments in observing and implementing international agreements on lowering contaminant emissions that affect water quality in our regions;

Review our climate change-related legislation and develop a prevention-focused regulatory framework in addition to encouraging more active participation in international events on climate change;

Assess and raise awareness of the progress made in protecting the environment on the legislative front;

Reaffirm our commitment, as legislators of the Americas, to heighten our collaboration and involvement in water resource conservation by promoting **dedicated water legislation** that will create appropriate mechanisms for regional bulk water supply, drainage and sewage treatment services, and ensure that the services delivered are high-quality, effective and guaranteed;

Exhort the governments to work hand in hand with the legislative bodies to lay the groundwork for a comprehensive strategy that truly makes improving access to water a priority. In this respect, it is **vital that the constitutions of the countries of the Americas be updated or overhauled** to entrench the **right to water and a healthy environment as an individual guarantee**, in light of **the right to water as recognized by the United Nation's Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**;

Call on the governments to encourage public and media participation in order to face the global water crisis together;

Undertake to introduce specific initiatives to include environmental education in the school curricula in order to equip future generations with concrete tools that will help them understand what conservation and the wise use of natural resources mean, and act accordingly;

Exhort COPA member legislators to recognize the importance of supporting political action aimed at improving services and water management so that constitutional reforms to recognize access to safe drinking water as a basic human right will translate into real change, and to define the penalties to be imposed on those who violate that right;





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Reinforce existing normative frameworks for environmental certification in our countries to prevent businesses from evading their responsibilities as regards preserving the environment;

Assume responsibility for legislating on natural resource conservation while remaining mindful of the fact that human health and development are just as important as the environment;

Press the governments to put solutions in place to encourage water efficiency and promote water harvesting and recycling as positive steps in responding to the global water crisis. Such solutions should include wastewater management and disposal regulation to reduce the transfer of contaminants to rural areas, for the welfare of all of society;

Promote regulatory frameworks aimed at protecting watershed quality and reversing watershed degradation due to human intervention;

Encourage efforts to improve the quality, quantity and balanced availability of water supply services and foster greater commitment toward the preservation of this vital resource through concrete public policies;

Promote public and private investment in research and development to spawn new technologies to reduce water consumption in farm, industrial and domestic systems and to collect accurate data on existing water resources.



Second ordinary work meeting
Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development
“PROTECTION OF WATER RESOURCES”

PARLAMENTARIANS REGISTERED

No.	NAME	COUNTRY
1	Sen. Zulma Gómez Cáceres	Paraguay
2	Sen. Amancio López	Paraguay
3	Sen. Oscar González Daher	Paraguay
4	Sen. Luis Víctor Bernal Garay	Paraguay
5	Sen. Fernando Silva Facetti	Paraguay
6	Sen. Julio César Franco	Paraguay
7	Dip. Mercedes González	Paraguay
8	Dip. Blanca Duarte Frutos	Paraguay
9	Sen. Mario Cano Yegros	Paraguay
10	Sen. Clarissa Marín	Paraguay
11	Sen. Manuel Bóbeda	Paraguay
12	Sen. Orlando Fiorotto	Paraguay
13	Dip. Eduardo Vera Bejarano	Paraguay
14	Dip. Dionisio Ortega	Paraguay
15	Dip. Luis Mauri	Argentina
16	Dip. Leandro Altolaguirre	Argentina
17	Dip. Estela Méndez de De Micheli	Argentina
18	Dip. Paes Landim	Brasil
19	Dip. André Drolet	Canadá
20	Sen. Milton A. Rodríguez Sarmiento	Colombia
21	Sen. Eduardo Nava Bolaños	México
22	Sen. Norma Esparza Herrera	México
23	Dip. Caritina SaéNZ Vargas	México

Asunción, Paraguay, May 13, 2011





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Ms. Caritina SaéNZ Vargas, MP
CHAIR

**11th General Assembly
of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas**

“Water and Climate change”

3rd Work session of the Committee on Environment and
Sustainable Development
September 8 2011, 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

DRAFT AGENDA

1. Welcoming remarks by MP Caritina SaéNZ Vargas, President of the Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development of COPA.
2. Reading and adoption of the draft agenda.
3. **Presentation by Dr. Richard Turcotte**, Head of Division of Hydrology and Hydraulics for the Ministry of Sustainable Development, Environment and Parks of Quebec and coordinator of the program “Water Resources” for the Ouranos Consortium **on the following theme: “Water and Climate Change”**.
4. Question period.





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5. **Presentation by Dr. Victor Arroyo**, Technical Chief-Advisor for the Sanitation Program for Latin America, UN-Habitat, **on the following theme: “Water and Climate Change”**.
6. Question period.
(Break)
7. Presentation by MP Caritina SaéNZ Vargas of the Report 2010-2011 on Committee activities and of the Report on the Second Work Session, held in Asunción, Paraguay, from May 11th to May 15th, 2011
8. Intervention by parliamentarians registered.
9. Discussion and vote on resolutions.
10. Reading of the resolutions adopted during the Second Work Session of the Committee, held in Paraguay and of the Third Work Session held in Québec City, which will be presented in plenary session.
11. Miscellaneous.
12. Adjournment.





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**LXI LEGISLATURA
CÁMARA DE DIPUTADOS**

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