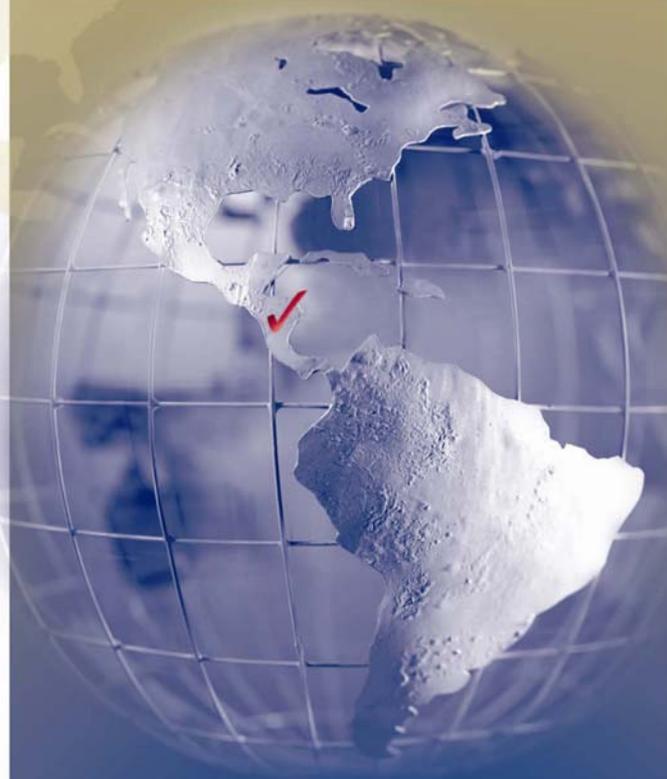




NICARAGUA PRESIDENTIAL AND LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS

NOVEMBER 5, 2006

REPORT OF THE ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION



Parliamentary Confederation
of the Americas



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FOREWORD

This fourth electoral observation mission conducted under the auspices of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA) was made possible by the invaluable assistance of a number of people.

To begin, I wish to extend warm thanks to the parliamentarians who participated in this electoral observation mission to Nicaragua. They fulfilled their mandate as international observers with professionalism, thoroughness, and impartiality, especially in collecting the information used to draft this report. I would like to thank Ms. Edda Acuña, first vice-president of COPA and senator of the Legislative Assembly of the province of Buenos Aires, Argentina, Ms. Jhannett Madriz Sotillo, former president of COPA and member of the Andean Parliament for Venezuela, Ms. Irma Segunda Amaya, Member of the Legislative Assembly of El Salvador, Messrs. Juan Bartolomé Ramírez and Victor Encina, Members of the Chamber of Deputies of Paraguay, Ms. Lilia Velia Carranza, Member of the State of Durango, Mexico, Ms. Nora Estrada, Member of the province of San Luis, Argentina, Mr. Victor Hugo Morales, Member of the Andean Parliament, Venezuela, Ms. Azucena Ortiz, Member of the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN), El Salvador, Mr. Efraín Villanueva, Member of the Congress of the State of Quintana Roo, Mexico.

I would like to say a special thank you to Mr. Carlos Jiménez Macías, president of the COPA and senator of the United Mexican States, who supported the development of the COPA electoral observation mission program throughout his term in office and who played a primary role in the conduct of this electoral observation mission to Nicaragua.

I am also most grateful to His Excellency Mr. Mario Laguë, ambassador of Canada to Nicaragua, and his entire team, for the support they provided to the secretariat of the Committee on Democracy and Peace in arranging certain working meetings before election day.

I would be remiss if I did not draw attention to the invaluable collaboration of the entire staff at the secretariat of the COPA Committee on Democracy and Peace, especially the indispensable presence of Mr. Jacques Paquet, administrative secretary of the Committee, who supervised the organization of the mission and provided outstanding support to the parliamentarian observers in the performance of their duties.

Lastly, I would like to thank Ms. Francine Barry, assistant to the Chief Electoral Officer of Québec, who facilitated the work of the delegation with her advice and informed observations on electoral issues.



ÉRIC R. MERCIER

Mission Leader,

Chair

COPA Committee on Democracy and Peace

Member of the National Assembly of Québec

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 Nicaragua, more particularly Managua and the departments of Carazo, Granada, León and Masaya, from November 2 to 6, 2006, to observe and report on the presidential and legislative elections held on November 5.

This was the fourth electoral observation mission conducted by COPA since it adopted a framework for organizing such missions. The first three electoral observation missions, which were held in December 2005 in Bolivia, in July 2006 in Mexico, and in October 2006 in Brazil, 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 Nicaragua from November 2 to 6, 2006, and present the results of the observation. The report is divided into eight parts: **1) terms of reference of the mission; 2) makeup of the delegation; 3) the pre-election political context; 4) the legal and institutional framework in which the November 5, 2006 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

During their March 2, 2006 meeting in Mexico City, Mexico, the COPA Executive Committee agreed to conduct two electoral observation missions in 2006. On this occasion, as well as within the framework of the 7th COPA General Assembly, held in Quito, Ecuador, from May 29 to June 2, 2006, the Executive Committee chose to prioritize the organization of an electoral observation mission to Nicaragua during the holding of the presidential and legislative elections scheduled to be held on November 5, 2006.

In a letter dated September 7, 2006 (Appendix I), the president of COPA, Mr. Carlos Jiménez Macías, informed the Nicaraguan authorities that COPA was available and interested in organizing a delegation of parliamentarians to travel to Nicaragua to observe the elections.

In an electronic mail message dated October 3, 2006, the Supreme Electoral Council of Nicaragua informed the Secretariat of the Committee on Democracy and Peace that the COPA parliamentarians could attend the Nicaraguan electoral process as electoral observers.

On October 4, 2006, the president of COPA sent a letter (Appendix II) inviting the members of the COPA Executive Committee to participate in large numbers in the electoral observation mission to Nicaragua and informing them, at the same time, that the mission would be led by **Éric R. Mercier**, chair of the COPA Committee on Democracy and Peace and member of the Québec National Assembly.

On November 2, 3 and 4, 2006, 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 Nicaraguan elections.

On election day, the delegates visited over fifty polling stations in the capital region, Managua, and in four departments (Carazo, Granada, León and Masaya) to observe the conduct of elections.

2. MAKEUP OF THE DELEGATION

The COPA delegation was composed of Mr. **Éric R. Mercier**, 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. **Edda Acuña**, first vice-president of the COPA and senator of the Legislative Assembly of the province of Buenos Aires (Argentina), Ms. **Jhannett Madriz Sotillo**, former president of the COPA and member of the Andean Parliament (Venezuela), Ms. **Irma Segunda Amaya**, member of the Legislative Assembly of El Salvador, Messrs. **Juan Bartolomé Ramírez** and **Victor Encina**, members of the Chamber of Deputies of Paraguay, Ms. **Lilia Velia Carranza**, Member of the State of Durango (Mexico), Ms. **Nora Estrada**, Member of the province of San Luis (Argentina), Mr. **Victor Hugo Morales**, Member of the Andean Parliament (Venezuela), Ms. **Azucena Ortiz**, Member of the Central American Parliament (El Salvador), Mr. **Efraín Villanueva**, Member of the Congress of the State of Quintana Roo (Mexico).

The parliamentarians were assisted by Mr. **Jacques Paquet**, secretary of the Committee on Democracy and Peace, and Ms. **Francine Barry**, assistant to the Chief Electoral Officer of Québec and electoral expert.

3. THE PRE-ELECTION POLITICAL CONTEXT

Nicaragua became an entirely sovereign republic in 1854. The historical beginnings of this State were strongly influenced by prolonged periods of military dictatorships. The 20th century was also marked by numerous difficulties: civil wars, revolutions, economic problems, foreign intervention, dictatorships, natural catastrophes, etc.

Beginning in 1936, the Somoza family held its place at the head of the country and remained in power until 1979. In parallel to this dictatorship, an opposition movement developed and centred on the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). Established in 1961, the Sandinista Front was the first rebel group that was sufficiently organized to stand up to the Somoza family dictatorship. The Sandinista insurrection, supported by a coalition, forced the Somoza family out in 1979 and took over the government.

In 1984, the elections were won by the Sandinista leader Mr. Daniel Ortega. Following his victory, the latter attempted to implement a series of socialist reforms, but the president's plans were defeated by an embargo and a civil war led by a counter-revolutionary paramilitary force, the *Contras*, trained, armed, equipped, and financed by foreign interests, within the context of the cold war. This civil war claimed approximately 30,000 lives in Nicaragua and only worsened the socioeconomic situation.

In 1991, Mr. Ortega was defeated by Ms. Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, a candidate supported by a conservative coalition. Despite the democratic election of Ms. Chamorro, the rivalries between armed groups consisting of former Sandinistas and former *Contras* contributed to maintaining a climate of insecurity in Nicaragua.

Mr. Arnoldo Alemán (conservative, former Somozist), won the 1996 presidential election. The economic recovery that had thus been initiated was compromised by the passage of cyclone Mitch, which caused considerable damages at the end of 1998. The system of government established by Mr. Alemán was deemed to be very corrupt. In 2003, the latter was condemned to 20 years imprisonment for misappropriation of funds. Enrique Bolaños, former vice-president of Arnoldo Alemán, became president in 2002, on account of an "anti-corruption" campaign.

The recent political history of Nicaragua was marked by antagonism among Sandinistas, represented by the FSLN, and the anti-Sandinista forces, represented by the Constitutionalist Liberal Party (PLC). Hence, at the time of the November 2006 elections, of the 91 deputies sitting in the National Assembly, 47 hailed from the PLC and 38 from the FSLN. Only 6 were from other political parties.

It is important to specify that in 1999, a "governance pact" was reached between Mr. Alemán (PLC) and Mr. Ortega (FSLN). This pact, which gave rise to the informal cooperation of both dominant political parties at the National Assembly, enabled, according to several analysts, the PLC and the FSLN to share the principal political offices, as well as to ensure themselves a certain control of the electoral organizations, particularly the Supreme Electoral Council (CSE). This association between the main Nicaraguan political parties was capable of affecting the

confidence of the population in the political institutions. Eventually, this situation led to the forming of dissident political forces.

The 2006 elections were characterized by the presence of new political parties. In addition to the FSLN, the PLC and the Alternative for Change (AC) were the Sandinista Renovation Movement (dissidents of the FSLN) and the Nicaraguan Liberal Alliance (dissidents of the PLC).

Hence, the five political parties and coalitions as well as their candidates in the presidential election of November 5 were as follows:

- **AC** (Alternative for Change – *Alternativa por el Cambio*) – Candidate: **Edén Pastora**
- **ALN – PC** (Nicaraguan Liberal Alliance – Conservative Party / *Alianza Liberal Nicaragüense – Partido Conservador*) – Candidate: **Eduardo Montealegre**
- **Alianza MRS** (Sandinista Renovation Movement Alliance – *Alianza Movimiento Renovador Sandinista*) – Candidate: **Edmundo Jarquín**

* Mr. Jarquín became candidate for the Alliance MRS following the death of candidate Herty Lewites on July 2, 2006.
- **FSLN** (*Sandinista National Liberation Front / Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional*) – Candidate: **Daniel Ortega**
- **PLC** (*Constitutionalist Liberal Party / Partido Liberal Constitucionalista*) – Candidate: **José Rizo**

The principle issues of the election campaign were the fight against poverty, the fight against corruption, the energy crisis, as well as reconciliation among citizens, still divided following the numerous years of civil war.

4. THE LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF THE NOVEMBER 5, 2006 ELECTIONS

4.1 The electoral system

On November 5, 2006, the presidential as well as the legislative elections were held simultaneously. On the same occasion, Nicaraguans also elected the departmental deputies and those who will represent them at the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN).

The **executive** authority:

The president holds executive power and is elected for a five-year term. There are two possible scenarios:

1. If the candidate having the most votes obtains at least 40 % of the popular vote or if he obtains at least 35 % of the votes and has at least 5 % of a difference with his closest opponent, he will be elected president without a second round being held.
2. If this is not the case, a second round will be held between the two candidates having obtained the largest number of votes. The second round must be organized within 45 days following the first round. In Nicaraguan history, there has never been a second round.

Fixed-date elections are held on the first Sunday in November. The outgoing presidents cannot seek re-election in two consecutive elections.

The **legislative** authority:

The legislative power, which is unicameral, is vested in the National Assembly (*Asamblea Nacional*). Fixed-date elections are held every 5 years, on the first Sunday in November.

The National Assembly is composed of 92 deputies and their respective alternates, who are elected by the proportional system.

- 20 deputies are elected by a proportional list system, in a single national district.
- 70 deputies are elected by a proportional list system, in the 17 district departments and autonomous regions, the number of seats for each department or region being proportional to its population.
- the 2 remaining deputy seats go to the candidate for president of the Republic who obtained second place in the election and to the outgoing president of the Republic who also obtains a deputy's seat (s. 133, *Constitución política de Nicaragua*).

4.2 The electoral laws

According to the electoral law (*Ley electoral*), in effect in Nicaragua since December 1, 1995, and which was last amended in 2000, suffrage is universal, equal, direct, free and secret, and is a right of Nicaraguan citizens aged 16 years and over (s. 30). Voting is not compulsory.

The presidential and legislative elections are held on fixed dates, the first Sunday in November, every 5 years (s. 3).

The Supreme Electoral Council is responsible, in consultation with the political organizations, for preparing the election calendar at each election, within a reasonable delay (s. 4).

Regarding the elections of November 5, 2006, the election calendar was punctuated with the following principal elements:

- Electoral list revisions took place on June 10 and 11, 2006, as well as on June 17 and 18, 2006. The list became permanent on August 6, 2006. Additions to the list were permitted until September 5, 2006.
- Citizens had until August 6, 2006, to request their voter identification card (*Cedula de Identidad*).
- The election campaign began on August 19 and ended on November 1, 2006.
- The election authorities had until September 21, 2006, to determine where the polling stations were to be set up.
- November 2, 3 and 4, 2006 were days set aside for the CSE activities, which was then able to broadcast information regarding the manner in which the vote was to be exercised.

4.3 Election authorities and organizations

The electoral power is shared among four levels of authority: the Supreme Electoral Council (*Consejo Supremo Electoral*), the Electoral Councils of the Departments and the Autonomous Regions of the Atlantic Coast (*Consejos Electorales de los Departamentos y de las Regiones Autónomas de la Costa Atlántica*), the Municipal Electoral Councils (*Consejos Electorales Municipales*) and the polling stations (Vote receiving juntas - *Juntas Receptoras de Voto*).

The Supreme Electoral Council (CSE)

The CSE is responsible for organizing, conducting and supervising the national elections. It is composed of 7 magistrates (*Magistrados Propietarios*) and 3 alternate magistrates (*Magistrados Suplentes*). The magistrates are elected by the National Assembly (60 % of the deputies must be in favour of the candidate), following proposals made by the president of the Republic and by the deputies of the National Assembly and after consultation with the relevant civil associations. They elect among themselves a president and a vice-president.

The president of the CSE convenes and presides over the meetings. He is the official and legal representative of the Council and is responsible for the implementation of its resolutions. Furthermore, he administers and coordinates the electoral power.

The vice-president is responsible for replacing the president in the event of a temporary absence. Moreover, he assists the latter in the exercise of his duties.

The other magistrates are required to take part in the meetings and in the adoption of the resolutions of the CSE. In addition, they assist the president in the exercise of his duties and may perform certain specific duties, such as the organization of relations with political parties, or other executive acts.

The CSE's main responsibilities are as follows:

- to convene, organize and conduct the electoral process and, subsequently, to announce the results and declare the validity of the elections;
- to organize and conduct plebiscites and referendums;
- to appoint the secretary general, directors general and members of the other electoral organizations;
- to establish the election calendar;
- to apply the constitutional and legal provisions in relation to the electoral process;
- to take into consideration and dispose of the resolutions and complaints of subordinate electoral organizations and the political parties;
- to take the appropriate measures in order that the electoral process be carried out in conditions ensuring full transparency;
- to regulate the accreditation and participation of electoral observers;
- to ask the associated organizations to ensure security of the political party members;
- to announce the voting results and to declare the validity of the results;
- to organize and keep under its control the central civil status register and the electoral list;
- to grant, suspend and revoke the judicial personality of political parties;
- to authorize the constitution of alliances between political parties.

In each department and autonomous region, there is a Departmental or Regional Electoral Council, and in each municipality, a Municipal Electoral Council and polling stations. These councils are subordinated to the CSE and are established during the initial stage of the electoral process. Each electoral council and polling station is composed of 3 persons.

The CSE appoints the departmental and regional electoral councillors, and it is the departmental and regional electoral councillors who appoint the municipal electoral councillors. The municipal councillors, in turn, appoint the members of the polling stations.

Each polling station is composed of three persons, namely a president and two members, (*Presidente*, *Primer Miembro* and *Segundo Miembro*), in addition to the legal representatives or supervisors of the political parties (*Fiscales*).

As regards the three persons forming the polling station personnel, political diversity must be considered. In addition to this, there may be only one person per political party.

The president (*Presidente*) and the first member (*Primer Miembro*) of each of the electoral councils are named on the basis of the results obtained in the last general election. Hence, they will be alternately chosen from the party having obtained the greatest number of votes and from the party having placed second. The second member (*Segundo Miembro*) will belong to another political organization having taken part in the previous elections.

Within the framework of the elections held on November 5, 2006, 50 % of the polling station presidencies were representatives of the PLC, and the other 50 %, representatives of the FSLN. Regarding the positions of first member, they were alternately filled in the same proportion by the PLC and the FSLN. All second member positions were granted to representatives of the AC, the only other party having participated in the last national general election. Consequently, owing to the provisions of the electoral law, no position of responsibility within the polling station was vested in the ALN or the MRS.

The departmental or regional electoral councils

The main responsibilities of the departmental or regional councils are as follows:

- to appoint the members of the municipal electoral councils by selecting them from the lists proposed by the political parties;
- to make public the polling station locations;
- to take the necessary and legal measures to ensure the proper conduct of the elections;
- to denounce violations of the electoral law before the competent authorities;
- to ensure the adequate operation of the electoral organization on their territory;
- to receive all documents and material used during the election of the municipal electoral councillors of their territory and, subsequently, forward this to the Supreme Electoral Council;
- to review the various acts of the electoral and municipal councils and to carry out the electoral counting at the departmental or regional level;
- to receive, process and dispose of petitions, claims, complaints and appeals of citizens.

The municipal electoral councils

The responsibilities of the municipal electoral councils are as follows:

- to appoint the polling station members;
- to grant accreditations to the representatives of the political parties and alliances (*Fiscales*);
- to inform the citizens, at the beginning of the election campaign, of the exact locations of the polling stations;
- to take the necessary measures for the proper conduct of the elections in each municipality;
- to receive all election material of the departmental or regional electoral councils of its constituency;
- to receive from the polling stations all documents and the material that was used during the election;
- to ensure that the election results are sent to the CSE by facsimile and, subsequently, to forward a copy thereof to the departmental or regional councils;
- to receive claims and complaints and the appeals of citizens and political organizations taking part in the elections;
- to review the arithmetic sum of the votes provided by the polling stations.

The polling stations

In each municipality, a sufficient number of polling stations must be established. A maximum of 400 citizens may be registered at each station.

If conditions so permit it, at least two polling stations must be available in each of the voting centres.

The responsibilities of the polling stations are as follows:

- to see to the accreditation of the representatives of the political parties and alliances and of the election officials;
- to verify whether citizens are indeed registered on the list of electors;
- to guarantee the exercise of suffrage;
- to receive the votes in the corresponding ballot boxes;
- to carry out the counting of votes;
- to guarantee order during registration, verification and voting;
- to permit access to polling stations to the observers throughout election day;
- to put together a package containing all of the electoral documents and the complaints received;
- to send all electoral documents to the respective municipal councils;
- to post a copy of the tally report outside of the polling station;
- to guarantee the rights of the political party representatives at all times during the electoral process;
- to forward the voting results to the CSE.

Each political party or alliance has the right to appoint a supervisor (*Fiscal*) before each polling station to supervise the election. The political party representatives will carry out various supervisory duties on election day.

4.4 Voting operations

Citizens exercise their vote at the polling station (*Junta Receptora de Votos*) where they are registered (s. 109).

The members of the polling stations meet at 6 a.m. on the day of the election and voting begins at 7 a.m. (s. 110).

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 (s. 111).

The three polling station members will first and foremost be required to issue a constitution and opening form (*Acta de Apertura y Constitucion*), which will bear the names of the members, the attestation of the legality of the premises as well as the number of unmarked ballot papers received.

There is a single ballot for each elective position to be filled: president, deputies of the National Assembly, departmental deputies and deputies of the PARLACEN.

During voting, it is prohibited to change rooms, to introduce or remove ballot papers from the ballot boxes and to take any material out of the room (s. 113). Furthermore, the members of the polling station must stay on the premises throughout election day.

Voting ends at 6 p.m., but the polling station must remain open as long as there are registered citizens who are waiting to vote (s. 114).

When voting:

1. The citizen presents his identification card (*Cédula de Identidad Ciudadana* or *Documento Supletorio de Votación*).
2. The members of the polling station verify the validity of the identification card and make certain that the voter is indeed registered on the list of electors.
3. The president of the polling station explains to the elector the appropriate way to vote.
4. The elector places a mark on each ballot opposite the candidate or party that corresponds to his choice.
5. After the vote, the elector has his finger marked with indelible ink.

On election day, it is prohibited to:

- organize shows or public meetings that could interfere with the conduct of the elections;
- sell and distribute alcoholic beverages;
- enter a polling station with a weapon;
- promote a candidate inside a polling station (for example, by wearing clothing items identifying a candidate);
- arrive at a polling station under the influence of alcohol;
- form groups around the polling stations;
- put up posters around the polling stations;
- take part in any other activity whose purpose is to disrupt the proper conduct of the vote.

After the vote, the members of the polling stations fill out the closing form (*Acta de cierre*), which will contain information such as the hour at which the voting ended, the number of voters, the political party representatives (*Fiscales*) present, the number of ballots received and used as well as the number of political party representatives. The three members of the polling station and the political party representatives must all sign this form.

Subsequently, the counting of ballots takes place. This is performed on site by the 3 members of the polling station and is controlled by the political party representatives. A tally report (*Acta de escrutinio*) is filled in. It contains the following information: the total number of ballots placed in the ballot box, the number of valid ballot papers, the number of invalid ballot papers, the number of unused ballot papers, the valid ballots obtained for each political party and the complaints made by political party representatives.

The members of the polling station and the representatives of the political parties must sign the tally report. The president is required to send this report to the CSE and to the corresponding municipal council.

5. MISSION ACTIVITIES PRIOR TO ELECTION DAY

5.1 Arrival of the delegation and accreditation of members

Upon arrival in Managua on November 2, 2006, the COPA mission issued a press release (Appendix III) 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 November 2, 3 and 4, 2006, the mission attended several working meetings in Managua with representatives of institutions and organizations involved in the electoral process in order to understand the organization of the Nicaraguan elections. The remarks and information gathered during these meetings are summarized below¹.

A) Electoral officials

Mr. Emmett Lang Salmerón, vice-president of the *Consejo Supremo Electoral of Nicaragua* – Friday, November 3, 2006, 7:30 p.m.

From the outset, the vice-president of the Supreme Electoral Council provided several pertinent facts concerning the 2006 elections. He thus indicated:

- that Nicaragua could count on the participation of 18,000 national observers;
- that there were between 1200 and 1300 international observers;
- that there were 4296 voting centres countrywide comprising a total of 11,274 polling stations;
- that there were 3,665,410 citizens registered on the list of electors out of a total population of 5,300,000;
- that 67,640 election officials would be working on November 5.

Mr. Lang then addressed the issue of the composition of polling stations by underlining that this was determined in compliance with the electoral law.

He recalled that each political party could appoint representatives and thus witness the work of the persons in charge of the polling stations on election day. However, several representatives' positions had yet to be filled at the time of the working meeting.

Mr. Lang also addressed the issue concerning the contesting of results. He recalled that the contesting of results would not be valid if it were not made in the polling station itself.

¹ Members of the mission only report the comments made by institutional and organizational representatives and do not pass any judgment.

B) The political parties

Dr. Oscar Téllez, campaign leader of the *Movimiento Renovador Sandinista (MRS)* – Friday, November 3, 2006, 4:30 p.m.

Mr. Téllez indicated that the election campaign was unfolding in a very peaceful manner, that the antagonistic groups crossed paths in the street without there being any problem and that there should not be any problems on election day, unless perhaps the results were very close.

Moreover, he underlined that the non-traditional political parties had great difficulty in taking their place in the electoral process, particularly with regard to the composition of the polling stations.

Furthermore, he found it unfair that limits had not been set regarding the expenses that can be incurred by political parties within the framework of the campaign.

Lastly, concerning media coverage of the election campaign, the MRS was, according to Mr. Téllez, the only party that did not have access to the main communications media.

Mr. Adolfo Arguello, president of the National Campaign Committee of the *Alianza Liberal Nicaragüense* – Saturday, November 4, 2006, 1:30 p.m.

Mr. Arguello deplored the distribution between the two major parties, the FSLN and the PLC, of the Nicaraguan democratic institutions.

He continued by adding that the electoral system did not favour either the emergence or the consolidation of third parties. Despite all of this, the ALN was second in the polls, a sign, in his opinion, that Nicaragua could change.

He then addressed the issue of his party's relations with the media.

Lastly, he was not concerned about the possibility of fraud occurring during polling station operations, but he claimed that there had been flaws in the distribution of the identification cards.

He was further pleased that the electoral observation would reduce the risks of fraud during the counting of ballots.

Mr. Gustavo Porras, deputy at the National Assembly and candidate of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN).

This working meeting is summarized below in the section concerning the discussions that took place with representatives of civil society groups, for Mr. Porras is also national coordinator of the National Workers Front (FNT).

Unfortunately, despite requests made by the COPA mission to the **Constitutionalist Liberal Party (PLC)** and the **Alternative for Change (AC)**, it was not possible to schedule a meeting with a candidate or representative of these parties owing to overbooked agendas.

C) Civil society

Mr. Ray Hooker, president of the *Fundación para la Autonomía y el Desarrollo de la Costa Atlántica de Nicaragua (FADCAN)* – Thursday, November 2, 2006, 10:00 a.m.

This civil society organization, based in Nicaragua's Autonomous Regions, works to improve the quality of life, the equitable development and the social justice of the Caribbean peoples.

Concerning the organization of the elections, Mr. Hooker believed that if the results were close, there could be attempted fraud.

He further stated that 35 % of the population of the Autonomous Regions of the Atlantic Coast had not received a voter identification card, owing to problems with the transportation networks. He explained that there are very few roads in this region and that the existing ones are in bad condition.

Mr. Jaime Aparicio, mission leader of the *Carter Center to Nicaragua* – Thursday, November 2, 2006, 11:30 a.m.

With more than 70 electoral observers, the Carter Center is one of the several and principal organizations that deployed a mission to observe the presidential and legislative elections of November 5 in Nicaragua.

Mr. Aparicio mentioned that Nicaragua could indeed count on the participation of several hundreds of foreign observers, but also on the presence of an important civil society organization, *Ética y Transparencia*, which deployed close to 12,000 national observers. In fact, it had been determined that there would be one or more national observers at each polling station.

In the opinion of the Carter Center mission leader, irregularities could arise if the election results were very close.

He recalled that the police and the army had been professionalized in recent years. Authorities could therefore rely on their support if problems arose.

Ms. Evelyn Flores Mayorga, member of the coordinating committee and of the steering committee of the *Puntos de Encuentro*, an NGO women's group – Thursday, November 2, 2006, 2:00 p.m.

The work of this non-governmental organization is oriented towards promoting the independence, participation, equality and decision-making power of women and youth in all aspects of life. The organization also campaigns for the reform of laws concerning the sexuality of women, such as the law regarding sexual offences.

During this meeting, Ms. Flores addressed the issue of voter identification cards. She advanced that out of all citizens, it was mostly young people who did not have a voter identification card. The problem was denounced, but according to her nothing had been done to rectify the situation.

Ms. Flores also addressed the issue of the partisanship of persons in charge of polling stations.

She considered that there could be violence following the release of the election results. Lastly, her greatest concern was if there were power failures during the transmission of results.

Mr. José Ángel Bermúdez, executive secretary of the *Frente Nacional de los Trabajadores (FNT)* and Mr. Gustavo Porras, national coordinator of the FNT, deputy of the National Assembly and candidate of the *Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN)* – Thursday, November 2, 2006, 4:00 p.m.

The FNT is the national organ for the coordination of the union activities of eight national Nicaraguan organizations that decided to join forces to defend their own interests together. The FNT network is based on a union activity municipalization strategy.

During this meeting, the members of the COPA delegation were informed that:

- 65 % of the labour force worked in the informal sector;
- 16 % of the labour force was covered by social security;
- 4 % of the population was unionized;
- the level of unionization was high only in the health and education sectors.

Furthermore, the FNT representatives indicated that currently there were eight deputies hailing from the union sector, including Mr. Porras, who represented the FSLN at the National Assembly, and in the elections under way, there were eight unionist candidates.

In order to counter any possibility of fraud, Mr. Porras hoped that the FSLN's personnel and representatives would be at the polling stations to make certain that all was taking place in an orderly fashion.

Mr. Gonzalo Carrión Maradiaga, program coordinator of *Defensa y Denuncia* of the *Centro Nicaragüense de Derechos Humanos (CENIDH)* – Friday, November 3, 2006, 9:00 a.m.

The CENIDH, founded in May 1990, is an organization for the promotion and the protection of human rights in Nicaragua.

Mr. Carrión explained that there was in Nicaragua a ballot-box democracy, an electoral democracy within the framework of which citizens may vote once every five years. He was however of the opinion that the citizenship issue posed a problem as democracy was not to be restricted to voting, but also required permanent citizen participation.

He was pleased that so many foreign and national observers attended the 2006 election, for, according to him, this would tend to discourage any attempts at fraud, and he hoped that the will of the people would be respected.

Mr. Carrión evoked the possibility of acts of violence or demonstrations taking place on election day and also addressed the problems related to the issuing of voter identification cards.

Monsignor Rodolfo Brenes, president of the *Conferencia Episcopal de Nicaragua* – Friday, November 3, 2006, 11:00 a.m.

Monsignor Brenes particularly mentioned a letter that was released on August 15, 2006, in which the Nicaraguan Catholic Church urged the people to more closely examine the proposals made by the candidates in the election. In this letter, the Church asked the candidates to propose viable projects and not projects based on ideology.

He was delighted with the fact that there was very little or no violence within the framework of this election, whereas previously, political parties tore down the election advertising of opposing parties. He also indicated that the country's police chiefs reported to him that this was no longer the case. However, he underlined that linguistic violence remained.

He was not worried about the transportation of ballot papers on election night and the acceptance of the results by the candidates and political parties.

Mr. Rodolfo Delgado Romero, national program director of the *Programa Plurianual sobre Democracia y Derechos Humanos* in Nicaragua at the *Instituto de Estudios Nicaragüenses (IEN)* – Friday, November 3, 2006, 12:30 p.m.

The Institute for Nicaraguan Studies is a non-governmental organization dedicated to the strengthening of democracy, the consolidation of peace and the promotion of a new political culture in Nicaragua.

Mr. Delgado compared the elections of 1996 and 2001. According to him, the 2006 elections were unfolding normally.

Concerning his assessment of the electoral process under way, he pointed out to the members of the delegation that the current composition of the Supreme Electoral Council (CSE) is the same as it was in the 2001 elections; the same parties are represented in the same manner as in 2001. On the basis of this information, it was not logical, in his opinion, to question the management of the electoral organizations in 2006.

Mr. Delgado also addressed the issue of the distribution of voter identification cards.

In his opinion, conditions were not met for fraud to occur within the framework of these elections.

Mr. Telémaco Talavera Siles, president of the *Consejo Nacional de Universidades* of Nicaragua – Friday, November 3, 2006, 6:00 p.m.

The National Council of Universities (CNU) is the national institution that advises and coordinates the operations of universities and higher education centres in Nicaragua.

Within the framework of the elections under way, Mr. Talavera explained that the CNU worked toward ensuring that the electoral process was conducted properly and that the results reflected the choice of the majority of the population. He indicated that the CNU had, for example:

- placed university buildings at the disposal of the CSE to issue voter identification cards;
- organized forums to promote citizen training;
- established a communications media observatory which was to provide technical analysis of the media coverage throughout the electoral process.

He added that the CNU hoped to observe the conduct of the November 5 elections and also planned on observing the work of the national and international electoral observers.

In his opinion, all of the elements were in place for the electoral event to unfold smoothly and harmoniously.

6. MISSION ACTIVITIES ON ELECTION DAY

6.1 Composition and deployment of the COPA observation teams

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

1) The first team, made up of Mr. **Éric R. Mercier**, mission leader, Mr. **Efraín Villanueva**, Mr. **Jacques Paquet** and Ms. **Francine Barry**, visited 13 polling stations in the third district of the city of Managua.

No. of voting centre	Polling station name	City/District	No. of polling station	Arrival time	Departure Time
06.05.153	Escuela Republica de Canadá	Managua/III	06.05.2133	6:35 a.m.	7:35 a.m.
06.05.180	Instituto Pablo Antonio Cuadra	Managua/III	06.05.2051	7:50 a.m.	8:15 a.m.
06.05.212	U.C.A.	Managua/III	06.05.2790	9:05 a.m.	9:25 a.m.
06.05.212	U.C.A.	Managua/III	06.05.2791	9:30 a.m.	9:45 a.m.
06.05.177	Escuela Nazareth	Managua/III	06.05.1921	10:00 a.m.	10:15 a.m.
06.05.214	Biblioteca Fidel Coloma	Managua/III	06.05.2461	10:35 a.m.	10:50 a.m.
06.05.218	Escuela La Purisima de Torrez Molina	Managua/III	06.05.2730	11:00 a.m.	11:15 a.m.
06.05.216	Escuela Republica de Cuba	Managua/III	06.05.2620	11:25 a.m.	11:45 a.m.
06.05.195	U.N.A.N	Managua/III	06.05.2890	12:05 p.m.	12:20 p.m.
06.05.852	E.M.S.E.C.	Managua/III	06.05.9620	3:30 p.m.	3:47 p.m.
06.05.855	Colegio Madre del Divino Pastor	Managua/III	06.05.9550	4:05 p.m.	4:25 p.m.
06.05.840	Escuela Mision Imposible	Managua/III	06.05.9482	4:45 p.m.	5:00 p.m.
06.05.229	Colegio Teresiano	Managua/III	06.05.2860	5:30 p.m.	10:15 p.m.

2) The second team, made up of Ms. **Jhannett Madriz Sotillo**, leader of team no. 2, and of Mr. **Victor Hugo Morales Monasterios**, visited 9 polling stations in the second district of the city of Managua and in the department of León. Ms. **Joceline Clemencia** of Curaçao also joined this team. A grid was filled out for 8 of the 9 polling stations visited.

No. of voting centre	Polling station name	City/District	No. of polling station	Arrival time	Departure Time
05.10.003	Centro Escolar Ricardo Morales Avilez	Nagarote	05.10.0071	9:20 a.m.	9:45 a.m.
06.05.002	Escuela Bautista Las Brisas	Managua/II	06.05.0670	11:55 a.m.	12:10 p.m.
06.05.008	Wisconsin	Managua/II	06.05.0620	12:15 p.m.	12:30 p.m.
06.05.003	Instituto Manuel Olivares	Managua/II	06.05.0623	12:35 p.m.	12:50 p.m.
06.05.005	Instituto Juan Pablo II	Managua/II	06.05.0655	1:00 p.m.	1:15 p.m.
06.05.004	INIFOM	Managua/II	06.05.0640	1:30 p.m.	1:40 p.m.
06.05.007	Pre-Escolar Los Arcos	Managua/II	06.05.0660	1:55 p.m.	2:15 p.m.
06.05.009	Escuela Las Brisas	Managua/II	06.05.0601	2:40 p.m.	3:00 p.m.

3) The third team, made up of Ms. **Edda Acuña**, leader of team no. 3, of Ms. **Nora Estrada** and of Mr. **Victor Encina**, visited 15 polling stations in Managua and in the departments of Carazo, Granada and Masaya.

No. of voting centre	Polling station name	City/District	No. of polling station	Arrival time	Departure time
06.05.635	Escuela Monte de Sinaí	Managua/VI	06.05.8401	6:30 a.m.	7:00 a.m.
06.05.635	Escuela Monte de Sinaí	Managua/VI	06.05.8400	6:55 a.m.	7:49 a.m.
09.01.022	Escuela Rubén Darío	Granada	09.01.0650	9:35 a.m.	9:55 a.m.
09.01.022	Escuela Rubén Darío	Granada	09.01.0660	10:00 a.m.	10:30 a.m.
09.01.017	Escuela Guadalupe	Granada	09.01.0432	10:45 a.m.	11:10 a.m.
09.01.017	Escuela Guadalupe	Granada	09.01.0600	11:20 a.m.	11:50 a.m.
07.02.012	Escuela San Juan Bosco	Masaya	07.02.0681	1:30 p.m.	2:00 p.m.
07.08.501	Alcaldia Municipal	Catarina	07.08.8000	2:45 p.m.	3:05 p.m.
07.07.003	Escuela Benito Juarez	Niquinohomo	07.07.0050	3:20 p.m.	3:40 p.m.
08.01.007	Escuela San Marcos	San Marcos	08.01.0072	4:00 p.m.	4:15 p.m.
07.04.001	Escuela Guillermo Ampie Lanzas	La Concepción	07.04.0012	4:30 p.m.	4:45 p.m.
07.04.003	Instituto San Juan Bautista	La Concepción	07.04.0060	5:00 p.m.	5:15 p.m.
06.06.510	Escuela San Carlos	Ticuanatepe	06.06.8092	5:25 p.m.	5:35 p.m.
06.05.227	Instituto Salomón de La Selva	Managua/III	06.05.2775	5:55 p.m.	11:30 p.m.
06.05.227	Instituto Salomón de La Selva	Managua/III	06.05.2772	5:55 p.m.	11:30 p.m.

4) The fourth team, made up of Mr. **Juan Bartolomé Ramírez**, leader of team no. 4, and of Ms. **Lilia Velia Carranza**, visited 12 polling stations in the third district of Managua.

No. of voting centre	Polling station name	City/District	No. of polling station	Arrival time	Departure time
06.05.153	Escuela Republica de Canadá	Managua/III	06.05.2131	6:35 a.m.	7:35 a.m.
06.05.180	Instituto Pablo Antonio Cuadra	Managua/III	06.05.2053	7:50 a.m.	8:15 a.m.
06.05.212	U.C.A.	Managua/III	06.05.2840	9:05 a.m.	9:45 a.m.
06.05.177	Escuela Nazareth	Managua/III	06.05.1931	10:00 a.m.	10:15 a.m.
06.05.214	Biblioteca Fidel Coloma	Managua/III	06.05.2472	10:35 a.m.	10:50 a.m.
06.05.218	Escuela La Purisima de Torrez Molina	Managua/III	06.05.2693	11:00 a.m.	11:15 a.m.
06.05.216	Escuela Republica de Cuba	Managua/III	06.05.2651	11:25 a.m.	11:45 a.m.
06.05.195	U.N.A.N	Managua/III	06.05.2910	12:05 p.m.	12:20 p.m.
06.05.852	E.M.S.E.C.	Managua/III	06.05.9603	3:30 p.m.	3:47 p.m.
06.05.855	Colegio Madre del Divino Pastor	Managua/III	06.05.9540	4:05 p.m.	4:25 p.m.
06.05.840	Escuela Mision Imposible	Managua/III	06.05.9511	4:45 p.m.	5:00 p.m.
06.05.229	Colegio Teresiano	Managua/III	06.05.2861	5:30 p.m.	6:00 p.m.

Mmes. **Irma Segunda Amaya Echeverría** and **Azucena Ortiz** of the National Assembly of El Salvador also visited 9 polling stations in Managua in the company, however, of colleagues from their Assembly. A single observer's grid was completed.

No. of voting centre	Polling station name	City/District	No. of polling station	Arrival time	Departure time
06.05.183	Instituto Miguel de Cervantes	Managua/III	06.05.2230	7:00 a.m.	9:30 a.m.

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 four 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, Managua, and in the departments of Carazo, Granada, León and Masaya, 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 49 of the 58 polling stations visited. The compiled results are as follows.²

7.1 The polling stations

In all of the polling stations visited, officials began installing election materials at 6:00 a.m., as stipulated in the Nicaraguan Electoral Code.

Start times for voting varied depending on the time it took to set up the material (ballot boxes, tables, voting booths, etc.) and to carry out various administrative procedures, particularly those enabling polling station members and political party representatives to exercise their right to vote before the opening of the polls. At the majority of polling stations visited, constituents began voting at 7:00 a.m., as prescribed by law. However, at close to twenty polling stations, for the aforementioned reasons, voters were required to wait, for example, until 8:30 a.m. in the case of polling station no. 06.05.2791 and even until 9:15 a.m. at polling station no. 06.05.2230.

	YES	NO	+ or -	No answer
Suitable polling station site and setup	44	1	2	2
Polling station is complete	47	0	0	2
Presence of security forces	44	2	0	3
Presence of candidate/party representatives	47	0	0	2
Presence of election advertising on site	2	45	0	2
Acts of voter intimidation	2	43	1	3

² These results are but a reflection of the observations made by the members of the COPA delegation.

7.2 Election materials

In general, election materials were available in sufficient quantities in keeping with prescribed standards.

	YES	NO	+ or -	No answer
Properly sealed ballot boxes	43	3	1	2
Voting booths ensuring voter secrecy	44	1	2	2
Voters list	47	0	0	2
Ballots in sufficient quantity	47	0	0	2

At polling station nos. 06.05.2790 and 06.05.9550, the ballot boxes were not properly sealed with adhesive tape, but simply were closed. This could have caused problems.

The physical setup of certain polling stations could call into question the secrecy of the vote. At polling station no. 06.05.2890, when several persons were voting at the same time, the three voting booths were not arranged to ensure voter secrecy. At polling station no. 06.05.2791, it was rather the manner in which ballot boxes were placed that could call into question voting secrecy.

In the great majority of polling stations visited, citizens who were not registered on the voters list were authorized to vote according to the provisions of section 41 of the electoral law. Indeed, the latter allows any citizen, qualified to vote, whose name does not appear on the voters list of the polling station located in his ordinary place of residence, to exercise his right to vote, if he has in his possession a voter identification card (*Cédula de Identidad*) or the supplementary voting document (*Documento Supletorio de Votación*) as proof that he indeed resides in the voting section in question. When such case arose, the concerned polling station officials authorized the voter to exercise his right to vote and were to write down the circumstances surrounding his case in their report on the conduct of the vote. All of these procedures were time consuming and delayed the process.

	Very good	Good	Poor	Very poor	No answer
Election materials	28	16	1	0	4
Work of polling station officials	27	17	0	1	4
Work of security agents	27	17	0	1	4

The COPA observers noted that certain characteristics of the voting material made exercising the right to vote more difficult. Indeed, the ballot papers and ballot boxes corresponding to each of the four elective positions were of different colours. However, it was difficult to associate some of the ballot paper colours, particularly the greys and blacks, to the coloured band appearing on the ballot boxes, because of the shade variations obtained during the printing of the material. This resulted in delays and errors.

7.3 Complaints

	YES	NO	No answer
Complaints by political party or candidate representatives	3	33	13
Complaints by voters	5	31	13

At polling station no. 06.05.214, the party representatives complained that the election police allowed persons with cellular phones to enter the premises when this is prohibited by law. At polling station no. 06.05.9482, representatives complained of the fact that there was no map of the electoral division, an element of the election material that was to have been provided by the Supreme Electoral Council.

Furthermore, some voters complained of the late opening of certain polling stations (nos. 06.05.2133 and 06.05.112), of the fact that the Supreme Electoral Council (CSE) had not issued voter identification cards to certain members of a family (no. 06.05.2051) as well as of the interruption in voting during the day (no. 06.05.9550) owing to an error made by the officers in the preparation of ballot papers.

7.4 General observations

Generally, there was compliance with Electoral Code provisions for the aspects observed.

	YES	NO	No answer
Respect for ballot secrecy	36	0	13
Presence of more than one voter in the voting booth	1	34	14
Electoral staff compliance with procedures	34	0	15
Voter understanding of procedures	35	0	14
Presence of unauthorized persons in polling booth	1	35	13
Visit by national observers	33	2	14
Visit by international observers	10	25	14

	YES	NO	No answer
Orderly conduct of voting	34	1	14
Interruption in voting during the day	2	33	14

Voting was interrupted at polling station nos. 05.10.0071 and 06.05.9550 owing to an error made by the officers of the said stations in the preparation of ballot papers.

Also, at polling station no. 06.05.2792, for no apparent reason and without justification, the officials did not allow members of the COPA delegation to enter the premises to observe the conduct of the election.

7.5 Vote count

COPA observers were on hand during vote counting at polling station nos. 06.05.2772, 06.05.2775 and 06.05.2860 in Managua. The count was performed in a serious, calm, and open manner in compliance with the provisions of the electoral law.

8. MISSION CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

At the end of the mission, the COPA delegation drafted and issued a press release announcing its preliminary conclusions and observations (Appendix V).

The members observed that voting operations were performed in compliance with the electoral rules in effect for this election. Moreover, they were impressed with the patience, enthusiasm, and responsible citizenship demonstrated by citizens with respect to this major election.

They want to point out in particular the diligence of the polling officials and political party representatives in accomplishing their task.

However, they also observed that there were several delays at the opening of the polling stations, which resulted in long lineups. These delays were essentially caused by the carrying out of various administrative procedures, particularly those enabling polling station members and political party representatives to exercise their right to vote before the opening of the polls.

As was reported in the previous section, the election officials often had recourse to section 41 of the electoral law in order to authorize citizens, who presented their voter identification card or their supplementary voting document, to exercise their right to vote despite their not being registered on the voters list. Recourse to the provisions of section 41 consequently gave rise to important administrative procedures causing delays in the electoral process.

Lastly, COPA observers noted that certain characteristics of the voting material made exercising the right to vote more difficult. Indeed, on that day, Nicaraguans were to elect a president, the deputies of the National Assembly, the departmental deputies and the deputies of the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN). The ballot papers and ballot boxes corresponding to each of the four elective positions were of different colours, yet it was difficult to associate the ballot paper colours, particularly the greys and blacks, to the coloured band appearing on the ballot boxes because of shade variations obtained during the printing of the material. This resulted in delays and errors.

In light of these observations, the COPA observation mission recommends that Nicaraguan electoral authorities propose the following electoral law amendments to lawmakers in order to:

- simplify certain administrative procedures carried out before the opening of polling stations on election day, more particularly the provisions relating to the exercise of the vote by polling station members and political party representatives, thus allowing polling station officials to begin operations according to the planned schedule;
- improve, in the long term, the accuracy of the voters list to reduce the number of times recourse must be had to section 41 of the electoral law;
- improve, at the next election, the quality of election material, particularly the print quality of the ballot papers and the corresponding coloured bands appearing on the ballot boxes, so as to facilitate the exercise of the right to vote.

The members of the COPA delegation were very pleased with the warm and friendly welcome they received from the various Nicaraguan participants at the working meetings held prior to the elections, as well as from the citizens and election officials during their polling station visits.

This report will be presented to parliamentarians of the Americas at the next meeting of the COPA Executive Committee and the next COPA General Assembly. In addition, it will be posted on the COPA website.

9. APPENDICES

Appendix I – Letter of interest from the COPA president



Palacio Legislativo de San Lázaro, 8 de septiembre del 2006

*Señor Roberto José Rivas Reyes
Presidente del Consejo Supremo Electoral
Iglesia Las Palmas Ic. al Sur
Apartado Postal 2241,
Managua, Nicaragua
PBX: 2687948*

Objeto: Elecciones presidenciales y legislativas del 5 de noviembre de 2006

De mi mayor consideración:

La organización que tengo el honor de presidir, la Confederación Parlamentaria de las Américas (COPA), fue fundada en 1997. La COPA 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". Según este reglamento, nuestra organización puede decidir el envío de misiones de observación a pedido de los países que manifiesten el deseo a la presidencia de la COPA. De esta forma, una primera misión de observación de la COPA pudo observar las elecciones generales anticipadas de diciembre de 2005 en Bolivia y una segunda misión, las elecciones presidenciales y legislativas mexicanas de julio de 2006.

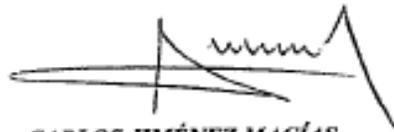
En el marco del Programa de misiones de observación electoral de la COPA, el Comité Ejecutivo de nuestra organización, en las reuniones celebradas en Ciudad de México, el pasado mes de marzo, y en Quito en junio en el marco de la VII Asamblea General de nuestra organización, decidió dar la prioridad a Nicaragua para realizar una misión de observación electoral, si las autoridades competentes de dicho país manifiestan su deseo. 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 Nicaragua, en el marco de una misión de observación electoral, con motivo de las elecciones presidenciales y legislativas del próximo 5 de noviembre. Nuestra misión se desplegaría en la ciudad de Managua. Ni bien tengamos la lista de los integrantes de nuestra delegación se la haré llegar.

Para su información, el 7 de septiembre pasado, envié una carta al señor Eduardo Gómez, Presidente de la Asamblea Nacional de su país, para informarle de la disponibilidad de nuestra organización con este fin.

Le agradezco de antemano todas las disposiciones que usted adopte 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, Secretario de la Comisión de Democracia y Paz de la COPA (teléfono (1-418-644-2888) o correo electrónico (jpaquet@assnat.qc.ca)) para establecer los contactos con su organización.

Agradeciéndole de antemano su colaboración, 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"

Oficina de la Presidencia de COPA, Palacio Legislativo de San Lázaro, Sede de la Cámara de Diputados del Congreso de México, Edificio D Segundo Nivel, tel (52) 55 57 16 82 53 ó fax 01 800 718 42 91 ext. 1257 correo electrónico presidencia.copa@gmail.com

Appendix II – Invitation and designation of mission leader



**SENADOR
CARLOS JIMÉNEZ MACÍAS**
P R E S I D E N T E



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

México DF a 4 de octubre del 2006

***Integrante de la Confederación Parlamentaria
De las Américas
Presente***

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". Según este reglamento, nuestra organización puede decidir el envío de misiones de observación a pedido de los países que manifiesten el deseo a la presidencia de la COPA. De esta forma, una primera misión de observación de la COPA pudo observar las elecciones generales anticipadas de diciembre de 2005 en Bolivia y una segunda misión, las elecciones presidenciales y legislativas mexicanas de julio de 2006.

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

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

Teléfono: (52) 55 57 16 82 53
55 53 45 30 72

01 800 718 42 91 ext. 5233 fax: 1257

E-mail: [cjinenezmacias@senado.gob.mx](mailto:cjimenezmacias@senado.gob.mx)
Presidencia.copa@gmail.com



**SENADOR
CARLOS JIMÉNEZ MACÍAS**
P R E S I D E N T E



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En el marco de la implementación del programa de misiones de observación electoral y 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 Nicaragua, en el marco de una misión de observación electoral, con motivo de las elecciones presidenciales del próximo 5 de noviembre. A este efecto, correspondencia similar le fue enviada al Tribunal Superior Electoral, a fin de informarle acerca de la función asumida por la COPA en esta materia y del interés de nuestra organización en obtener las acreditaciones necesarias, para ello, hemos recibido la respuesta satisfactoria, por lo que adjunto a la presente la ficha de registro de la misma.

Por ello, le hago extensiva y formal la invitación para asistir a esta importante Misión de Observación Electoral, para lo cual le recuerdo la importancia de Coordinarse con la Presidencia de la Comisión de Democracia y Paz a cargo del Diputado Erich Mercier quien está a cargo de los trabajos preparatorios de esta Misión

Sin otro particular, me reitero a sus apreciables órdenes, al tiempo que le reitero las seguridades de mi más alta y distinguida consideración.

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

Presidencia del Congreso de la Unión 400 13/2005, México,
D.F. Oficina 3 2do. Nivel

Unidad de la República Plana en la Colonia #16, CP 30020/Carretera
del Castillo, San José

Teléfono (52) 55 57 54 02 57
55 52 42 30 78
11 800 718 42 11 ext. 4013 fax: 5207
E-mail: carlosjimenez@senado.gob.mx
Presidencia.senado@gmail.com

Appendix III – Press release, November 2, 2006

Delegation of representatives of the Americas to observe Nicaraguan elections

Managua, November 2, 2006—After observing the September elections in Brazil, parliamentarians from the **Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA)** arrived today in Nicaragua to observe the presidential and legislative elections on November 5. Mr. Eric Mercier, a member of the Québec National Assembly and chair of COPA's Democracy and Peace Committee, will head up the electoral observation mission in Managua from November 2 to 6.

The delegation will also include COPA first vice president and senator of the province of Buenos Aires, Argentina Edda Acuña, former COPA president and Andean Parliament member for Venezuela Jhannett Madriz Sotillo, El Salvador Legislative Assembly member Irma Segunda Amaya, Paraguay Chamber of Deputies member Juan Bartolomé Ramírez, Andean Parliament member for Venezuela Luis Diaz Laplace, Andean Parliament member for Venezuela Yul Jabour, Andean Parliament member for Venezuela Victor Hugo Morales, and Mexican State Congress of Quintana Roo member Efraín Villanueva.

Invited by the Supreme Electoral Council of Nicaragua as observers of the Nicaraguan election, the COPA parliamentarians will cover the maximum possible number of polling stations in Managua, Nicaragua'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.

The parliamentarians will be assisted by COPA Democracy and Peace Committee secretary Mr. Jacques Paquet, as well as Ms. Francine Barry, assistant to the Chief Electoral Officer of Québec and electoral expert.

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 IV – Observer’s grid

NICARAGUAN PRESIDENTIAL AND LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS
November 5, 2006

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): _____
Polling station composition: _____

	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 security agents				

Details: _____

4. VOTERS

Number of voters registered: _____
 Waiting time: _____
 Average time required to vote: _____
 Voters admitted without voter registration cards: _____
 Voters admitted 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 V – Press release, November 6, 2006

COPA Electoral Observation Mission in Nicaragua

PARLIAMENTARIANS CONGRATULATE THE NICARAGUAN PEOPLE ON A WELL-RUN ELECTION DAY

Managua, November 6, 2006—A delegation of twelve parliamentarians from the **Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA)** led by Mr. Éric R. Mercier, chair of COPA's Democracy and Peace Committee and a member of the Québec National Assembly, observed Nicaragua's presidential and legislative elections, which took place on November 5, 2006. The COPA delegation, which included Ms. Edda Acuña, first vice president of COPA and senator of the province of Buenos Aires in Argentina, and Ms. Jhannett Madriz Sotillo, former president of COPA and member of the Andean Parliament for Venezuela, along with nine other parliamentarians from Argentina, El Salvador, Mexico, Paraguay, and Venezuela, noted that voting proceeded calmly and in accordance with electoral rules in effect for this election.

On election day, the delegates went to the capital city of Managua and the departments of Carazo, Granada, León, and Masaya to observe election proceedings at close to fifty polling stations. Delegation members noted that election procedures were observed and voting ran smoothly. "I was extremely impressed by the patience, enthusiasm, and responsible citizenship demonstrated by citizens with respect to this major election," stated Mr. Mercier. "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," added Mr. Mercier.

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 November 2, to learn about the situation in the country.

This was the fourth 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.