

QUEBEC CITY PARLIAMENTARY DECLARATION

Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Parliamentary Conference of the Americas Québec, April 18 and 19 2001

We, the parliamentarians of the Assemblies represented on the Executive Committee of the Parliamentary Conference of the Americas (COPA), have gathered in Quebec City on April 18 and 19, 2001, just prior to the Third Summit of the Americas, to debate the issues of the hemispheric integration processes, and particularly the creation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and the strengthening of democracy.

The Parliamentary Conference of the Americas is a permanent and autonomous forum that brings together the parliamentary assemblies of the unitary, federal, federated and associated States, regional parliaments and interparliamentary organizations of the Americas. An initiative of parliamentarians, the Conference fosters the enrichment and continuity of the debate on the issues of common interest that are discussed at the Summits of the Americas, and in other forums.

We reiterate our support for the objectives of the Summits of the Americas to build a community of the Americas founded on the respect of the dignity of persons, peace, democracy, social justice, solidarity between nations and gender equality. We reiterate that it is essential for parliamentarians to be involved in the regional integration processes, and particularly in those arising out of the Summits of the Americas. We also affirm that any integration agreement must respect the existing regional agreements, the rights of workers and environmental protection.

It is our duty, as parliamentarians, to foster a public debate on the issues connected with the integration of our hemisphere, in order to make known the expectations and concerns of our fellow citizens to the Heads of State and Government. Our participation is important since, as legislators, we will be called on to approve the Plans of Action of the Summits of the Americas, when we ratify the agreements signed between the governments.

We wish for an ongoing dialogue to be instigated with the executive authorities of the hemisphere, that will make it possible to strengthen the transparency and legitimacy of the process begun in Miami, at the First Summit of the Americas.

We have set the groundwork for dialogue with the Heads of State and Government by adopting, at the first two COPA General Assemblies, declarations and recommendations on the fundamental issues of inter-American cooperation, which were transmitted to them.

In addition, the Network of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas, which is part of COPA, has passed resolutions on the need to take into account the social and economic concerns of women in the context of hemispheric integration.

In order to contribute to the building of a democratic and prosperous community of the Americas, we will carry out a Plan of Action, within COPA and in our assemblies, which will favour the active participation of parliamentarians in the negotiations on integration agreements, as well as the defence and strengthening of democracy.

We reiterate the request made to the Heads of State and Government to officially receive the COPA representatives at the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City, and at the subsequent Summits, and ask them to take notice of this Declaration and of the Plan of Action accompanying it, in the course of their deliberations.

PLAN OF ACTION

We, the parliamentarians of the Assemblies represented on the Executive Committee of the Parliamentary Conference of the Americas, having gathered in Quebec City on April 18 and 19, 2001, just prior to the Third Summit of the Americas, express our firm will to carry out this Plan of Action, within COPA and in our respective Assemblies, in order to instigate a dialogue with the executive authorities of the Americas, to increase our participation in the FTAA negotiations and to strengthen representative democracy.

I. Dialogue between COPA and the Heads of State and Government of the Americas

With the goal of collaborating in the process of the Summits of the Americas, the parliamentarians commit themselves to:

1. take the necessary steps toward the Heads of State and Government, in order that they include their respective parliaments, as well as COPA, in the discussions and decision-making of the Summits of the Americas and of the hemispheric Ministers' meetings;
2. hear the representatives of the Summit Implementation Review Group and the FTAA negotiators;
3. seek to have COPA officially recognized as the legitimate forum of the unitary, federal, federated and associated States and of the regional parliaments and interparliamentary organizations of the hemisphere, and as such, to see that COPA delegates are received:
 - by the Heads of State and Government at the Summits of the Americas, as is the custom in a number of international forums;
 - by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs at the OAS General Assemblies;
 - by the Ministers of Trade at the Ministers' meetings on the FTAA negotiations.

II. COPA and the FTAA negotiations

In order to promote the interests and aspirations of the populations that they represent and to increase their participation in the FTAA negotiations, the parliamentarians commit themselves to:

1. take the necessary measures to inform the populations that they represent on the issues of the FTAA, in order to bring them into debate on these issues;
2. hold public consultations on the FTAA, in accordance with the request formulated in the Parliamentary Declaration of COPA's Second General Assembly, held in Puerto Rico in July 2000, and transmit the conclusions of these public consultations to COPA in order that it may inform the parliamentary assemblies of the Americas of them;
3. assess the possible consequences of the FTAA on the populations that they represent, as well as on their ability to legislate in certain fields;
4. assess the impacts of free trade and hemispheric integration on women and make known the results to the population, to parliamentarians and to the Heads of State and Government;
5. communicate their expectations and concerns regarding the FTAA, and those of their fellow citizens, to the Heads of State and Government;
6. take the necessary measures to ensure that the FTAA negotiation texts are transmitted to them on a regular basis.

III. COPA and the strengthening of representative democracy

In order to strengthen representative democracy in the Americas, the parliamentarians undertake to:

1. maintain a function of alertness concerning the respect, in each State, of the basic principles of democracy;
2. implement measures to improve the functioning of the institutions, particularly of their respective parliaments;
3. develop policies to fight against corruption, in keeping with the resolution passed at COPA's Second General Assembly;
4. contribute to the holding of fair and transparent elections in the Americas by means of electoral observation missions.

IV. Implementation of the Plan of Action

In order to ensure the implementation of this Plan of Action, the parliamentarians agree to:

1. create parliamentary networks within COPA, including one dealing with the FTAA, and another with the strengthening of democracy, in order to foster exchange of information and consultation of specialists through the Internet;
2. maintain and develop COPA communication and information networks intended for the parliamentarians of the Americas;
3. continue and strengthen the cooperation initiated with civil society organizations;
4. continue the collaboration with the College of the Americas in the context of the activities of the Inter-American Research Chair on Parliamentary Approaches to Continental Integration.