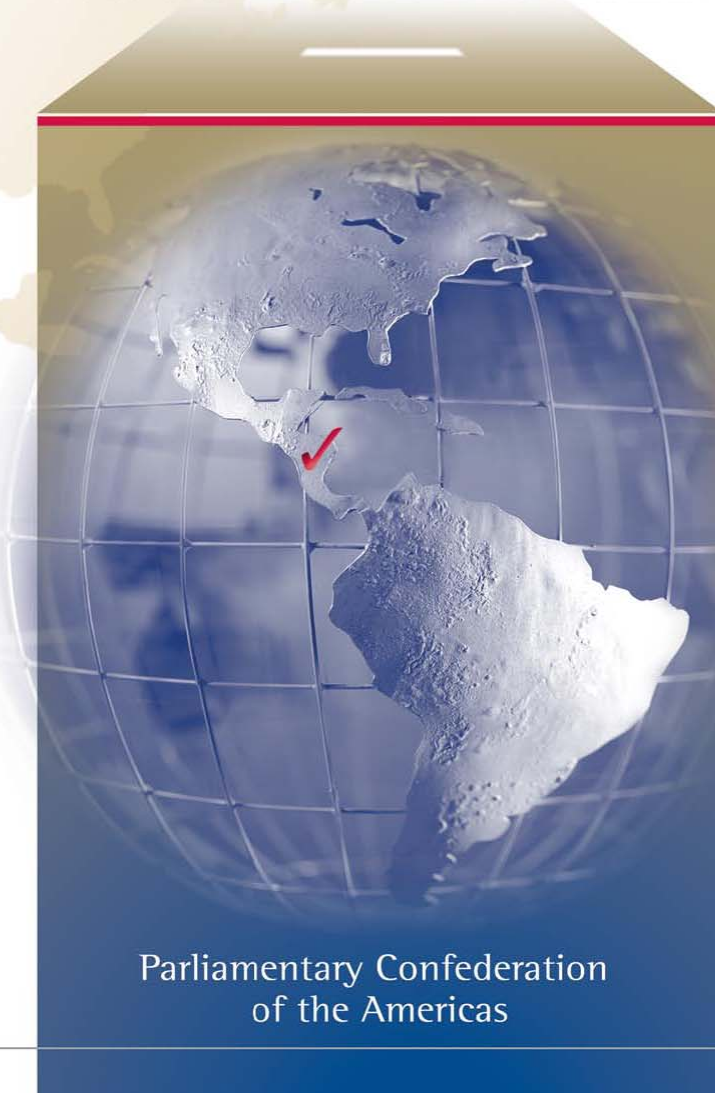




GUATEMALA PRESIDENTIAL AND LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS

SEPTEMBER 9, 2007

REPORT OF THE ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION



Parliamentary Confederation
of the Americas



FIRST ROUND OF THE GUATEMALA PRESIDENTIAL AND LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS

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PARLIAMENTARY CONFEDERATION OF THE AMERICAS

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INTRODUCTION

Created in 1997, the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA) is an interparliamentary organization that brings together the congresses and parliamentary assemblies of unitary, federal, federated, and associated states, regional parliaments, and interparliamentary organizations of the Americas.

Its goals include strengthening parliamentary democracy and building a community of the Americas founded on the respect for dignity and human rights, peace, democracy, solidarity between peoples, social justice, and gender equality.

In order to support democracy, COPA seeks to play an increasingly active role in the area of electoral observation on the American continent.

A delegation of COPA parliamentarians thus visited Guatemala, more particularly Guatemala City and the departments of Sacatepequez and Chimaltenango, from September 5 to 10, 2007, to observe and report on the first round of the presidential and legislative elections held on September 9.

This was the fifth electoral observation mission conducted by COPA since it adopted a framework for organizing such missions. The first four electoral observation missions, which were held in December 2005 in Bolivia, in July 2006 in Mexico, in October 2006 in Brazil and in November 2006 in Nicaragua, provided opportunities to develop know-how that contributed to the success of this fourth mission.

The goal of this report is to summarize the activities of the COPA mission during its visit to Guatemala from September 5 to 10, 2007, and present the results of the observation. The report is divided into eight parts: **1) terms of reference of the mission; 2) composition of the delegation; 3) the pre-election political context; 4) the legal and institutional framework in which the September 9, 2007 elections were held; 5) mission activities prior to election day; 6) mission activities on election day; 7) findings of mission members; and 8) mission conclusions and recommendations.**

1. TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE MISSION

In expectation of the Guatemalan presidential and legislative elections, to be held on September 9, 2007, the COPA Executive Committee, meeting in Los Angeles, California, United States, on June 23, 2007, decided to establish an electoral observation mission in Guatemala.

Accordingly, in a letter dated June 27, 2007 (Appendix I), the President of COPA, Mr. Carlos Jiménez Macías, informed the Guatemalan authorities of COPA's interest in and availability for establishing a delegation of legislators that could go to Guatemala to observe the elections.

On July 2, 2007, the President of COPA invited the members of the COPA Executive Committee by letter (Appendix II) to take part in the electoral observation mission to Guatemala.

On July 25, 2007, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal of Guatemala authorized the COPA legislators to attend the Guatemalan electoral process as electoral observers.

In a letter dated August 23, 2007 (Appendix III), the President of COPA informed the Guatemalan electoral authorities of the membership of the COPA delegation, which was to be led by Mr. Jean-François Roux, Chair of the COPA Committee on Democracy and Peace and Member of the National Assembly of Québec.

On September 5, 6, 7, and 8, 2007, the members of the mission attended information sessions given by representatives of institutions and organizations active in the electoral process in order to understand the organization of the Guatemalan elections.

On election day, the delegates visited nearly ninety polling stations in the capital region, Guatemala City, and in the departments of Sacatepequez and Chimaltenango to observe the conduct of the election operations.

2. COMPOSITION OF OF THE DELEGATION

The COPA delegation was composed of Mr. **Jean-François Roux**, mission leader, Chair of the COPA Committee on Democracy and Peace and Member of the National Assembly of Québec.

It was also composed of Ms. **Jhannett Madriz Sotillo**, former President of the COPA and Member of the Andean Parliament of Venezuela, of Messrs **Martín Carlos Olavarrieta** and **Alejandro Ramírez Rodríguez**, Members of the Legislative Assembly of the Federal District of Mexico, of Ms **Rebeca Parada Ortega**, Member of the Legislative Assembly of the Federal District of Mexico, of Ms **María Isabel Nava Cruz**, Member of the Congress of the state of Veracruz (Mexico), of Messrs. **Ramé J. Amatsoerdi** and **August K. Bado**, Members of the National Assembly of Surinam, of Ms **Sylvia Kajoeramari**, Member of the National Assembly of Surinam and of Ms **Iris Varela**, Member of the National Assembly of Venezuela.

The parliamentarians were assisted technically and administratively by Mr. **Jacques Paquet**, advisor of the COPA Committee on Democracy and Peace, by Ms **Marcia I. S. Burleson**, Secretary General of the National Assembly of Surinam, by Ms **Francine Barry**, assistant to the Chief Electoral Officer of Québec and electoral expert, by Ms **Norka Maria Cristina Lopez Zamarripa**, magistrate of the Electoral Tribunal of the Federal District of Mexico and by Mr. **Hector Martinez**, advisor of the Member María Isabel Nava Cruz.

3. THE PRE-ELECTION POLITICAL CONTEXT

During the 1960s, political life in Guatemala was characterized by a succession of military dictatorships and confrontations between the army and a guerrilla movement composed of rebel officers of the Revolutionary Armed Forces, of a Communist party fraction, and of peasant movements. Subsequently, having regrouped within the Guatemalan Revolutionary National Union (URNG), the armed movements were severely repressed by the successive military governments. The civil war casualties in Guatemala were high, especially between 1980 and 1985: 200,000 dead and 40,000 missing, mostly Mayan civilians, in addition to over one million internally displaced persons and tens of thousands of refugees.

In 1986, with the election of President Vinicio Cerezo, the army surrendered power to the civilians after 23 years of military dictatorship. The president then initiated dialogue with the armed opposition. On 14 January 1991, Mr. Jorge Serrano was elected president of the country. The following year, Ms. Rigoberta Menchu, a symbolic figure in the fight for the rights of indigenous people, received the Nobel Peace Prize and subsequently participated in the negotiation process. President Serrano, having been accused of trying to re-establish a dictatorship, was forced into exile and replaced by the *ombudsman* for human rights, Mr. Ramiro de Leon Carpio. In 1994, intermediate agreements were signed and, in 1995, MINUGUA (United Nations Mission to Guatemala) was created.

In January 1996, the presidential elections brought Mr. Alvaro Arzu Irigoyen to power, representing PAN (*Partido de Avanzada Nacional*). On 29 December 1996 the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace was signed, thus putting an end to a 36-year civil war. The situation with regard to human rights greatly improved.

On 26 December 1999, a new president was elected to the head of the country: Mr. Alfonso Portillo Cabrera (FRG, *Frente Republicano Guatemalteco*). This brought about the consolidation of peace agreements, the creation of dialogue committees and the desire to initiate reforms, particularly with regard to taxation and the military.

Today, it is recognized that several provisions of the peace agreements have been implemented, but substantial progress has yet to be made, particularly with regard to the integration of indigenous populations, which represent more than 60% of the population.

In December 2003, Mr. Oscar Berger Perdomo, at the head of a coalition of three small right-wing parties, GANA (*Gran Alianza Nacional*), was elected President of the country. The 20 or so political parties taking part in the election had all signed a non-violence pact that evidently was not respected: 21 assassinations, 46 threats to journalists and hundreds of acts of intimidation and harassment were reported, all directly linked to the election. For the occasion, 48,000 soldiers and police officers had been deployed.

Besides the magnitude of the destruction caused by Hurricane Stan as well as the difficulties linked to the increase in oil prices and a persistently high level of insecurity, the government was also shaken by the assassination, in February 2007, of four Guatemalan police officers, themselves indicted a few days earlier for the murder of three Salvadoran deputies of the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN). The government immediately announced the dismissal of 1500 police officers, who were possibly involved in criminal activities.

As the election of 9 September 2007 approached, tensions and instability once again intensified, causing frequent demonstrations, the bankruptcy of two banks and a severe shortage of printed money. In April 2007, two militants of the opposition party *Unidad Nacional de la Esperanza* (UNE) were assassinated. Since 2004, 13 members of this party, including two deputies, have lost their lives in similar circumstances.

Among the more noteworthy events of the 2007 election campaign, we should also mention the presidential candidacy of Nobel Peace Prize recipient, Mrs. Rigoberta Menchu. After having created her own political movement last February, the *Winaq* movement, she decided to accept an alliance with the left-centre group *Encuentro por Guatemala*.

Lastly, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) found itself in the midst of a controversy which led to the dismissal of two of the organization's senior public servants, in June 2007, who were accused of influence peddling and corruption. A few months earlier, the TSE had been severely criticized for having submitted an expenditure budget of unprecedented proportions to finance the 2007 electoral process.

On July 10, the registration period for political parties and their candidates came to a close in view of the September elections. The following is a list thereof, by political party:

- *Alianza Nueva Nación* (ANN) – Mr. Pablo Monsanto
- *Centro de Acción Social* (CASA) – Mr. Eduardo Suger
- *Democracia Cristiana Guatemalteca* (DCG) – Mr. Marco Vinicio Cerezo
- *DIA* – Mr. Hector Augusto Rosales
- *Encuentro por Guatemala* – Ms. Rigoberta Menchú
- *Frente Republicano Guatemalteco* (FRG) – Mr. Luis Rabbé
- *Gran Alianza Nacional* (GANNA) – Mr. Alejandro Giammattei
- *Partido de Avanzada Nacional* (PAN) – Mr. Oscar Rodolfo Castañeda
- *Partido Patriota* (PP) – Mr. Otto Pérez Molina
- *Partido Unionista* – Mr. Fritz García-Gallont
- *Unión del Cambio Nacionalista* (UCN) – Mr. Mario Estrada
- *Unión Democrática* (UD) – Mr. Manuel Conde
- *Unidad Nacional de la Esperanza* (UNE) – Mr. Álvaro Colom
- *Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca Movimiento Amplio de Izquierda* (URNG/MAIZ) – Mr. Miguel Angel Sandoval

4. THE LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF THE SEPTEMBER 9, 2007 ELECTIONS

4.1 The electoral system

Guatemala is a unitarian Republic with a presidential regime.

The executive power is held by a president and a vice-president who are elected by universal suffrage for a four-year term. The president is the head of the State, of the government and is commander-in-chief of the armies. He may not be re-elected.

The legislative power is exercised by the Congress of the Republic (*Congreso de la República*). This unicameral institution is composed of 158 deputies who are elected by direct ballot for a term of four years.

On 9 September 2007, Guatemalans elected their next president, the members of Congress, the mayors of the country's municipalities.

	Legislative elections – Elections of September 9, 2007
Members	158 (direct election)
Constituencies	-22 multi-member constituencies corresponding to the country's departments -1 national multi-member constituency (31 seats)
Voting method	-Mixed system with closed-list voting -127 seats filled by departmental plurality system (minimum 1 seat per department and one other seat for each 80,000 inhabitants) -31 seats by national list proportional representation (D'Hondt method ¹)

	Presidential election – Election of September 9, 2007
1st round	The candidate having obtained the absolute majority of votes by universal suffrage is elected president.
2nd round	A second round is organized between the two candidates having obtained the largest number of votes when no candidate has obtained absolute majority during the first round.

¹ The votes gathered by the party lists are divided by 1, 2, 3, 4, etc. The results of these divisions are classified by order of importance, from the largest to the least, and seats are successively allotted to the parties having obtained the highest quotients, until the total number of seats has been distributed.

4.2 The electoral laws

The "Electoral Law and of Political Parties" (LE) (*Ley Electoral y de Partidos Políticos*), in effect since 14 January 1986 and whose last amendment dates back to 2006, governs questions relating to political rights, the rights and obligations of the authorities, electoral bodies and political organizations, as well as the exercise of the right to vote and the electoral process.

The 2006 reform resulted, in particular, in decentralizing the polling stations. Thus, whereas there had been nearly 600 voting centres and 8,910 polling stations in 2003, for the September 2007 election there were more than 1,000 voting centres and 13,756 polling stations. In 2007, for the first time, political parties also were obliged to reveal the source of their private financing. However, the abolition of Chapter 10 of the "Electoral Law and of Political Parties," which deals with electoral offences and irregularities, left the Supreme Electoral Tribunal with little power to punish violations. All electoral offences are now governed by the Guatemalan penal code.

Suffrage is universal, secret, individual and may not be delegated (LE s. 12). Under section 129 of the country's Constitution, voting is obligatory for those who know how to read and write, and optional for illiterate electors. However, the law does not provide for any penalty.

In 1987, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal adopted the "Regulation on the Electoral Law and the Political Parties" (RLE) (*Reglamento a la Ley electoral y de partidos políticos*) to set out guidelines for the implementation of the Electoral Law.

4.3 Election authorities and organizations

In Guatemala, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) represents the highest authority in electoral matters. The other electoral bodies are:

- a) The Citizens' Registry (*Registro de Ciudadanos*)
- b) The Departmental Electoral Committees (*Juntas electorales departamentales*)
- c) The Municipal Electoral Committees (*Juntas electorales municipales*)
- d) The polling stations (*Juntas receptoras de votos*)

Le Tribunal suprême électoral

The Supreme Electoral Tribunal is an independent institution and thus is not subordinate to any organization of State. It consists of five titular and five substitute judges, who are elected by concurring vote of two thirds of the Congress of the Republic, and for six years. This term is renewable. These members of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal are elected among thirty candidates appointed by the *Comisión de Postulación*. (LE s. 123) This Committee is composed of five members, all of whom are from the university sector. It is currently chaired by the president of the *Universidad San Carlos de Guatemala*.

The members of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal must possess the same qualities as those required of Supreme Court of Justice judges. Furthermore, they enjoy the same immunities and prerogatives, and are entrusted with equal responsibilities (LE s. 124).

The Supreme Electoral Tribunal has the following duties and obligations:

- Ensure strict observance of the Constitution, laws and provisions guaranteeing the right to organize and the political participation of citizens;
- Convene and organize the electoral processes, proclaim the election results and their validity or, if need be, the partial or total cancellation thereof, and allocate positions to be submitted for election;
- Give final ruling on the acts accomplished by the Citizens' Registry and brought to its attention pursuant to a recourse or a request for an opinion;
- Rule on the registration, approval or cancellation of political organizations;
- Give final ruling on all matters relating to coalitions and political party mergers;
- Appoint the members of the Departmental and Municipal Electoral Committees and, if justified, dismiss one or several of these members, while ensuring the proper conduct thereof;
- Ensure that the polling stations are composed adequately and in due course;
- Examine petitions and opinion requests submitted by citizens and political organizations and take the appropriate measures.

The president of the organization is elected among and by the members of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (LE s. 126).

The Citizens' Registry

The Citizens' Registry is a technical body of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal. It is particularly responsible for:

- Citizen registration;
- Census of electors;
- Registration of political organizations and tax audit of their operations;
- Registration of citizens seeking a position that is submitted for election;
- Being informed and ruling on registrations, suspensions, revocations and penalties concerning political organizations.

The Citizens' Registry has the responsibility of preparing and updating the electoral list (LE s. 224). Citizens who are not yet registered on this list have until 9 June 2007 — 3 months before election day — to do so (RLE s.2). Lastly, the electoral list must be revised and printed no later than 30 days before the elections, that is, 9 August 2007 (LE s. 225).

For the 2007 election 5,990,029 electors were registered on the electoral list, an increase of 13% in relation to that of 2003.

To exercise the right to vote, each elector must also present his or her municipal identification card (*cédula de vecindad*), which is issued by each municipality.

The Departmental and Municipal Electoral Committees

The Departmental and Municipal Electoral Committees are temporary bodies that are responsible for the electoral process in their respective jurisdictions. These committees are composed of three titular members and of two substitute members, all of whom are appointed by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal. The Law stipulates that electoral committee members, just as polling station members, are prohibited from holding managerial positions at the same time within any political organization (LE s. 174 and 182).

A Departmental Electoral Committee must be established for each of the departments of the Republic, no later than three months before the holding of the election. Moreover, a Municipal Electoral Committee must be created for each of the municipalities, two months before election day.

The main responsibilities of the Departmental Electoral Committees are the following:

- Establish the Municipal Electoral Committees and appoint their members;
- Proclaim the results and validity of the municipal elections conducted within the department or, if need be, the partial or total nullity thereof;
- Process all election documents and material received from the Municipal Electoral Committees and forward these to the Supreme Electoral Tribunal no later than three days after having received them;
- Immediately publish the election results.

The main responsibilities of the Municipal Electoral Committees are the following:

- Name, administer an oath to and give control to the polling station members;
- Publish the polling station locations;
- Produce the election results in their municipality, by using the documents received from the polling station presidents;
- Immediately publish the election results.

The polling stations

Polling stations are temporary bodies. Each polling station is composed of three titular members (a president, a secretary and a member), who are appointed by the corresponding Municipal Electoral Committee, at least fifteen days before the holding of the election. Substitute members are also named in the same manner (LE s. 181).

The main responsibilities of the polling stations are the following:

- Open and close the election, in pursuance of the law and other applicable provisions;
- Verify election materials and documents;
- Identify each of the voters and ensure that they are registered on the list of electors;
- Carry out the counting of votes in the presence of the representatives of the political parties and of the citizens' electoral committees;
- Send the votes received to the Municipal Electoral Committee as soon as polling station proceedings have been completed;

As well, once voting has ended, the president of the polling station must send a certified copy of the voting results to each of the political party auditors and citizens' electoral committees who are on the premises.

The maximum number of electors registered per polling station is of 600 (LE s. 230).

4.4 Voting operations

In order to be able to exercise their right to vote, citizens must have in their possession the identification card (*cédula de vecindad*) issued by each municipality and be registered on the electoral list.

If the data appearing on the identification card have not been recently updated, Guatemalans may still exercise their right to vote, but they must go to a polling station for “non-updated” (*no actualizados*) electors.

Voting begins at 7.00 a.m. and ends at 6.00 p.m., but the polling station must remain open as long as there are registered citizens who are waiting to vote (LE s. 236). There is no advance poll.

On election day, it is forbidden to sell and distribute alcoholic beverages and to advertise the elections in any manner (LE s. 223).

On the morning of the election, the 3 polling station members must first and foremost issue an opening form (*Acta de Apertura*), which will bear the names of the members as well as the number of unmarked ballot papers received (RLE s. 79).

To direct the electors and to see to the proper conduct of the voting process and the security of the polling station, the members of the station appoint an officer of justice (*alguacil*) (RLE s. 78).

The elector uses four ballots that are of different colours for each of the offices to be filled: (i) the President and the Vice-President, (ii) the Members of the National Assembly at the constituency level, (iii) the Members of the National Assembly at the national-list level, and (iv) mayors.

The premises where voting will take place must be set up in such a manner so as to guarantee voter secrecy and transparency of the electoral process (LE s. 232).

The voting process can be divided into seven steps:

- (1) The elector must present and hand over a valid identification card (*cédula de vecindad*) as well as proof of his registration on the electoral list.
- (2) The president of the polling station verifies that the elector is indeed registered on the electoral list and asks the latter to sign it in the appropriate place;
- (3) The elector then receives the four ballots duly signed by the president;
- (4) In the voting booth the elector marks his ballots by hand;
- (5) He or she then places them in the urns corresponding to each of the elective offices;

(6) The elector's index finger is marked with indelible ink;

(7) The elector receives his or her identification card, signed and stamped by the president of the polling station.

Once the polling station closes, the ballots are counted on site by the 3 polling station members and under the supervision of the political party representatives. A vote tally report (*Acta de escrutinio*) is completed. It contains, among other information:

- the time at which the polling station closed, the total number of ballot papers placed in the various ballot boxes;
- the valid votes obtained for each political party;
- the number of invalid votes, the number of blank votes;
- the list of objections made and how they were resolved.

Polling station officials and party representatives must sign the vote tally report. The president is required to send this report along with all election material to the Municipal Electoral Committee. Subsequently, the latter sends the election results to the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) and the Departmental Electoral Committee, either by telegraph, telephone or any other method at its disposal (RLE s. 87 and 88). Today they are transmitted by electronic means.

5. MISSION ACTIVITIES PRIOR TO ELECTION DAY

5.1 Arrival of the delegation and accreditation of members

Upon arrival in Guatemala City on September 5, 2007, the COPA mission issued a press release (Appendix IV) announcing its objectives and the makeup of its delegation, and briefly introducing COPA.

5.2 Working meetings with representatives of institutions and organizations involved in the electoral process

On September 5, 6, 7 and 8, 2007, the mission attended several working meetings in Guatemala City with representatives of institutions and organizations involved in the electoral process in order to understand the organization of the Guatemalan elections. The remarks and information gathered during these meetings are summarized below².

² Members of the mission only report the comments made by institutional and organizational representatives and do not pass any judgment.

A) The political parties

Mr. Giddel Zaso, Campaign Director for the *Unidad Nacional de la Esperanza (UNE)* Party, accompanied by Mr. Fernando Varillas, person responsible for media relations – Friday, September 7, at 7.00 p.m.

During this working meeting Mr. Zaso noted that his party had been seriously affected by violence during the election campaign; 27 candidates or persons close to this party had been victims of attacks, and 14 of them had died as a result. In this regard he wondered who was struggling to prevent his party from taking power in Guatemala and mentioned organized crime, which had tried unsuccessfully to infiltrate his party.

He also deplored the fact that the party's presidential candidate, Mr. Alvaro Colom, had been the victim of baseless attacks and accused of crimes by the press.

Mr. Zaso indicated that the UNE is a party which is independent of the State and receives no public funding.

He expressed concern regarding possible acts of violence that could be committed on election day, in particular the burning of urns, as had occurred during the 2003 elections.

Finally, he regretted the low level of credibility that the country's institutions have with the population. According to him, only the churches are spared this fate.

Mr. Oscar Rodolfo Castañeda, presidential candidate for the *Partido de Avanzada Nacional (PAN)*, accompanied by Ms. Esther Castañeda Rosales, campaign secretary – Saturday, September 8, 2007, at 4.00 p.m.

During this working meeting Mr. Castañeda maintained that the September 9 elections would be free and transparent and that there was no possibility of either corruption or fraud.

He did indicate, however, that he had denounced to the electoral observation mission of the Organization of American States (OAS), to that of the European Union (EU), and to the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) the bias of the media which he noted during the election campaign.

Mr. Castañeda's party also denounced the context of violence and insecurity in which Guatemalans must live on a daily basis, indicating that organized crime had infiltrated certain political parties and affected the course of the election campaign.

Mr. Castañeda maintained that the Supreme Electoral Tribunal had done good work with the limited financial means at its disposal. He acknowledged the benefits of the recently introduced decentralization of the electoral process. In his view the SET is a body that is both independent and respected by all.

Although he did not expect irregularities on election day, Mr. Castañeda raised the question of the falsification of the identification cards (*cédulas de vecindad*) needed to exercise the right to vote. According to him, there are isolated cases in which mayors have issued false identification cards in order to promote their own re-election. However, he maintained that that would have no effect on the conduct of the vote, since electors have to be marked on the index finger with indelible ink, thus preventing them from voting more than once.

Finally, he deemed it necessary for the President of the Republic to be able to be re-elected to a second term, something the current act forbids, since he considers four years in the presidency to be too little to allow the implementation of significant reforms.

B) Civil society organizations

Mr. Aparicio Pérez, Coordinator of the National Coordination of Peasant Organizations (*Coordinadora Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas* - CNOC), accompanied by Mr. Carlos Morales, Mr. Moises Guzman, and Mr. Rafael Gonzalez – Wednesday, September 5, 2007, at 10,30 a.m.

The representatives of CNOC were very concerned by the course of the electoral campaign. In particular, they cited the following problems:

- bias in the treatment of information by the media;
- violence directed against the candidates and the political parties;
- the presence of organized crime in the campaign.

They also raised various possibilities regarding fraud or electoral irregularities:

- vote-buying;
- deliberate power outages to hinder the operations;
- the falsification of identification cards (*cédulas de vecindad*).

Moreover, on the question of the falsification of identification cards, which was being done by some provincial mayors in the hope of fostering their own re-election, CNOC filed a complaint with the Supreme Electoral Tribunal.³

Finally, they indicated that not all political parties had identified the source of their electoral financing, as is required by law.

Mr. José Dávila and Mr. Julio Curruchiche, representatives of Mirador Electoral – Wednesday, September 5, 2007, at 2.00 p.m.

Mirador is a civil-society organization made up of five member associations.⁴ It was participating in the Guatemalan electoral process for the second time as a national observer.

Mirador has observed the conduct of the electoral and political authorities, the political parties, their speeches, their programs, and the violence that besets the country as well as the communications media for one year.

According to their observations, in comparison with the 2003 elections the journalistic coverage has been more balanced. However, they noted that the information was concentrated only on

³ The majority of the complaints received by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (SET) concern the falsification of identification cards. As of September 11, 2007, of the 31 complaints forwarded by the SET to the Public Ministry (*Ministerio Público*) 29 were still under investigation.

⁴ Acción Ciudadana (AC), Centro de Estudios de la Cultura Maya (CECMA), Asociación Desarrollo, Organización, Servicios y Estudios Socioculturales (DOSES), Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO), and Instituto Centroamericano de Estudios Políticos (NCEP).

the first five presidential candidates who were leading in the polls. The nine other parties received very little media coverage.

The 2007 election campaign was also characterized by a high level of violence. They reported that the number of assassinations reached 43, whereas in 2003 there had been 29.

The group indicated that it regretted not having received authorization from the Supreme Electoral Tribunal to do an audit of the electoral list.

Although the reform of the election act has put into place the beginnings of oversight over the financing of political parties and electoral expenses, Mirador nonetheless observed that the allowable expenditure limit, US\$6,000,000, was not observed by the main political parties leading in the polls and that certain parties also failed to respect the obligation to divulge the source of their financing. They deplored the fact that the penalties for infractions to the election act are very minor or even nonexistent. According to them, more rigorous oversight over party financing is fundamental in order to prevent, for example, the use of funds from drug trafficking to finance political parties.

Finally, they noted that although the participation of aboriginals was high during the vote, it remains low in respect of their participation in the electoral process as such. Thus, during the present election campaign Mirador also worked on behalf of aboriginals along the following three axes :

- promoting the inclusion in the campaign of issues important to aboriginals, such as education and health;
- increasing the participation of aboriginals as candidates (30% of the candidates are aboriginals, whereas they represent nearly 70% of the population);
- overseeing the creation of the Departmental Electoral Commissions (*Juntas electorales departamentales*), since it is important for aboriginals to belong to them.

Mr. Carlos Mancilla, representative of the Guatemala Confederation of Trade Union Unity (*Confederación de Unidad Sindical de Guatemala - CUSG*), accompanied by Mr. Guillermo Gamboa, Mr. Moise Pérez, and Mr. Oliverto Hernandez – Thursday, September 6, 2007, at 11.00 a.m.

The representatives of the CUSG cited a variety of elements, worrisome in their opinion, that characterized the 2007 elections. They deplored:

- that no penalty has been imposed on political parties that began their election campaign well before the date prescribed by law;
- that the election campaign had been punctuated by considerable defamatory advertising;
- that five presidential candidates were not invited to the presidential debate and that a number of fundamental issues were not broached on that occasion;

- that the campaign was marked by a high level of violence and, in particular, by the assassination of several candidates;
- that the reliability of the electoral list was called into question, because the names of several deceased persons, among others, were found on it.

As well, they were concerned about the possibility that groups of individuals might invade the polling stations at the close of election day to destroy the ballots.

They also raised the question of the falsification of identification cards (*cédulas de vecindad*) in certain municipalities, which could favour the re-election of the authorities in place, and accused the Supreme Electoral Tribunal of not enforcing the election act.

Finally, they suggested that Guatemalans in general had little confidence in the political class, which represents them and governs the country.

Mr. Pedro Trujillo, Director of the Institute for Political Studies and International Relations (*Instituto de Estudios Políticos y Relaciones internacionales*) at Francisco Marroquín University (*Universidad Francisco Marroquín*), accompanied by Mr. David Amador and Mr. Christian Alvarez – Thursday, September 6, 2007, at 2.00 p.m.

According to this skilled researcher, the high number of undecided electors in the polls a few days before the elections can be explained by the similarity in the government programs advanced by the political parties, particularly with respect to matters of justice, security, education, and health.

He noted that citizens are quite dissatisfied with the political class at the moment. In Mr. Trujillo's opinion, this dissatisfaction is related, among other things, to the high rate of corruption and inefficiency in the public service. The latter lacks continuity, he stressed, since it is replaced every four years after each election. However, Mr. Trujillo indicated that the Supreme Electoral Tribunal retained a relatively high level of confidence with the population.

The academic is also of the opinion that the Supreme Electoral Tribunal will have to meet a number of challenges during the coming years, in particular that of identification cards (*cédulas de vecindad*), which are issued locally by the municipalities. He maintained that this document is easy to forge and that that seems to favour the re-election of the mayors already in place. Mr. Trujillo also indicated that oversight over election expenditures remains another major challenge that the Supreme Electoral Tribunal must take up.

Mr. Trujillo returned to the recent reform of the election act and recalled that it had considerably increased the number of polling stations, which rose from 8,885 in 2003 to 13,756 in 2007. As a result, the number of logistical problems that the Supreme Electoral Tribunal has had to face on election day has increased. However, according to the academic, if there were a risk of fraud, it would have been committed before election day.

With regard to problems relating to violence, Mr. Trujillo maintained that there were no more crimes than previously. In his view, the political parties or even the communications media have exaggerated and sought to politicize the violence.

Finally, regarding the work of the media, Mr. Trujillo noted that they take part in the governance of the State more than they criticize it.

Mr. César A. Estrada Diéguez, President of the Chamber of Commerce and Services (*Cámara Empresarial de Comercio y Servicios*), accompanied by representatives of his organization – Thursday, September 6, 2007, at 7.00 p.m.

Mr. Estrada indicated that the 2007 election campaign had not been marked by the important confrontations that had characterized previous campaigns. In fact, he is of the opinion that the political climate which prevailed in Guatemala during the 2007 campaign was very similar to that of the other countries of Latin America.

He described the election campaign by pointing out that there had been friction among the various political parties but that citizens had followed the course of the campaign peacefully. Concerning the violence that had taken place, Mr. Estrada suggested that it was not entirely related to the electoral context.

Generally speaking, he stated that he was not worried about the operations on election day, although there might be problems related to violence in certain departments of the country.

According to him, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal has done a professional, transparent, and efficient job.

Favouring the development of a true democracy in Guatemala, he stressed that entrepreneurs do not wish to be subject to arbitrary rule. Regarding the role of entrepreneurs in the current election campaign, Mr. Estrada stated that there had been no interference on their part. However, he rejected the interference of traffickers in illegal drugs, who, according to him, finance Guatemalan candidates and political parties, as they do elsewhere in Latin America.

Mr. José Alberto Flores, Chair of the Guatemala Human Rights Commission (*Comisión de Derechos Humanos de Guatemala - CDHG*), accompanied by Mr. Miguel Sucuqui – Friday, September 7, 2007, at 9.00 a.m.

Regarding the 2007 election campaign, Mr. Flores made the following observations:

- citizens have little confidence in the processes for obtaining an identification card (*cédula de vecindad*) and registering for the electoral list;
- journalistic coverage of the election campaign was adequate;
- the Supreme Electoral Tribunal has demonstrated certain organizational weaknesses with regard to its ability to enforce the election act;
- all political parties were affected by the violence that is rampant in the country.

For election day Mr. Flores was worried about the transportation of the ballots and the consequences of the falsification of the identification cards in certain municipalities.

In his view, police forces will be responsible for maintaining order and security, especially in the western region of the country.

Ms. Ileana Alamilla, Director of the Guatemala News Centre (*Centro de reportes informativos de Guatemala*) – Friday, September 7, 2007, at 11.00 a.m.

According to Ms Alamilla, although election day might be marked by certain irregularities, in particular the falsification of identification cards, the burning of urns, and risks related to power outages, the election results will be reliable.

However, she deplored the fact that the Guatemalan election act remains weak and blamed the authorities for not having adopted reforms to consolidate the democratic process. Ms. Alamilla cited as an example the period during which elections are held in Guatemala, the month of September, right in the rainy season. According to her, if a hurricane hit during this period, it could cause serious problems.

She also criticized the Supreme Electoral Tribunal for not having enforced the election act with political parties that are breaching it. She is of the view that the Tribunal continues to be marked by a lack of authority and by internal problems.

Ms. Alamilla recalled the violence and insecurity that beset the country, and not only during electoral periods. Thus, there are, on average, nearly 16 murders per day, only 5% of which are solved. According to her, nothing has been done to tackle the problems of organized crime and narcotics trafficking.

Finally, she stated that the journalistic coverage of the election campaign had been more balanced than in the past.

Mr. Victor Hugo Herrera, Executive Secretary of the Guatemalan Federation of Radio Schools (*Federación Guatemalteca de Escuelas Radiofónicas*), accompanied, in particular, by Mr. Hector Samayoa, Mr. Manuel Rerando Pablo, Mr. Juan Pablo Juc Quib, Mr. Donaldo Arevalo, Mr. Carlos Siefeld, and Ms. Maria Angelica – Friday, September 7, 2007, at 2.00 p.m.

The representatives of this organization noted in turn the falsification of identification cards, in particular those issued in the name of deceased persons. Although the Constitutional Court ruled on the possibility that the September 9 ballot could be suspended on that account, the reaction of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal was to continue the electoral process, they stressed.

With respect to the operations on election day, they were concerned about the campaigns of defamation that had taken place, about the possible re-election of certain mayors, which could incite discontent among the population, about vote-buying, as well as about the use of fake identification cards.

Mr. Hugo Garrido, Executive Secretary of the Guatemala Conference of Evangelical Churches (*Conferencia de Iglesias Evangélicas de Guatemala*), accompanied by Mr. Santiago Teleguario and Mr. Domingo Chali – Saturday, September 8, 2007, at 12.00 noon.

Mr. Garrido noted the increase in political and social violence in Guatemala in recent years and stressed that although the country is not in conflict, approximately 15 murders take place each day. He considers the situation to be critical.

He also reported that many Guatemalans are offered the opportunity to sell their vote. In a country where there is so much need, he found it understandable that some citizens would agree to do so.

The representatives of the evangelical churches criticized the limited presence of women and aboriginals within the political parties.

Mr. Garrido expressed no fear regarding the conduct of operations on election day. However, he stressed that threats could be made in the days following the election, in particular from persons who did not accept its results.

In his opinion, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal is fairly credible to the population of Guatemala, the work it has done for these elections has been transparent, and everything is in place to carry off election day successfully.

Mr. Miguel Ángel Albizures, representative of the *Movimiento Nacional por los Derechos Humanos (MNDH)* – Saturday, September 8, 2007, at 2.00 p.m.

Mr. Albizures mentioned three factors that had an impact on the 2007 election campaign: the interference of the military, of the economically powerful, and of organized crime within the political parties.

He recalled that the election campaign was characterized by extreme violence, in particular several political assassinations, and that it is impossible to evaluate how many candidates had withdrawn from the campaign out of fear of becoming victims of this violence.

According to him, the presence of international observers remains important, particularly on election day.

The media coverage of the campaign was very considerable, but he regretted that the press was concentrated in the hands of the economically powerful. However, he mentioned that the Supreme Electoral Tribunal had established a limit on the advertising expenditures of the political parties in the media and that the latter had been obliged to provide free advertising space to each candidate.

In his opinion, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal has, historically, played a very important role and is one of the public bodies most respected by the population.

6. MISSION ACTIVITIES ON ELECTION DAY

6.1 Composition and deployment of the COPA observation teams

On election day, the mission members divided into five teams of observers.

- 1) The first team, made up of representatives of Québec and Surinam, that is to say Mr. **Jean-François Roux**, mission leader, Ms **Sylvia Kajoeramari**, Mr. **Jacques Paquet** and Ms **Francine Barry**, observed the voting operations in 25 polling stations in the zones 5, 10, 13, 14, 15 and 16 of Guatemala City and in the city of Santa Catarina Pinula.

Geo-electoral code	Name of voting centre	City/district	No. of polling station	Arrival time	Departure time
01-01-057	Club Los Arcos	Guatemala/Zone 14	628	6:35 am	7:25 am
01-01-059	Escuela Oficial Urbana Mixta Eduardo Cáceres	Guatemala/Zone 14	631	7:35 am	7:57 am
01-01-059	Escuela Oficial Urbana Mixta Eduardo Cáceres Lenhof	Guatemala/Zone 14	1547 not updated	7:59 am	8:05 am
01-02-001	Colegio Parroquial	Santa Catarina Pinula	1670	8:15 am	8:45 am
01-02-001	Escuela Oficial Urbana Mixta N° 810	Santa Catarina Pinula	1659	8:47 am	9:01 am
Not codified	Colegio Mixto La Imaculada	Santa Catarina Pinula	1718 not updated	9:07 am	9:25 am
01-01-057	Colegio de Varones Santander	Guatemala/Zone 14	623	9:25 am	9:50 am
Not codified	Escuela Republica de Bolivia	Guatemala/Zone 13	1216 not updated	10:25 am	10:37 am
01-01-054 et 055	Escuela Normal Central para Varones	Guatemala/Zone 13	594	10:45 am	10:55 am
01-01-054 et 055	Escuela Normal Central para Varones	Guatemala/Zone 13	596	10:56 am	11:07 am
01-01-056 et 058	Instituto Tecnico Vocacional Dr. Imrich Fischmann	Guatemala/Zone 13	605	11:15 am	11:35 am
Not codified	Instituto América Latina	Guatemala/Zone 13	1414 not updated	12:00 pm	12:15 pm
01-01-061 et 062	Colégio Bilingüe Vista Hermosa	Guatemala/Zone 15	663	2:05 pm	2:15 pm
01-01-061 et 062	Colegio Bilingüe Vista Hermosa	Guatemala/Zone 15	666	2:15 pm	2:25 pm
01-01-063	Campus Central Universidad Rafael Landivar	Guatemala/Zone 16	672	2:35 pm	2:45 pm
01-01-063	Campus Central Universidad Rafael Landivar	Guatemala/Zone 16	1631 not updated	14:48 pm	3:00 pm
01-01-063	Campus Central Universidad Rafael Landivar	Guatemala/Zone 16	1645 not updated	3:02 pm	3:20 pm
Not codified	Escuela Normal de Maestras para Párulos Dr. Alfredo Carrillo Ramírez	Guatemala/Zone 15	1446 not updated	3:35 pm	3:45 pm
Not codified	Escuela Normal de Maestras para Párulos Dr. Alfredo Carrillo Ramírez	Guatemala/Zone 15	1454 not updated	3:50 pm	4:05 pm
01-01-060	Colegio Valle Verde	Guatemala/Zone 15	647	4:10 pm	4:20 pm
01-01-060	Colegio Valle Verde	Guatemala/Zone 15	654	4:20 pm	4:30 pm
01-01-016 and 042	Liceo Guatemala Secundaria	Guatemala/Zone 5	156	4:40 pm	4:50 pm
01-01-016 and 042	Liceo Guatemala Secundaria	Guatemala/Zone 5	160	4:50 pm	5:00 pm

Geo-electoral code	Name of voting centre	City/district	No. of polling station	Arrival time	Departure time
01-01-044	Escuela Oficial de Niñas N° 20 José Antonio Salazar	Guatemala/Zone 10	470	5:45 pm	8:30 pm

- 2) The second team, made up of representatives of Venezuela and Mexico, that is to say Ms **Jhannett Madriz Sotillo** and Ms **Norka Maria Cristina Lopez Zamarripa**, observed the voting operations in 11 polling stations in the zones 5, 10, 11, 12 and 15 of Guatemala City.

Geo-electoral code	Name of voting centre	City/district	No. of polling station	Arrival time	Departure time
01-01-018	Instituto Experimental Dr. José Matos Pacheco	Guatemala/Zone 5	174	7:00 am	8:00 am
01-01-060	Colegio Valle Verde	Guatemala/Zone 15	645	8:00 am	8:15 am
01-01-053	USAC-EFPEM	Guatemala/Zone 12	583	12:00 pm	12:10 pm
01-01-051	Instituto experimental Carlos Martínez Duran	Guatemala/Zone 12	544	12:30 pm	12:45 pm
01-01050	Instituto Técnico Mixto Privado Marco Pólo	Guatemala/Zone 12	536	12:55 pm	1:05 pm
Not codified	Centro Recreativo del Sindicato de Trabajadores de Finanzas	Guatemala/Zone 12	1273 not updated	1:10 pm	1:20 pm
01-01-053	Colegio Franciscano 12 de Octubre Sección Niños	Guatemala/Zone 12	571	1:35 pm	1:40 pm
01-01-053	Colegio Franciscano 12 de Octubre Sección Niños	Guatemala/Zone 12	559	1:40 pm	1:50 pm
01-01-046	Colégio Italiano	Guatemala/Zone 11	504	2:00 pm	2:10 pm
01-01-045	Escuela Oficial Mixta Republica de Colombia	Guatemala/Zone 11	471	2:15 pm	2:25 pm
01-01-043	Colegio Parroquial Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe	Guatemala/Zone 10	459	5:55 pm	8:00 pm

- 3) The third team, made up of representatives of Surinam, Mexico and Venezuela, that is to say Mr. **August K. Bado**, Ms. **Rebeca Parada Ortega** and Ms. **Iris Varela**, observed the voting operations in 21 polling stations in the zones 1, 2 and 10 of Guatemala City. A grid has been completed for 20 of the 21 polling stations that were visited.

Geo-electoral code	Name of voting centre	City/district	No. of polling station	Arrival time	Departure time
01-01-004, 005 et 006	Instituto Central Normal para Señoritas (Belen)	Guatemala/Zone 1	963 not updated	7:00 am	9:00 am
01-01-004, 005 et 006	Instituto Central Normal para Señoritas (Belen)	Guatemala/Zone 1	972 not updated	7:00 am	9:00 am
01-01-000 et 001	Instituto Rafael Aqueche	Guatemala/Zone 1	2	9:00 am	9:25 am
01-01-000 et 001	Instituto Rafael Aqueche	Guatemala/Zone 1	1554 not updated	9:00 am	9:25 am
01-01-000 et 001	Instituto Rafael Aqueche	Guatemala/Zone 1	1	9:00 am	9:25 am
01-01-007 et 012	Instituto Normal Centroamericano para Señoritas (INCA)	Guatemala/Zone 1	71	9:45 am	10:10 am
01-01-009	Instituto para Varones Adrian Zapata	Guatemala/Zone 2	92	10:20 am	10:45 am
01-01-009	Instituto para Varones Adrian Zapata	Guatemala/Zone 2	95	10:20 am	10:45 am
01-01-010 et 011	Colegio La Patria	Guatemala/Zone 2	109	11:05 am	11:15 am
01-01-010 et 011	Colegio La Patria	Guatemala/Zone 2	113	11:05 am	11:15 am
01-01-010 et 011	Colegio La Patria	Guatemala/Zone 2	110	11:05 am	11:15 am
Not codified	Centro Educativo Rotario Benito Juárez	Guatemala/Zone 2	1519 not updated	11:35 am	11:50 am
Not codified	Centro Educativo Rotario Benito Juárez	Guatemala/Zone 2	1519 not updated	11:35 am	11:50 am
Not codified	Centro Educativo Rotario Benito Juárez	Guatemala/Zone 2	1524 not updated	11:40 am	11:50 am
01-01-009	Escuela Oficial Urbana Mixta Laboratorio N° 1 Raymond Rignal	Guatemala/Zone 2	105	12:00 pm	12:20 pm
01-01-009	Escuela Oficial Urbana Mixta Laboratorio N° 1 Raymond Rignal	Guatemala/Zone 2	104	12:00 pm	12:20 pm
Not codified	Instituto Victor Manuel de la Roca	Guatemala/Zone 1	1584 not updated	12:25 pm	12:35 pm
01-01-002	Parqueo Parque Central Ala Sur	Guatemala/Zone 1	17	1:00 pm	1:10 pm
01-01-002	Parqueo Concordia	Guatemala/Zone 1	34	11:35 pm	1:45 pm

Geo-electoral code	Name of voting centre	City/district	No. of polling station	Arrival time	Departure time
Non codé	Escuela Oficial Urbana de Niñas N° 3 Dolores Bedoya de Molina	Guatemala/Zone 1	1427 not updated	1:43 pm	1:48 pm
01-01-044	Escuela Oficial de Niñas N° 20 José Antonio Salazar	Guatemala/Zone 10	NA	6:00 pm	9:00 pm

- 4) The fourth team, composed of representatives of Mexico and Surinam, that is to say Mr. **Martín Carlos Olavarrieta** and Ms. **Marcia I. S. Burleson**, observed the voting operations in 10 polling stations in the zones 7 and 10 of Guatemala City as well as in the departments of Chimaltenango and Sacatepequez, notably in the city of Antigua Guatemala. Observation was carried out for each voting centre visited in its entirety and not for each polling station.

Geo-electoral code	Name of voting centre	City/district	Type of voting centre	Arrival time	Departure time
01-01-037	Carlos Federico Mora Instituto Experimental	Guatemala/Zone 7	Mixed	6:45 am	7:40 am
Non codé	Escuela Rafael Rosales	Jocotenango	Not updated	8:40 am	9:10 am
03-01-006	CEM Aldea Santa Isabel	Chimaltenango	Updated	9:40 am	10:00 am
Not codified	Gimnasio de la CDAG	Antigua Guatemala	Not updated	10:10 am	10:35 am
Not codified	Club de Leones	Antigua Guatemala	Not updated	10:40 am	11:30 am
Not codified	Convento La Merced	Antigua Guatemala	Not updated	11:45 am	12:00 pm
02-01-000 et 001	Convento de Capuchinas	Antigua Guatemala	Updated	12:10 pm	12:35 pm
Not codified	Escuela Luis Mena	Antigua Guatemala	Not updated	12:45 pm	1:05 pm
02-01-000 et 001	Colegio La Salle	Antigua Guatemala	Updated	1:10 pm	2:15 pm
01-01-043	Escuela Nacional para Varones	Guatemala/Zone 10	Updated	6:10 pm	9:00 pm

- 5) Finally, the fifth team, composed of representatives of Mexico and Surinam, that is to say Ms. **María Isabel Nava Cruz**, Mr. **Ramé J. Amatsoerdi** and Mr. **Hector Martinez**, observed the voting operations in 12 polling stations in the zones 7 and 10 of Guatemala City. The times of arrival at and departure from the polling stations were not provided by the team members. Observation was carried out for each voting centre visited in its entirety and not for each polling station.

Geo-electoral code	Name of voting centre	City/district	Type of voting centre	Arrival time	Departure time
01-01-036	Intecap Zona 7	Guatemala/Zone 7	Updated	NA	NA
01-01-036	Salón de Usos Múltiples del Comité Pronavidad del Niño	Guatemala/Zone 7	Updated	NA	NA
01-01-038	Salón Parroquial San Pablo Apóstol	Guatemala/Zone 7	Updated	NA	NA
Not codified	Escuela Parvulos Tulio Bucaro	Guatemala/Zone 7	Not updated	NA	NA
01-01-036	Hangar Colonia Centroamérica	Guatemala/Zone 7	Updated	NA	NA
Not codified	Escuela Nacional David Vela	Guatemala/Zone 7	Not updated	NA	NA
Not codified	Colegio Maria de Fátima	Guatemala/Zone 7	Not updated	NA	NA
01-01-037	Carlos Federico Mora Instituto Experimental	Guatemala/Zone 7	Mixed	NA	NA
01-01-040	Colegio Mesoamericano	Guatemala/Zone 7	Mixed	NA	NA
01-01-037	Sotano Centro Comercial Gran Vía	Guatemala/Zone 7	Mixed	NA	NA
01-01-034	Parque La Democracia	Guatemala/Zone 7	Updated	NA	NA
01-01-044	Escuela Oficial de Niñas N° 20 José Antonio Salazar	Guatemala/Zone 10	Mixed	17 h 45	21 h 30

6.2 Aspects observed

To help them perform their work as observers, the parliamentarians had received an electoral observation grid prepared by the secretariat of the COPA Committee on Democracy and Peace. This grid, which is in Appendix IV and of which a copy was completed at most of the polling stations visited, is divided into eight parts and is based on the provisions of the Nicaraguan Electoral Code. The grid covers the following areas of the electoral process:

- 1) General information on the observer and the polling station
- 2) The polling station
- 3) Election materials
- 4) Voters
- 5) Complaints
- 6) Other observations
- 7) Vote counting
- 8) Overall assessment

To collect this information, the observers mainly talked to polling station presiding officers.

The five teams of observers also sought to obtain a relatively representative sample of voting practices by visiting polling stations in a cross-section of neighbourhoods. Hence, in the capital region, Guatemala City, and in the departments of Chimaltenango and Sacatepequez, they visited polling stations located in working class, middle-class and more well-to-do neighbourhoods.

7. COPA MISSION FINDINGS

Here are the main findings, which are illustrated with the help of the five tables included in the observation grid provided to COPA delegation members. The tables cover the following aspects: **1) the polling stations; 2) election materials (2 tables); 3) complaints; and 4) general observations.** A fifth aspect—the vote count—is not illustrated by a table. A grid was completed for 77 of the 78 polling stations visited. The compiled results are as follows:⁵

7.1 The polling stations

At the majority of the polling stations observed, electors began voting at 7.00 a.m. as prescribed by law. Only two delays are to be noted:

- in a polling station at the non-actualized voting centre *Club de Leones* in Antigua Guatemala electors began to exercise their right to vote at 7.20 a.m., because the station members had decided to recount the ballots;
- for reasons relating to a lack of coordination Polling Station No. 963, located at the *l'Instituto Central Normal para Señoritas* (Belen) in Zone 1 of Guatemala City, opened its doors at 7.10 a.m.

	YES	NO	+ or -
Suitable polling station site and setup	70	0	7
Polling station is complete	77	0	0
Presence of security forces	71	6	0
Presence of candidate/party representatives	75	2	0
Presence of election advertising on site	1	76	0
Acts of voter intimidation	0	77	0

The physical organization of certain polling stations was unusual in that electors often found themselves cramped. However, that seemed to be the customary practice, and electors did not complain.

The members of the second observer team reported the presence of negative electoral advertising aimed at the presidential candidate Alvaro Colom of the UNE inside the voting centre located at the *l'Instituto Experimental Dr. José Matos Pacheco* (Guatemala/Zone 15).

⁵ These results are but a reflection of the observations made by the members of the COPA delegation.

All observer teams noted the presence of many volunteers stationed, in particular, at the entryways to voting centres, whose task was to assist electors. Nevertheless, in certain locations the members of the COPA delegation noted long waiting lines in front of the tables of those who were responsible for directing electors.

7.2 Election materials

In general the election materials were provided in sufficient quantities and were in conformity with the prescribed standards.

	YES	NO	+ or -	No answer
Properly sealed ballot boxes	75	1	0	1
Voting booths ensuring voter secrecy	72	1	3	1
Voters list	76	0	0	1
Ballots in sufficient quantity	64	12	0	1

It must be added that at certain polling stations the number of ballots given to those responsible was slightly below or above the number prescribed by law. However, that caused no difficulty in the polling stations observed by the members of the delegation.

The physical organization of some polling stations could call into question the secrecy of the vote. Thus, in Polling Station No. 1645, located on the *Universidad Rafael Landivar Central Campus* (Guatemala/Zone 16), the voting booth was not placed in such a way as to guarantee the secrecy of the vote.

	Very good	Good	Poor	Very poor	No answer
Election materials	38	35	1	0	3
Work of polling station officials	39	33	1	0	4
Work of the <i>aguacil</i> (officer)	32	34	3	2	6

In general the work of the polling station members and of the *aguacil* was exemplary. However, it may be noted, for example, that at Polling Station No. 631, located at the *Escuela Oficial Urbana Mixta Eduardo Cáceres* (Guatemala/Zone 14), the members' work seemed a bit disorganized and caused delays for the electors.

7.3 Complaints

In general very few complaints were lodged by party representatives, candidates, or citizens.

	YES	NO	No answer
Complaints by party or candidate representatives	5	65	7
Complaints by voters	1	70	6

Nonetheless, some electors complained to COPA observers about the waiting times – more than 20 minutes in the case of Polling Station No. 631 at the *Escuela Oficial Urbana Mixta Eduardo Cáceres* Voting Centre (Guatemala/Zone 14)

At Polling Station No. 2 at the *Instituto Rafael Aqueche* (Guatemala/Zone 1) electors complained of not having been informed of the number of the voting table to which they had been assigned. They were referred to the Supreme Electoral Tribunal's mobile information centre.

At the *Parqueo Parque Central Ala Sur* Voting Centre (Guatemala/Zone 1), Polling Station No. 17, the representatives of the political parties complained that ballots were lacking to permit them to vote.

Finally, at the *Instituto Normal Centroamericano para Señoritas INCA* Voting Centre (Guatemala/Zone 1), Polling Station No. 71, the representative of the UNE Party requested the presence of a notary to officially record the fact that index fingers were not being marked with indelible ink.

7.4 General observations

In general the provisions of the Electoral Code were observed with regard to the following matters of observation:

	YES	NO	No answer
Respect for ballot secrecy	75	1	1
Presence of more than one voter in the voting booth	5	71	1
Electoral staff compliance with procedures	76	0	1
Voter understanding of procedures	75	1	1
Presence of unauthorized persons in the polling station	0	75	2
Visit by national observers	57	15	5
Visit by other international observers	55	16	6
Orderly conduct of voting	73	2	2
Interruption in voting during the day	0	72	5

The first team of observers reported two irregularities: (i) a legislative candidate held a political meeting on the voting premises of the *Liceo Guatemala Secundaria* (Guatemala/Zone 5) during their visit; (ii) an elector was assisted in the voting booth by a representative of a party at Voting Table No. 1414 at the *Instituto América Latina* (Guatemala/Zone 13).

As well, this same team reported that an elector at Polling Station No. 1718 at the *Colegio Mixto La Imaculada* de Santa Catarina Pinula did not sign the electoral list at the correct place after having voted.

The president of Polling Station No. 536 at the *Instituto Técnico Mixto Privado Marco Pólo* Voting Centre (Guatemala/Zone 12) did not wish to cooperate with the members of the second COPA observer team or to answer their questions during their visit.

Finally, it should be noted that there were no interruptions in voting at the polling places observed.

7.5 Vote count

The COPA observers witnessed the counting of the votes at the *Escuela Oficial de Niñas N° 20 José Antonio Salazar*, *Colegio Parroquial Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*, and *Escuela Nacional para Varones* voting centres. The three voting centres were located in Zone 10 of Guatemala City. The vote count took place in a calm and serious manner, was done transparently, and in conformity with the provisions of the election act.

8. MISSION CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

At the end of its mission the COPA delegation drafted and published a press release to announce the preliminary conclusions from its observations (Appendix VI).

Thus, apart from the few minor irregularities reported above, the members noted that the election procedure had been followed and that the vote had taken place in an orderly manner. Furthermore, they were impressed by the enthusiasm and the sense of civic duty that citizens demonstrated during this important election.

The members of the mission also wish to stress the rigour displayed by the election personnel and the representatives of the political parties in the performance of their tasks. They further noted the participation of many young people as election workers.

During their meetings with representatives of institutions and organizations involved in the electoral process, as mentioned in Part 5.2 of this report, the members of the delegation were informed of an important preoccupation regarding the falsification, by certain municipalities, of identification cards (*cédulas de vecindad*), which are necessary to exercise the right to vote. On this subject the Guatemalan electoral authorities publicly acknowledged the existence of an undetermined number of duplicate identification cards in the registers of electors in several municipalities. Moreover, the majority of the official complaints forwarded to the Supreme Electoral Tribunal concern the falsification of these identification cards. The Tribunal nevertheless attributed the responsibility for the issuance of these falsified cards to the system of the municipal register of residents.

It is also impossible to ignore and to fail to condemn the violence and intimidation that marked the 2007 electoral campaign, creating victims – up to fifty deaths, according to some – among candidates, political party workers, and their families. This aspect of the campaign was widely noted by the communications media and vehemently denounced by the overwhelming majority of those with whom the delegation met.

Thus, the COPA delegation wishes to make the competent Guatemalan authorities aware of these concerns, and it recommends in this regard that they:

- ensure the reliability and the transparency of the process by which identification cards (*cédulas de vecindad*) are issued in order to eliminate the doubts that persist about them, by contemplating, for example, the issuance of a national card;
- take steps to have justice done for the victims of crimes of a political nature committed during the campaign, and to put appropriate measures in place so that the electoral process will not again be punctuated by such violence.

The members of the delegation also wish to recall that the great majority of those they met during working meetings reported that the Supreme Electoral Tribunal had not been fully able to enforce certain provisions of the election act, in particular those that require political parties to divulge the source of their private financing, or to enforce the date of the opening of the election campaign. During their stay in Guatemala the members of the COPA delegation were unable to meet representatives of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal in order to confirm these allegations. However, an examination of the “Election Law and of Political Parties” makes it possible to ascertain that the Supreme Electoral Tribunal has little power to punish any violations that may occur.

Finally, the members of the COPA delegation wish to stress the warm and cordial reception they were given by the various Guatemalans they met during working meetings before election day as well as by the citizens and election workers when they visited the polling stations.

9. APPENDICES

Appendix I – Letter of interest from the president of COPA



**SENADOR CARLOS JIMÉNEZ MACÍAS
PRESIDENTE**



CONFEDERACIÓN PARLAMENTARIA
DE LAS AMÉRICAS
PARLIAMENTARY CONFEDERATION
OF THE AMERICAS
CONFEDERAÇÃO PARLAMENTAR
DAS AMÉRICAS
CONFÉDÉRATION PARLEMENTAIRE
DES AMÉRIQUES

Senado de la República Mexicana a 27 junio de 2007

**Señor Oscar Edmundo Bolaños Parada
Presidente del Tribunal Supremo Electoral
Tribunal Supremo Electoral
Oficinas Centrales
6a. Avenida 0-32 Zona 2
Ciudad de Guatemala
GUATEMALA**

Objeto: Elecciones presidenciales y legislativas del 9 de septiembre de 2007

De mi mayor consideración:

Como usted sabe, la Confederación Parlamentaria de las Américas (COPA), fundada en 1997, es una organización interparlamentaria que reúne los congresos y las asambleas parlamentarias de los Estados unitarios, federales, federados y asociados, los parlamentos regionales y las organizaciones interparlamentarias de las Américas. Su principal objetivo es contribuir al fortalecimiento de la democracia parlamentaria y la edificación de una comunidad de las Américas basada en el respeto de la dignidad y los derechos humanos, la paz, la democracia, la solidaridad entre los pueblos, la justicia social y la equidad entre los sexos.

Para lograr alcanzar este objetivo, en su Asamblea General, celebrada en Foz do Iguaçu, Brasil, en mayo de 2005, nuestra organización expresó el deseo de participar de manera activa en materia de observación electoral en la escena internacional al adoptar el "Reglamento sobre las Misiones de Observación Electoral de la COPA". Desde entonces, como usted sabe, la Comisión de Democracia y Paz ha implementado la realización de cuatro misiones de observación de elecciones, tanto en Bolivia (diciembre de 2005) como en México (julio de 2006), Brasil (octubre de 2006) y en Nicaragua (noviembre de 2006).

Presidencia Av. Congreso de la Unión #66 C.P.15969, México,
D.F. Edificio D 2do. Nivel

Senado de la República Paseo de la Reforma #10 CP 06030,
Torre del Caballito, Piso 15

Teléfonos: (52) 55 57 16 82 53
55 53 45 30 72
01 800 718 42 91 ext. 8253 fax: 1257
E-mail: cjimenezmacias@senado.gob.mx



**SENADOR CARLOS JIMÉNEZ MACÍAS
PRESIDENTE**



CONFEDERACIÓN PARLAMENTARIA
DE LAS AMÉRICAS
PARLIAMENTARY CONFEDERATION
OF THE AMERICAS
CONFEDERAÇÃO PARLAMENTAR
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En el marco de la implementación del programa de misiones de observación electoral, el Comité Ejecutivo de nuestra organización, en su última reunión celebrada en Los Ángeles del 22 al 24 de junio de 2007, adoptó una resolución, que adjuntamos a la presente, en la que se propone, si las autoridades competentes de dicho país manifiestan su deseo, "el envío de una misión de observación electoral de la COPA a las elecciones presidenciales y legislativas en Guatemala, en pleno respeto de la soberanía nacional de Guatemala".

Por la presente, como Presidente de la COPA, le informo del interés y la disponibilidad de nuestra organización para constituir una delegación de parlamentarios que podrían viajar a Guatemala, en el marco de una misión de observación electoral, con motivo de las elecciones presidenciales y legislativas del próximo 9 de septiembre. Nuestra misión se desplegaría en la Ciudad de Guatemala.

Para su información, envié recientemente una carta al señor Jorge Méndez Herbruger, Presidente de la Asamblea Nacional de su país, para informarle de la disponibilidad de nuestra organización con este fin.

Si esta proposición le place, le agradezco de antemano todas las disposiciones que tenga usted a bien adoptar con respecto a nuestra delegación, con el fin de facilitar los arreglos logísticos necesarios para la implementación de una misión de este tipo, en especial en lo relativo a la obtención de las credenciales.

Para ello, designo al señor Jacques Paquet, asesor de la Comisión de Democracia y Paz de la COPA (teléfono (1-418-644-2888) o correo electrónico (copa@assnat.qc.ca) para establecer los contactos con su organización.

Deseándole el mayor de los éxitos en la organización de estos importantes comicios, le ruego reciba mis más cordiales saludos.

CARLOS JIMÉNEZ MACÍAS
Presidente de la Confederación
Parlamentaria de las Américas (COPA)
Senador del Congreso de la Unión de
México

Se adjunta documentación: -"Reglamento sobre las Misiones de Observación Electoral de la COPA", "Resolución sobre el envío de una misión de observación electoral en Guatemala", adoptada por el Comité Ejecutivo de la COPA, durante su reunión en Los Ángeles, el 23 de junio de 2007.

Presidencia: Ave. Congreso de la Unión #66 C.P. 15909, México,
D.F. Edificio D 2do. Nivel

Senado de la República Paseo de la Reforma #10 CP 06030,
Torre del Caballito, Piso 15

Teléfonos: (52) 55 57 16 82 53
55 53 45 30 72
01 800 718 42 91 ext. 8253 fax: 1257
E-mail: cjimenezmacias@senado.gob.mx

Appendix II – Invitation letter



**SENADOR CARLOS JIMÉNEZ MACÍAS
PRESIDENTE**



CONFEDERACIÓN PARLAMENTARIA
DE LAS AMÉRICAS
PARLIAMENTARY CONFEDERATION
OF THE AMERICAS
CONFEDERAÇÃO PARLAMENTAR
DAS AMÉRICAS
CONFÉDÉRATION PARLEMENTAIRE
DES AMÉRIQUES

Senado de la República Mexicana a 3 de julio de 2007

Distinguido Miembro del Comité Ejecutivo de la COPA:

El pasado 23 de junio, en Los Ángeles, Estados Unidos, el Comité Ejecutivo de la COPA adoptó una resolución en la que se propone el envío de una misión de observación electoral a Guatemala, para las elecciones presidenciales y legislativas del 9 de septiembre de 2007, en pleno respeto de la soberanía nacional de este país. Encontrará el texto de la resolución anexo a la presente.

Con este objeto, recientemente inicié trámites ante las autoridades competentes de Guatemala para comunicarles la adopción de la resolución antes mencionada y confirmarles el interés y la disponibilidad de nuestra organización para enviar una misión de observación electoral.

Tengo entonces la responsabilidad de designar rápidamente, y basándome en el principio de una representación equitativa de las cinco regiones de la COPA y en respeto del pluralismo político, a los parlamentarios que integrarán la misión de la COPA que viajará a dicho país para observar el desarrollo de estas elecciones. Considerando la inminente celebración de los comicios, encargué a los Vicepresidentes regionales de la COPA que, desde ya, soliciten a las asambleas parlamentarias de su respectiva región propuestas de nombres de parlamentarios dispuestos para participar en dichas misiones.

Le recuerdo que, según el "Reglamento sobre Misiones de Observación Electoral de la COPA", la participación de los parlamentarios observadores está sujeta a que las asambleas parlamentarias a las que pertenecen tomen a su cargo la totalidad de los gastos de transporte y estadía. Se debe prever una estadía aproximada de cinco días en Guatemala, del 5 al 10 de septiembre de 2007.

Para toda información a este respecto, le ruego se comunique con el Sr. Jacques Paquet, asesor de la Comisión de Democracia y Paz, por teléfono al no. 1-418-644-2888 o a la dirección electrónica: copa@assnat.qc.ca.

Reciba usted, Señor Parlamentario, la expresión de mi alta consideración.

CARLOS JIMÉNEZ MACÍAS
*Presidente de la Confederación
Parlamentaria de las Américas (COPA)*

Se adjunta documentación: "Resolución sobre el envío de una misión de observación electoral en Guatemala", Adoptada por el Comité Ejecutivo de la COPA, durante su reunión en Los Ángeles, el 23 de junio de 2007.

*Presidencia Ave. Congreso de la Unión #66 CP 15940, México
D.F. Edificio D 2da. Nivel*

*Senado de la República Paseo de la Reforma #10 CP 06030
Torre del Caballito, Piso 15*

*Teléfonos: (52) 55 57 16 82 53
55 53 45 30 72
01 800 718 42 91 ext. 8253 fax: 1257
E-mail: cjimenemacias@senado.gob.mx*

Appendix III – Designation letter



Senado de la República Mexicana, 23 de agosto de 2007

***Señor Oscar Edmundo Bolaños Parada
Presidente del Tribunal Supremo Electoral
Tribunal Supremo Electoral
Oficinas Centrales
6a. Avenida 0-32 Zona 2
Ciudad de Guatemala
GUATEMALA***

Objeto: Elecciones presidenciales y legislativas del 9 de septiembre de 2007

Estimado Presidente:

En consideración a la decisión que el Tribunal Supremo Electoral de la República de Guatemala decidiera el día 25 de julio de 2007 de acreditar a los miembros de la Confederación Parlamentaria de las Américas (COPA) para que participen como observadores en las próximas elecciones generales que se desarrollarán en dicho país, para elegir Presidente, Vicepresidente, Diputados y Alcaldes el día 9 de septiembre del presente año, es un placer informarle que la misión de observación electoral de la COPA, que se llevará a cabo entre el 5 y 10 de septiembre de 2007 en la Ciudad de Guatemala, estará compuesta de las personas siguientes :

Jefe de la misión:

Sr. Jean-François Roux, Diputado de la Asamblea Nacional de Québec y Presidente de la Comisión de Democracia y Paz de la COPA

Miembros:

Sra. Edda Acuña, Senadora de la Provincia de Buenos Aires, Argentina, y Primera Vicepresidenta de la COPA

Sr. Alexandre Postal, Diputado de la Asamblea Legislativa del Estado de Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil, y Presidente de la Unión Nacional de los Legisladores Estatales (UNALE/Brasil)

Sr. Paulo Tadeo Vale, Diputado de la Cámara Legislativa del Distrito Federal, Brasil

Sra. María Guadalupe Josefina García Noriega, Diputada del H. Congreso de la Unión, México

Sra. María Victoria Gutiérrez Lagunes, Diputada del H. Congreso de la Unión, México

Sr. Eduardo Ortiz Hernandez, Diputado del H. Congreso de la Unión, México

Sr. Jesús Humberto Zazueta, Diputado del H. Congreso de la Unión, México

Sr. Leonardo Alvarez Romo, Diputado de la Asamblea Legislativa del Distrito Federal, México

Sr. Martín Carlos Olavarrieta, Diputado de la Asamblea Legislativa del Distrito Federal, México

Sra. Rebeca Parada Ortega, Diputada de la Asamblea Legislativa del Distrito Federal, México

Sr. Alejandro Ramírez Rodríguez, Diputado de la Asamblea Legislativa del Distrito Federal, México

Sr. Gerardo Rodríguez Rodríguez, Diputado del Congreso del Estado de Jalisco, México

Sra. Rosa Luna Hernández, Diputada del Congreso del Estado de Veracruz, México

Sra. María Isabel Nava, Diputada del Congreso del Estado de Veracruz, México

Sr. Luis Bigott, Diputado venezolano del Parlamento Andino

Sr. Luis Díaz, Diputado venezolano del Parlamento Andino

Sr. Yul Jabbour, Diputado venezolano del Parlamento Andino

Sra. Jhannett Madriz, Diputada venezolana del Parlamento Andino

Sr. Victor Hugo Morales, Diputado venezolano del Parlamento Andino

Sr. August K. Bado, Diputado y Jefe de la delegación de la Asamblea Nacional de Surinam

Sra. Sylvia Kajoeramari, Diputada de la Asamblea Nacional de Surinam

Sra. Ramé J. Amatsoerdi, Diputada de la Asamblea Nacional de Surinam

*Sra. **Marcia I.S. Burleson**, Secretaria General de la Asamblea Nacional de Surinam*

*Sr. **Jacques Paquet**, Asesor de la Comisión de Democracia y Paz de la COPA*

*Sra. **Francine Barry**, Asistente del Director General de Elecciones de Québec y experta en materia electoral*

*Sra. **Norka Maria Cristina Lopez**, Magistrado del Tribunal Electoral del Distrito Federal, México*

*Sr. **Orlando Goncalves**, Asesor venezolano del Parlamento Andino*

Sin más por el momento, reciba las seguridades de mi consideración más distinguida y aprecio.

Atentamente

CARLOS JIMÉNEZ MACÍAS
Presidente de la Confederación Parlamentaria de las Américas (COPA)
Senador de la República



Appendix IV – Press release, September 5, 2007

Delegation of representatives of the Americas to observe the conduct of the Guatemalan elections

Guatemala, September 5, 2007 – Parliamentarians from the **Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas** (COPA) arrived today in Guatemala to observe the presidential and legislative elections on September 9. Mr. Jean-François Roux, a member of the Québec National Assembly and chair of COPA's Democracy and Peace Committee, will head up the electoral observation mission in Guatemala from September 5 to 10. More than twenty parliamentarians from Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Surinam, and Venezuela are also taking part in this mission.

Invited by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal of Guatemala to act as observers of the electoral process, the COPA parliamentarians will cover the maximum possible number of polling stations in Guatemala's capital city, on election day. The delegation will also meet with representatives of the institutions and organizations conducting the election. Candidates, as well as the heads of political parties and civil society organizations will be among those consulted by the COPA delegation.

At the conclusion of the electoral mission a report highlighting the observations of the parliamentarians from the Americas will be tabled with COPA. It will thus be possible to peruse the observations recorded during the election. For additional information on previous COPA electoral observation missions, please visit the following website: www.copa.qc.ca.

Founded in Québec City in 1997, the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA) brings together over 300 parliamentary assemblies of unitary, federal, federated, and associated states, as well as the regional parliaments and interparliamentary organizations of the Americas. By taking an increasingly active role in election monitoring throughout the Americas, COPA has established its strategic importance in the consolidation of democracy.

Appendix V – Observer's grid



GUATEMALAN PRESIDENTIAL AND LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS September 9, 2007

ELECTION OBSERVER'S GRID

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Name of observer: _____

District: _____

Polling station: _____

Arrival time: _____

Departure time: _____

2. POLLING STATION

Opening time: _____

Reasons for delay (if any): _____

	YES	NO
Suitable polling station site and setup		
Polling station is complete		
Presence of security forces		
Presence of candidate/party representatives		
Presence of election advertising on site		
Acts of voter intimidation		

Details: _____

3. ELECTION MATERIALS

	YES	NO
Properly sealed ballot boxes		
Voting booths ensuring voter secrecy		
Voters list		
Ballots in sufficient quantity		

	Very good	Good	Poor	Very poor
Election materials				
Work of polling station officials				
Work of the <i>aguacil</i> (officer)				

Details: _____

4. VOTERS

Number of voters registered: _____

Waiting time: _____

Average time required to vote: _____

Voters without voter registration cards: _____

Voters who were not on the voters list: _____

Details: _____

5. COMPLAINTS

	YES	NO
Complaints by party or candidate representatives		
Complaints by voters		

Details: _____

6. OTHER OBSERVATIONS

	YES	NO
Respect for ballot secrecy		
Presence of more than one voter in the voting booth		
Electoral staff compliance with procedures		
Voter understanding of procedures		
Presence of unauthorized persons in the polling station		
Visit by national observers		
Visit by other international observers		
Orderly conduct of voting		
Interruption in voting during the day		

Details: _____

7. VOTE COUNT

Vote count start time: _____

Number of voters registered:: _____

Number of people who voted: _____

Invalid ballots: _____

Blank ballots: _____

Challenges by representatives: _____

Details: _____

Signature of tallies by representatives: _____

Level of security for transport of material to the District Council

Excellent ()

Average ()

Low ()

Details: _____

8. OVERALL EVALUATION

Irregularities to report: ()

Minor irregularities: () Specify

Serious irregularities capable of affecting the integrity of the electoral process: ()
Specify _____

Remarks: _____

Appendix VI – Press release, September 10, 2007

COPA ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION IN GUATEMALA

LEGISLATORS CONGRATULATE THE GUATEMALAN PEOPLE ON A WELL-RUN ELECTION DAY

Guatemala City, September 10, 2007—A delegation of ten legislators from the **Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA)** led by Mr. Jean-François Roux, chair of COPA's Democracy and Peace Committee and a member of the National Assembly of Québec, observed Guatemala's September 9, 2007, presidential and legislative elections. The COPA delegation, composed of legislators of the Legislative Assembly of the Federal District of Mexico, the Congress of the State of Veracruz (Mexico), the Andean Parliament of Venezuela, the National Assembly of Surinam and the National Assembly of Venezuela as well as five electoral advisors, noted that voting proceeded in order and in accordance with electoral rules in effect in this country.

On election day, the delegates went to the capital city of Guatemala and the department of Sacatepequez to observe election proceedings at close to seventy polling stations. Delegation members noted that election procedures were observed and voting ran smoothly. They were extremely impressed by the enthusiasm and responsible citizenship demonstrated by citizens with respect to this major election. The members of the delegation want to point out in particular the diligence of the polling officials and political party representatives in accomplishing their task. Furthermore, the observations of the delegation will be recorded in a report and made public.

In addition to observing polling stations on election day, the COPA delegation attended important meetings with political party and civil society representatives upon their arrival on September 5, to learn about the situation in the country.

This was the fifth electoral observation mission organized by COPA since it set up a regulatory framework for organizing such missions in May 2005.

Founded in Québec City in 1997, the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA) brings together over 300 parliamentary assemblies of unitary, federal, federated, and associated states, as well as the regional parliaments and interparliamentary organizations of the Americas. By taking an increasingly active role in election monitoring throughout the Americas, COPA has established its strategic importance in the consolidation of democracy.