



PARAGUAY'S GENERAL ELECTIONS

APRIL 20, 2008

REPORT OF THE ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION



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 and federated 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 Paraguay, more particularly Asunción and the Central Department, from April 16 to 21, 2008, to observe and report on the general elections held on April 20.

The know-how and expertise in electoral matters that COPA has developed over the years contributed to the success of this seventh mission.¹

The goal of this report is to summarize the activities of the COPA mission during its visit to Paraguay from April 16 to 21, 2008, 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 April 20, 2008 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

On February 12, 2008, Carlos Jiménez Macías, COPA President and Senator of the Congress of the Union of Mexico, was invited by the President of Paraguay's Superior Tribunal of Electoral Justice (TSJE) (Appendix I) to form a delegation of COPA parliamentarians who would participate in an electoral observation mission to Paraguay for that country's general elections to be held on April 20, 2008.

A resolution to set up such a mission was adopted by COPA's executive committee at its meeting held in Cancún, Quintana Roo, Mexico, on March 15, 2008 (Appendix II).

In a letter dated March 16, 2008 (Appendix III), the President of COPA informed Paraguayan authorities of COPA's willingness to form a delegation of parliamentarians to observe the upcoming elections. In a further letter, dated April 11, 2008 (Appendix IV), he informed the

¹ COPA conducted observation missions during the following elections:

- Bolivian Early General Elections, December 18, 2005;
- Mexican Presidential and Legislative Elections, July 2, 2006;
- 1st Round of the Brazilian Presidential and Legislative Elections, October 1st, 2006;
- Nicaraguan Presidential and Legislative Elections, November 5, 2006;
- 1st Round of the Guatemalan Presidential and Legislative Elections, September 9, 2007;
- Argentinean Presidential and Legislative Elections, October 28, 2007.

president of Paraguay's TSJE of the composition of the COPA delegation, to be headed by Ms. Edda Acuña, 1st Vice-President of COPA and Senator of the province of Buenos Aires, Argentina.

On April 16, 17, 18 and 19, 2008, 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 Paraguayan elections.

On election day, the delegates visited nearly fifty polling stations in the capital region, Asunción, and in the Central Department to observe the conduct of the election operations.

2. COMPOSITION OF OF THE DELEGATION

The COPA delegation was composed of Ms. **Edda Acuña**, mission leader, 1st Vice-President of COPA and Senator of the province of Buenos Aires in Argentina.

It was also composed of Ms. **Silvia Caballero**; Member for the province of Buenos Aires, Argentina; Mr. **Ernesto Angulo Milla**, Member of the Legislative Assembly of El Salvador; Mr. **Mario López Valdez** and Mr. **Eduardo Nava**, Senators of the Congress of the Mexican Union; Mr. **Alexandre Cloutier**, Member of the National Assembly of Québec

The parliamentarians were assisted technically and administratively by Mr. **Jacques Paquet**, Advisor of the COPA Committee on Democracy and Peace, by Ms. **Mailén Vélez**, Political Advisor of Senator Acuña, by Ms. **Monica Casazza**, Political advisor of Deputy Caballero and by Mr. **Stéphane Dolbec**, Director of Cooperation with the Chief Electoral Officer of Québec and electoral expert.

3. THE PRE-ELECTION POLITICAL CONTEXT

In 1989, a coup d'état overthrew the government of General Alfredo Stroessner who, since 1954, had been at the head of the Colorado Party, the party in power for 60 consecutive years. Subsequently, General Andrés Rodríguez, second in command of the Colorado Party and instigator of the coup d'état, took the reins of power. The latter organized elections that he won with over 70 % of the votes against his rival Domingo Laino, of the Authentic Radical Liberal Party (PLRA), the main opposition party.

In 1991, the Colorado Party organized a constituent assembly bringing together close to 200 representatives. The new constitution, which provides that the President is not eligible for re-election, was formalized in 1992. In 1993, the first elections considered to be fully democratic brought Juan Carlos Wasmosy to the presidency. The latter initiated an institutional and government modernisation. Among other things, laws were passed in an attempt to limit the historical influence of the military in political affairs.

The second half of the 1990s was characterized by recurrent political instability that threatened democratic consolidation. In 1996, a coup d'état attempt against President Wasmosy was led by General Lino Oviedo. Shortly before the presidential elections of 1998, the latter, a presidential candidate, was condemned to ten years of prison for this act. The elections were thus won by Raul Cubas Grau, the right-hand man of the General, whose release was immediately ordered. This release provoked a political crisis during which the Vice-President, Luis Maria Argaña, was

assassinated by supporters of General Oviedo. A popular uprising followed, known as the "Paraguayan March", during which a dozen young people were assassinated by General Oviedo's snipers. Consequently, Mr. Cubas was forced to resign after having been in power for approximately one year, and the Senate President, Luis Angel Gonzalez Macchi, replaced him.

During his mandate, Mr. Macchi, who was accused of corruption by the opposition, faced increasing dissent. In 2000, a coup d'état led by General Oviedo's supporters was avoided, but plunged the country into a state of emergency for 30 days. In 2002, the country again found itself in a state of alert while demonstrations intensified and the population demanded the resignation of the President. Mr. Macchi was successful, however, in holding on to power until the 2003 elections.

In these elections, Nicanor Duarte Frutos was elected President and attempted to demonstrate his commitment to fighting corruption and poverty. Mr. Duarte Frutos was inspired by a more centrist ideology, in comparison with that of his traditionally very conservative *Colorado Party* predecessors, and tried to project an image of firmness in the management of his government. Despite efforts put into institutional reforms, the President was confronted with increasing opposition from Congress.

In March 2006, close to 40,000 persons poured into the streets of the Paraguayan capital, Asunción, to prevent President Duarte Frutos from amending the Constitution in order to be able to run for re-election. This demonstration, the most important since 1999, was mainly composed of students and supporters of Fernando Lugo, a former bishop and new arrival on the political scene.

The latter's address, focussing on the fight against social inequalities and corruption, and proposing a land reform project, led to the mobilization of several left-wing social movements supporting the "bishop of the poor" as presidential candidate. Despite this support, Mr. Lugo, who did not belong to any political structure, chose to join the *Concertación nacional*, a coalition of parliamentary opposition parties.

However, the candidacy of Mr. Lugo, as presidential candidate for the *Concertación nacional*, created tensions and breakups within this organization. On the one hand, the *Patria Querida* (Beloved Homeland) party left the *Concertación Nacional* to support Pedro Fabul as presidential candidate. On the other hand, following the liberation of General Oviedo, the *Unión Nacional de Ciudadanos Éticos* (UNACE-National Union of Ethical Citizens) in turn left the organization to support General Oviedo as presidential candidate. Hence, the remainder of the *Concertación Nacional*, such as the PLRA and the *Encuentro Nacional* (National Meeting), joined the left-wing movements and presented Mr. Lugo as presidential candidate under the banner of the *Alianza Patriótica para el Cambio* (APC-Patriotic Alliance for Change).

In December 2007, primary elections were organized to elect a successor to Duarte Frutos as presidential candidate of the *Colorado Party*. The former Minister of Education, Blanca Ovelar, supported by the current President, won against former Vice-President, Luis Castiglioni, and the Colorado Party President, José Alberto Alderete, who brought irregularities to light and contested the results.

Ending in a virtual tie between Ms. Ovelar and Mr. Castiglioni, the elections revealed deep divisions in the Colorado Party. Mr. Castiglioni accused the electoral judges of illicit vote-counting in favour of his rival and the government of having falsified polling station documents in 11 of the 17 departments. Ms. Ovelar thus became the first woman to run for President of

Paraguay, a country in which women represent 49.6% of the population and barely 10% of the Members of Congress.

The April 20 election dynamic was rife with fraud, whistleblowing and defamation campaigns from all sides. Furthermore, an increase in threats and intimidation towards the Paraguayan media covering the event were noted. Finally, the 2008 election campaign unfolded in a very different climate owing to the fact that the most recent surveys foreshadow the possibility that the reign of the Colorado Party could end after close to 60 years at the head of Paraguay.

Surveys such as that of the *Latinobarómetro* reported the population's loss of trust in the political system. This phenomenon was observed, among other times, during the municipal elections of 2008. On this occasion, abstention from voting was estimated at a record rate of 65%.

The main political parties and coalitions for the April 2008 elections were:

- *Alianza Patriótica para el Cambio* (APC) — Candidate: **Fernando Lugo**
- *Asociación nacional republicana* (ANR) or *Partido Colorado* - Candidate: **Blanca Ovelar**
- *Movimiento Teta Pyahu* (MTP)- Candidate: **Horacio Galeano Perrone**
- *Partido Humanista Paraguayo* (PHP) - Candidate: **Sergio Martínez Estigarribia**
- *Partido Patria Querida* (PPQ) - Candidate : **Pedro Fadul**
- *Partido de los Trabajadores* (PT) — Candidate: **Julio López**
- *Unión Nacional de Ciudadanos Éticos* (UNACE) - Candidate: **Gen. Lino César Oviedo**

4. THE LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF THE APRIL 20, 2008 ELECTIONS

4.1 The electoral system

The Constitution of 1992 of the Republic of Paraguay enacts the separation of the executive, legislative and judicial powers, thus ensuring balance, coordination, control and reciprocity between the three branches (s. 3).

The **executive power** is held by the President of the Republic, who combines the roles of head of State, head of the Government and commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces.

The President and Vice-president are elected under a first-past-the-post system for a five-year term, and may not be re-elected.

The bicameral **legislative power** is exercised by the National Congress. The Upper House is composed of 45 Senators and 30 substitutes, the Lower House of 80 Members and an equivalent number of substitutes.²

² The speakers currently in office are Miguel Abdón Saguier (Upper House) and Oscar Rubén Salomón (Lower House).

Members and senators alike are elected every five years under a proportional representation system (d'Hondt Method³) with closed lists⁴ (Act 834, s. 258); they may be re-elected. Under the Constitution of 1992, every democratically elected President of the Republic becomes, on completion of his or her term, a senator for life with the right to speak but not to vote.

Senators are elected on a country-wide basis. Members are elected on a departmental basis and the number of seats in each department is determined by the Superior Tribunal of Electoral Justice (TSJE) to reflect the population of that department.

On April 20, 2008, in addition to choosing their President, Vice-President, Senators and Members, Paraguayans elected the Governors who serve as the country's political officials in each department. Elected for a five-year term, the Governors represent the executive power in implementing national policy (Constitution, s. 161). Members of departmental assemblies were also elected, the number varying on average between 10 and 20 depending on the department. Paraguay is divided into 18 departments, including that of the capital city, Asunción.

Municipal elections are the only ones not held on the same day as general elections. The last municipal elections took place in November 2006.

For the first time on April 20, Paraguayans elected 18 Members to serve in the Mercosur Parliament⁵ (the Parlasur), in accordance with Resolution 55/2007 of the TSJE.

Thus, the updated Permanent Register (*Registro Cívico Permanente*) listed 2,861,940 eligible voters for the elections of April 20, 2008. Voting took place in all 232 districts of the country's 17 departments, with 979 voting centres and 14,302 voting tables.

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS- April 20, 2008⁶

The person with the most votes is elected president (first-past-the-post system).

LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS- April 20, 2008

Senators	45 Senators and 30 substitutes.
Voting system	Closed-list proportional representation (d'Hondt Method).
Members of the Parlasur	18 Members and 18 substitutes
Voting system	Closed-list proportional representation (d'Hondt Method).

³ Under this method the "list" votes of the parties are divided by 1, 2, 3, 4 etc, and the results classified from highest to lowest; the seats are then attributed in descending order to the parties with the highest results, until all seats are accounted for.

⁴ Electors do not vote for a particular candidate but for the list of a particular party, alliance or movement.

⁵ Each member country must elect 18 Members to represent it in the Parlasur.

⁶ The types of election are classified according to Resolution 22/2008.

DEPARTMENTAL ELECTIONS-April 20, 2008	
Members	80 Members and 80 substitutes (number of seats proportionate to population of the department).
Voting system	Closed-list proportional representation (d'Hondt Method).
Governors and Members of departmental assemblies	-18 Governors - Assembly Members (the number varies from one department to the next)
Voting system	First-past-the-post

4.2 The electoral laws

Paraguay's Elections Act (Codigo electoral), Act 834/96, was adopted in 1996 and amended most recently in 2007.

General elections are held every five years in April or May.

Suffrage is universal and free, with direct voting under a one-person, one-vote system; a vote cannot be delegated.

The right to vote is granted to all Paraguayan citizens who reside in the country, are 18 years of age or older, and are listed in the Permanent Register.

V

oting is compulsory, and failure to vote renders an individual liable to a penalty (ss. 4, 113 and 332).

Under section 91, the vote does not extend to:

- incarcerated individuals and people prohibited from voting by a court judgement;
- conscripts, members of the Armed Forces, members of the police force, and students enrolled at military or police academies;
- persons who can neither speak, hear nor express themselves in writing.

Under section 85, any citizen can run for office in any of the various types of election. Electoral candidates are subject to the following rules:

- the candidate must not have previously participated in an election campaign with regard to the office he or she is seeking;
- the candidate must not have held an executive position with a political party in the past two years;
- the candidate must have the support of a number of electors that is at least equal to 0.5% of the valid votes cast in the last elections for the office he or she is seeking. An elector may not support more than one candidate and must provide his or her home address and identification number;
- the candidate must provide a sworn declaration detailing all campaign contributions received or to be received, and precisely identifying the contributors (this data may be verified by the Electoral Tribunal (s. 86)).

Political parties are prohibited from receiving direct or indirect contributions from foreign sources (e.g., governments, political parties, institutions, natural or legal persons), or from Paraguayan state-owned businesses and unions (s. 68). All political party funds must be deposited in Paraguayan banks or financial institutions. The Electoral Tribunal has access to the particulars regarding the amounts received and spent by each party. The central government funds the parties at the rate of 15% of the daily minimum wage for each vote obtained in the general elections (s. 72).

4.3 Election authorities and organizations

The Constitution of 1992 stipulates that the Electoral Justice System (EJS) is part of the judiciary power. Under Act 635/95, which governs the EJS, the role of that entity is to judge, evaluate, organize, direct and supervise activities related to general, departmental and municipal elections. It also ensures that the rights and obligations of elected individuals are respected.

Though it remains subject to Act 635/95, the EJS is an independent body from both an administrative and a jurisdictional point of view.

The EJS consists of :

- the Superior Tribunal of Electoral Justice (*Tribunal Superior de Justicia Electoral*);
- electoral judges (*Jueces Electorales*);
- electoral tribunals (*Tribunales Electorales*);
- the Electoral Registry Office (*Dirección del Registro Electoral Permanente*);
- ancillary electoral organizations (civic assemblies) (*Juntas Cívicas*);
- electoral counsel (*Fiscales Electorales*);
- voting tables (*Mesas Receptoras de Votos*).

The Superior Tribunal of Electoral Justice (TSJE)

The TSJE (*Tribunal superior de justicia electoral*) is the supreme authority in electoral matters. Among its many duties, the TSJE is responsible for convening, directing and supervising elections, administering the electoral register and managing the election resources allocated under the nation's General Budget (Act 635, s. 5).

The TSJE is headed by three individuals, including a chair and a vice-chair, who are elected annually by the Ministers of the Supreme Court of Justice. The current Chair is Rafael Dendia, who, under section 4 of Act 635, is responsible for the legal representation and administrative supervision of the Electoral Justice System.

The TSJE must call elections at least eight months before polling day.

Electoral Judges

With four exceptions, each department capital has at least one Electoral Judge. The departments of d'Alto Paraguay and Concepción share a judge, as do the departments of Boquerón and Villa Hayes. The national capital, Asunción, has two judges (Act 635, s. 17).

The chief role of Electoral Judges is to assess applications and contestations related to the electoral register and to impose penalties for breaches of electoral law. They also appoint the officials who work at the voting tables. Electoral Judges are appointed by the Judicial Council.

Electoral Tribunals

Each electoral district has an electoral tribunal consisting of three members elected by the Judicial Council.

The tribunals' responsibilities include:

- judging contestations and appeals rejected by electoral judges;
- directing and supervising elections to ensure they are lawfully conducted;
- participating in the vote count.

The Electoral Registry Office (ERO)

The Permanent Register actually comprises two registers: a register of resident citizens and a register of foreign-born citizens who live in Paraguay and have the right to vote (Act 834, s.106 to 122). Two persons appointed by the TSJE are responsible for the Permanent Register.

The two parties, movements or alliances with the largest representation in Parliament name a representative to the ERO, who must subsequently be approved by the TSJE.

The role of the ERO is to register electors on the voters' list, to operate the Permanent Register, and to keep track of political parties, alliances and movements.

To register and vote, electors must have an identification card. This card may only be issued by the Identification Department of the National Police Force (*Departamento de identificaciones de la policía nacional*), with the administrative support of the ERO.

An up-to-date copy of the electoral register for each district must be submitted to the ERO on the first business day in March of each year. This document must include persons who are newly registered, no longer registered, or suspended from the list. Before March 30, the ERO must send an up-dated preliminary version of the Permanent Register to the offices of each electoral district. A definitive version must be finalized at least 30 days before the election. On election day, each table in a polling station must be in possession of four copies of the Register (Act 834, s. 102).

Civic Assemblies

Civic assemblies are temporary electoral bodies composed of five members and their substitutes. Members are designated by the Electoral Tribunals on the recommendations of the parties, in a proportion that reflects the number of votes obtained by those parties in the previous election.

Civic Assemblies look after the logistical and organizational aspects of election day (location of polling stations, dissemination of voting materials, etc.)

Electoral Counsel

These persons are appointed by the Supreme Court of Justice, on the recommendations of the Judicial Council. Their role is to defend citizens and represent the public interest throughout the electoral process. Every district that has an Electoral Judge also has an Electoral Counsel who scrutinizes the operations of electoral institutions and reports to the Attorney General (Act 635, s. 24).

4.4 Voting operations

Polling Stations

Each municipality constitutes an electoral district, with the capital Asunción a district unto itself (Act 834, s. 107). There are 232 electoral districts in all.

Each table at a polling station consists of three members (one of whom is made presiding officer on the basis of a random name-draw) appointed by an Electoral Judge 15 days prior to the election, on the recommendations of the three political parties, alliances or movements with the largest representation in Parliament. Each member is of necessity from a different party, alliance or movement (Act 834, s. 177).

The Civic Assembly or its delegate oversees the composition of a voting table where the presiding officer or another member is absent (Act 834, s. 197); the absent member's place is thus filled by his or her substitute; if the substitute is absent, the matter is decided by a name-draw of the other substitutes present; if there are no other substitutes, a listed elector (i.e., one whose name appears on the voters' list) present at the time is chosen for the job.

With the approval of the Civic Assembly, any party, alliance or movement that runs candidates in an election may designate a witness (*veedor*) for each voting table (*mesa receptora de votos*), 10 days before the election is held (Act 834, s. 189).

All parties, alliances and movements may assign two representatives and their substitutes to the voting centres (*local de votación*) where they are running candidates. A representative and substitute may likewise be appointed for each electoral district or electoral college (Act 834, s. 188). Representatives have uninhibited access to voting centres and may scrutinize voting procedures and formulate complaints or contestations, in accordance with the Elections Act (Act 834, s. 188).

The legislation provides for one voting table per 200 electors, but permits a maximum of 300 electors per table. There are two polling booths per table (resolution 21/2008), which means that two electors can vote at the same time.

Electronic Voting

The potential of electronic ballot boxes was assessed in a pilot project during the 2001 municipal elections. The Unit for the Promotion of Democracy (UPD) of the Organization of American States (OAS) acted as advisor on the project through its program for strengthening electoral systems and processes. Brazil provided technical support and loaned electronic ballot boxes; the U.S. funded the project, which continued to run its course during the general elections of 2003 and the municipal elections of 2006.

Electronic ballot boxes gave rise to much debate during the 2008 electoral campaign. Most of Paraguay's political parties, alliances and movements spoke against their use, the sole exception being the Colorado Party. The TSJE settled the matter in February 2008, ruling that traditional ballot boxes alone would be used in the April 20 elections (resolution 12/08).

Paraguay's traditional ballots show the colours of each party or bear photographs of the candidates, in particular of the presidential and gubernatorial candidates. There is a separate ballot for each elected office (President, Vice-President, Member, Senator, Governor, Member of a departmental assembly and Member of the Parlasur).

Polling Day

Under the Elections Act, polling day begins officially at midnight; there is no advance polling. Section 195 of the Act prohibits, on polling day,

- gatherings of persons within 200 metres of voting centres (except electors in line to vote);
- possession of a weapon within 200 metres of voting centres;
- public entertainments until two hours after the election;
- the sale of alcoholic beverages; and
- political party information outlets within 200 metres of voting centres.

On April 20, voting tables will be open from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (resolution 21/2008). The presiding officer and the other two members, with their substitutes, must be at the table by 6:00 a.m.. The three members review the voting material: quantity of ballots, the register, cards identifying tables and candidates. Ballot boxes must be sealed with adhesive paper on which the members have affixed their signatures. The members are also responsible for ensuring that the premises are ready for the turn-out.

At 6:30, the members of the table must issue an attestation as to the composition of the table, to be included with the documents sent to the TSJE after the vote.

Electors vote in order of their arrival at the polls, with priority given to pregnant women, persons with reduced mobility or health problems, persons 75 or older, and electoral authorities and candidates.

Electors must show their identification card at the voting table. The presiding officer and members check that the card is valid and corresponds with the register; if there is a doubt, or if a witness or representative demands further verification of an elector's identity, the matter is decided by majority vote of the three officials at the table, who check the card against the register. Afterwards, the ruling must be issued as a document (s. 209).

If the elector's identity is confirmed, the two members sign the ballot on the back, in the shaded area reserved for that purpose. They must then check to see that the fingers of the elector's right hand are free of ink or any other substance.

After selecting the candidate of their choice in the voting booth, electors fold their ballots and return them to the table for the presiding officer's signature. A one-finger ink fingerprint is taken of each elector before he or she may deposit the ballot in the ballot box. The elector then receives a confirmation of participation bearing his or her name, identification number, electoral district number and voting table number.

Electors who are physically incapable of marking their ballot or depositing it in the ballot box may request the assistance of a reliable person for this purpose (s. 217).

To prevent election fraud, the TSJE recently adopted resolution 22/2008, which provides for such measures as bar codes and special paper for ensuring the security of the electoral envelope containing voting-table and other electoral documents. In addition, each table will be identified by an alphanumeric code, and the members of the table will be more effectively screened. Lastly, for the first time in Paraguay’s electoral history, there will be three ballot boxes for each table, one for each type of election: presidential, legislative (Parlasur and Senators) and departmental (Members, Governors, and Members of departmental assemblies).

Ballots	
Ballot Box 1: Presidential Elections	1 ballot
Ballot box 2: Legislative Elections	1 ballot (Senators)
	1 ballot (Mercosur Parliament (Parlasur))
Ballot Box 3: Departmental Elections	1 ballot (Members)
	1 ballot (Governors)
	1-ballot (Departmental assemblies)

After 4:00 p.m. only electors who are already in line may vote. Next, members of the table who have not yet voted may do so. Closing of the polls may be postponed to compensate exactly for any interruptions that may have taken place during the day (ss. 218 and 219).

An interruption in the vote must be justified by the members at the table, who then inform the Civic Assembly. If a vote is definitively suspended, the votes cast up to that point do not count and are destroyed (s. 215).

In no case may a voting table operate without all three of its members present. If there is a substitution, an explanatory document must be issued to that effect (art. 216).

When the polls close, the number of persons who voted must be entered on the registry form. The whole must be signed by the members of the table and, of their own free will, by the witnesses of the different parties, alliances and movements (s. 220).

Voting is by secret ballot, but vote-counting is public and may be observed in silence by any elector, at a distance determined by the presiding officer of the table (s. 221).

The steps in vote-counting must be carried out without interruption. These steps are:

- opening the ballot boxes;
- counting the ballots (ballots that do not meet the applicable standards or are not signed by the members of the table are cancelled);
- comparing the number of counted ballots with the number of electors who voted. Any difference must be entered in the Elections Statement. If the number of counted ballots exceeds the number of electors, the presiding officer destroys the surplus ballots. If the number of surplus ballots represents 10% or more of the total number of votes, all votes from the table are cancelled;

- placing the ballots back in the ballot boxes;
- reading the ballots aloud, according to type of election and political party. This is done by the presiding officer;
- tabulating the ballots and submitting them to the witnesses, by category, beginning with the presidential election;
- recounting the votes and announcing the results aloud;
- issuing the Elections Statement (number of votes cast by category, and complaints).

The Elections Statement, the document attesting to the composition of the table, the register and any document of complaint or contestation, must be inserted in the electoral envelope, which is sealed and signed by the members of the table before being placed in a plastic envelope and submitted to the Civic Assembly; the latter issues an acknowledgement of receipt to the presiding officer and the Electoral Judges. In a final step, the package is submitted to the Electoral Judges and then to the tribunals of each riding for a comprehensive vote-count by district or department.

At the national level, votes are tabulated by TSJE. In the upcoming elections, preliminary results (*Trasmisión de Resultados Electorales Preliminares* or TREP) will be announced in the hours immediately following the closing of the polls, official results on May 23, 2008.

5. MISSION ACTIVITIES PRIOR TO ELECTION DAY

5.1 Arrival of the delegation and accreditation of members

Upon arrival in Asunción on April 16, 2008, the COPA mission issued a press release (Appendix V) 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 April 16, 17, 18 and 19, 2008, the mission attended several working meetings in Asunción with representatives of institutions and organizations involved in the electoral process in order to understand the organization of the Paraguayan elections. The remarks and information gathered during these meetings are summarized below⁷.

A) Electoral authorities

Mr. Rafael Dendia, President of the Superior Tribunal of Electoral Justice of Paraguay – Thursday, April 17, 2008, 9 a.m.

Mr. Dendia said he was very happy to have an international team of electoral observers on hand to observe Paraguay's elections, which he believed would be conducted in a fair and transparent manner.

He noted that the organization of the election depends not only on permanent personnel, but on temporary staff such as voting-table members. Under the Elections Act, the Electoral Justice

⁷ In this report, the members of the mission only present the comments made by institutional and organizational representatives. They do not endorse the opinions expressed by their interlocutors.

System (EJS) is responsible for choosing voting-table members from among the persons proposed by the political parties. These members have important responsibilities, such as not granting the right to vote to a person whose identification card is illegible or whose photo on the card is not clear. For Mr. Dendia, the main problem on polling day was likely to be lateness in having voting tables ready for the vote: the absence of a member means that the Civic Assembly or its delegate must arbitrate the composition of the table, a process which can be time-consuming.⁸

In Mr. Dendia's view, vote-counting could present difficulties since, having become accustomed to electronic ballot boxes in the last elections; the EJS had reinstated paper ballots at the request of the political parties.

M. Dendia confirmed that registration on the voters' list is voluntary. On October 31, 2007, the provisional list was made public by the EJS. For a period of 30 days the list could be modified in response to voters' requests. After revision, the list was sent to each political party. Mr. Dendia estimated that 500,000 eligible voters had not registered to vote. And while voting is compulsory in Paraguay, there is no penalty for not voting. Mr. Dendia expected voter turn-out to be in the neighbourhood of 60% to 65%.

He also underlined the fact that a cooperative relationship exists between the EJS and the political parties, despite the criticism and recriminations directed at the former by the latter.

Lastly, Mr. Dendia gave three reasons to explain the interest sparked by these elections: (1) for the first time there was a possibility of a woman's being elected President; (2) the Colorado Party, which has been in power for the past 60 years, could lose the presidential election; (3) the three main parties were running neck and neck in the polls. In Mr. Dendia's opinion, a close race would increase the risk of tension. He also thought that the preliminary results of the presidential election would be known by about midnight.

B) Political parties

Ms. Blanca Ovelar, Presidential Candidate — *Partido Colorado* (ANR) – Friday, April 18, 2008, 10 a.m.

From the outset, the Colorado Party candidate maintained that the two candidates with the best chance of being elected, herself and Mr. Lugo, were both outsiders—a fact which she said demonstrated the wearing effect of time on Paraguay's political class.

Ms. Ovelar saw the withdrawal of electronic ballot boxes as a step backwards, since vote-counting would be significantly slower with the return to paper ballots. For the next elections she wants to see electronic boxes equipped with a tamper-proof mechanism that would reassure all those concerned by the question.

Ms. Ovelar expressed her continued confidence in the TSJE, while at the same time noting that a power-struggle within that institution may have reduced its credibility with the public. She said that the Electoral Justice System was doing an excellent job, particularly in the transmission of preliminary election results, and is perhaps one of the most important institutions in Paraguay's transition to democracy.

⁸ Under the Elections Act, the voting table cannot be constituted without the presence of a presiding officer and two other members (Act 834, s. 197).

She declared herself ready to acknowledge defeat on election night, even if by a single vote, and called on the other candidates to make the same commitment. She agreed with the TSJE proposal that no candidate announce his or her own victory before the results of the summary vote-count were in. Her chief fear was that, in the event of a close race, defeated candidates might be tempted to declare themselves victorious, thus undermining the winning candidate's legitimacy.

On the potential for electoral fraud, she recognized the problems posed by duplicate identification cards and by deceased persons figuring on the voters' list, but did not believe these would be significant factors on election day.

Mr. Fernando Lugo, Presidential Candidate — *Alianza Patriótica para el Cambio (APC)* - Friday April 18, 2008, 12 p.m.

Mr. Lugo noted that fraud was a major issue in this election. For the Patriotic Alliance for Change (APC), which is formed of nine different political parties, reliability of the system remains the great concern, and it was for this reason that the Alliance urged the Electoral Justice System to spare no effort in being transparent and open. However, at the time of the working meeting, Mr. Lugo regretted the TSJE's decision to bar opposition parties from being present for the transmission of preliminary election results.⁹ He also drew attention to the fact that electoral authorities had failed to respond to the complaints formulated by the Alliance.

Still, he predicted a stunning victory for his party. He expected to win by a wide margin over the second-place candidate, and felt that instances of fraud would not be sufficient to reverse the results.

Mr. Lugo considered that the voters' list revision had not been sufficiently thorough, given that names of deceased persons remained on the list. He touched on the phenomenon of "scattering" voters, and maintained that out of 200 electors for a given voting table, 4 or 5 have been "scattered" to a far away polling station.¹⁰ He also touched briefly on the purchase of identification cards.

Mr. Lugo described the practice that consists in tampering with elections statements in transit and affirmed that the Alliance would redouble its efforts to prevent the practice. Accordingly, the Alliance will have a representative at every voting table in the country.

Arguing that the Colorado Party would incite the country's civil servants and their families—close to half a million individuals—to vote for the party in power, Mr. Lugo affirmed that he considered all individuals who were not government employees as potential electors for his coalition.

Mr. Lugo declared that the Alliance would accept defeat, but would tolerate no electoral fraud.

⁹ On Friday, April 18, TSJE President Rafael Dendia announced that a representative of each of the four main presidential candidates, together with international observers from the OAS, the IFES and the IIDH/CAPEL, could henceforth be present for the transmission of preliminary results, an option not available in the past.

¹⁰ This refers to the practice of preventing electors from voting by deliberately registering them, without their knowledge, at polling stations located far from their homes. The practice is thought by candidate Lugo to favour the party in power.

Mr. Lino Cesar Oviedo, Presidential Candidate — *Unión Nacional de Ciudadanos* — Friday, April 18, 2008, 3 p.m

Convinced that he will be elected President on April 20, Mr. Oviedo said he was pleased by the presence of so many international observers, a presence that, in his opinion, was very important for Paraguay. These observers, he affirmed, would contribute to a trouble-free and transparent election process.

He indicated that corruption was undermining his country and that no opposition candidate would claim to have confidence in the Electoral Justice System. In addition, many Paraguayans wondered why they should bother to vote when nothing ever changed anyway.

He identified a number of dangers to watch out for on election day: possible doctoring of elections statements; the presence of deceased persons' names on the voters' list; and the practice of voter "scattering".

According to Mr. Oviedo, electoral fraud and manipulation would most likely benefit supporters of the Colorado Party. Mr. Oviedo asked why nobody was denouncing such excessive spending. In his view, 70% of the country's civil servants are in the pay of the Colorado Party.

Mr. Pedro Fadul, Presidential Candidate — *Patria Querida* — Friday, April 18, 2008, 5 p.m.

Mr. Fadul opened by saying that Paraguay's political class was experiencing a crisis of confidence and credibility.

He thanked the international observers for their presence and their efforts, but said that Paraguayans remained pessimistic. Still, he predicted the beginning of a new era for his country.

He claimed that the Electoral Justice System had done nothing to reduce the risk of electoral irregularities or fraud, and drew attention to the fact that his party had proposed the creation of an Independent Electoral Council to replace the TSJE, but to no avail.

In Mr. Fadul's view, the voting tables will be controlled by the country's two biggest traditional parties, the Colorado Party and the Authentic Radical Liberal Party (ARLP, the main party of the Alliance supporting Fernando Lugo). He also thought that the presidential race would be close.

C) Political authorities and international governmental organization

Mr. Miguel A Sanguier, President of the Chamber of Senators of Paraguay — Thursday, April 17, 2008 11 a.m.

In Mr. Sanguier's opinion, Paraguay is characterized by a culture of fraud. Little by little, however, attempts are being made to change this unhealthy state of affairs, unhealthy because it tends to undermine the very foundations of a democratic system of government. The presence of international observers would, he said, be helpful in preventing fraud during the elections—seen as historic—of April 20, when for the first time the governing party could lose the presidency.

To detect fraud attempts, he called on the COPA delegation to pay close attention to each operation in the electoral process as it unfolded at the polling stations, and to note whether or

not the procedure prescribed by the legislation was respected. He feared that electoral authorities would close their eyes to irregularities that did occur.

Mr. Sanguier maintained that, until recently, the executive members of the TSJE reflected in some measure the political lay of the land, with one member affiliated with the Colorado Party, one with the Radical Liberals and one independent. However, this equilibrium was upset when the independent went over to the Colorado Party.

Mr. Sanguier described as follows the practice of “scattering” voters: An elector registers to vote in the district in which he or she lives, but come polling day realizes that his or her name appears in the electoral register of a district 500 km away. Mr. Sanguier put at 30,000 to 40,000 the number of electors who will be unable to vote because authorities in charge of updating the voters’ list have intentionally registered them at polling stations too far away from their homes, in other departments.

On the subject of the democracy clause with which all members of the Southern Common Market (Mercosur) must comply, Mr. Sanguier said that any country contravening the principles of the clause would be liable to economic sanctions.¹¹

Lastly, he expressed his concern about the unrest that could arise on election night in the event of a close race.

Mr. Oscar Rubén Salomón, President of the Chamber of Deputies of Paraguay — Thursday April 17, 2008 12:30 p.m.

During a working lunch, Mr. Salomón underlined the importance of the presence at these elections of international observers, who would be the eyes of the world and could subsequently describe to others the situation prevailing in Paraguay.

He expected a close race and stressed that the will of the people had to be respected.

Ms. Maria Emma Mejía, Chief of the Organization of American States (OAS) Mission to Paraguay and former Columbian Foreign Affairs Minister – Saturday, April 19, 2008, 4 p.m.

Ms. Mejía told the delegation that the OAS observation mission comprised 70 observers of 15 different nationalities. She also noted that national observers would also be present on election day.

She had no incidents to report as to the organization of the elections, and believed that the main problem facing the authorities was the public’s lack of confidence and trust in the election process. In her view, the Electoral Justice system would be the first to be blamed if there were irregularities on election day. She saw the pre-election tensions as being caused by this.

¹¹ The coup d’état attempt in Paraguay in April 1996 led to the adoption of the *Presidential Declaration on Commitment to Democracy in Mercosur*, in San Luis, Argentina, on June 25, 1996, and to the adoption of the *Protocol on Democratic Commitment in the Southern Common Market, the Republic of Bolivia and the Republic of Chile*, in Ushuaia, Argentina, on July 24, 1998. The Protocol comprises seven articles and provides that member States may suspend a state’s rights and obligations deriving from the integration processes in the event of a breakdown of democracy in that State.

With regard to the transmission of preliminary election results, Ms. Mejía drew attention to the fact that the three main observer organizations (the OAS, the IFES et l'IIDH/CAPEL) had finally been authorized by the Electoral Justice System to observe the quick count. The political parties were also authorized to participate.

D) Civil society organizations

Ms. Maria A. Cano Radil, President of *Tiempo Nuevo* and Senate Candidate for the Colorado Party – Wednesday, April 16, 2008, 4 p.m.

Tiempo Nuevo is a non-government organization that encourages women to play a leading role in politics and in society generally. Over the past few years it has set up a Women's Parliament which has met with much success.

Ms. Cano noted that women made up 20% of the Colorado Party's candidates, counting all levels, but considered that only ten or so of these candidates had a chance of being elected on April 20.

She also referred to the Colorado Party's primary election, which opposed Ms. Ovelar, former Education Minister, and Mr. Castiglioni, Vice-President, and ended in victory for the former. The defeated candidate cried fraud and refused to throw his support behind Ms. Ovelar. According to Ms. Cano, this was the first time in its 60-year reign that the Colorado Party would be divided going into an election.

During the working meeting, Ms. Cano questioned the reliability of the voters' list and identified three problems: the presence on the list of many people over a hundred years old, the presence of deceased persons, and the practice of "scattering" voters.

She also talked about problems relating to the preparation and distribution of election materials, citing instances of pre-marked ballots and of identification cards being withheld to prevent electors from voting.

She denounced both the pressure tactics employed by the governing party to obtain the support of civil servants, and its use of state property during an election period. She raised the possibility that, on election day, attempts may be made to buy the votes of election workers or falsify elections statements in transit.

On the possibility of violence erupting on election day, Ms. Cano said that Paraguayans were a non-violent people, and that they had decided in favour of real change. She noted that, as far as she was concerned, the armed forces had declared that they would respect election results, and Paraguay's Mercosur partners would not support acts of election violence. For all these reasons, she did not think violence would occur.

Messrs. Gerald McCulloch, Executive Director, and Victor Gonzalez Acosta, Vice-President, and Ms. Graciela Narvaja Jones, Director of the *Cámara de Comercio Paraguayo-Americana (AmCham)* — Thursday, April 17, 2008, 2 p.m.

At the very outset of the meeting, the representatives of the Paraguayan American Chamber of Commerce voiced to the COPA delegation their fears that the Paraguayan government could try to use the international observers to validate the election results on April 20.

Next they spoke of the government's putting pressure on the approximately 200,000 State employees to vote for the party in power. As an example, they pointed to the Colorado Party's campaign-closing rally, at which 90% of the participants were civil servants obliged to attend.

They expressed concern about the independence of the Electoral Justice System and about the work it has done. On the basis of fraudulent practices in past elections, they adduced the following examples of what could take place this time around:

- replacement by the party in power of the voting table authorities proposed by opposition parties that are absent on the morning of the elections;
- intentional failure to correctly sign elections statements from voting tables where the results do not favour the party in power, thus causing such results to be nullified;
- loss of documents when results are transmitted;
- the "scattering" of voters when the voters' list is drawn up, a practice which they say has been going on since the end of the dictatorship.

During the working meeting, they pointed to irregularities that could occur during the transmission of preliminary results, although at that time the TSJE had not yet authorized the political parties to be present for that operation.

Ms. Idalina Gómez Hansen, Coordinator of the rural sector of the *Comité de Iglesias para Ayudas de Emergencias* (CIPAE), accompanied by Ms. Julia Cabello Alonso of *Tierra Viva* and other colleagues — Thursday, April 17, 2008, 4 p.m.

The representatives of these organizations, part of whose work is aimed at encouraging public participation in the electoral process, agreed that the present electoral campaign was not without worrisome aspects.

They noted that, realizing that it could lose the presidential election for the first time, the governing party would take all possible measures to reverse the trend and win the election.

They said that the climate was favourable to fraud and manipulation, in particular with regard to vote-buying, confiscation of identification cards in return for financial consideration, and voter "scattering" when the electoral list is drawn up. Even if such practices were committed before April 20 and not in the polling stations on election day, they deplored that the will of the people should be thus manipulated.

They believed that a high voter turn-out could favour Fernando Lugo's Alliance, but also noted that the Colorado Party would do all it could to persuade State employees, almost half a million in number, to vote for it. They said that the election race was very unequal.

In their view, the TSJE is the State institution with the least credibility in the eyes of the public. They pointed out that the political parties had challenged in no uncertain terms the TSJE's decision not to permit them to be present for the transmission of preliminary results, which they were formerly allowed to do.

They noted that the composition of the TSJE had been criticized, since its members had cut off communications with each other. They also believed that only the Colorado Party and the Liberal Radicals would be able to have a representative at each of the country's voting tables.

Mr. Gustavo Volpe, President of the *Unión Industrial Paraguaya* (UIP), accompanied by his colleagues — Thursday, April 17, 2008, 6 p.m.

The UIP (Paraguay industrial union) is a corporate organization whose mission is to provide services and meet the needs of its membership, which consists of businesses in the industrial, commercial and agroprocessing industries.

The UIP representatives said that election day would be a celebration of democracy, that the will of the people had to be respected and that all forms of violence must be prohibited.

They preferred not to give an opinion on the organization of the elections, stating that they were not involved in the electoral process.

They noted that the possibility of having Fernando Lugo as the country's President was a source of much concern in the industrial sector, given the man's leftist tendencies, but that his alliance with the Radical Liberals could work to calm these apprehensions. Another source of concern was the possibility of interference in Paraguay's internal affairs by Latin American countries with radical leftist governments.

They thought it important that election observers stay in the country until the end of the process, that is, until the newly elected persons were sworn in.

They stated that the public was beginning to question the ability of a democratic system to find solutions to the country's economic problems. Formerly, they said, the people had full stomachs but could not express themselves freely; now the reverse was true.

Messrs. Agustín Carrizosa, Executive President, and Alvaro Caballero, General Coordinator of the *Centro de Informacion y Recursos para el Desarrollo* (CIRD) – Saturday, April 19, 2008, 11 a.m.

The CIRD was founded in 1988 to support civil society organizations wishing to contribute to the country's development while at the same time promoting social responsibility.

Though polls show a certain shrinking in the gap between the three main presidential candidates with regard to voting intentions, the CIRD representatives said that the chances of a Colorado Party defeat had never been so great.

As for electronic voting, used during the last elections, they held that there was still so much suspicion surrounding its use as to make a return to paper ballots inevitable, at least for the time being. They added that even the Colorado Party did not want to use electronic ballot boxes in primary elections. However, it was observed that, since the decision to return to paper ballots, very little training has been given to election workers in anticipation of the April 20 elections.

The CIRD representatives pointed out that, for the first time, the TSJE's preliminary results transmission process had been contested by the political parties, who were not permitted to participate in its development, though they would be present for the disclosure of those results.

They also mentioned the return of independent electoral monitoring to be carried out by civil society organizations under the auspices of the SAKA. According to Messrs. Carrizosa and Caballero, lack of confidence in the TSJE has brought back independent monitoring, which had

been abolished at the end of the 1990s. The SAKA intended to deploy observers to systematically monitor 1150 voting tables throughout the country.

Fraud during the transmission of final elections statements was not in their eyes the main problem. They saw vote-buying as more worrisome, and indicated that they had received, on the same day as our visit, a complaint to the effect that voting-table workers had been “bought” for the elections.

6. MISSION ACTIVITIES ON ELECTION DAY

6.1 Composition and deployment of the COPA observation teams

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

- 1) The first team, made up of representatives of Argentina and Mexico, that is to say Ms. **Edda Acuña**, Mission Leader, Mr. **Ernesto Angulo Milla**, Mr. **Eduardo Nava** and Ms. **Mailén Vélez**, observed the voting operations in 21 polling stations of the city of Asunción.

City/District	Name of voting centre	No. of polling station	Arrival time	Departure time
Asunción	Escuela Graduada N° 3 Republica del Brasil	N° 3	6:50 am	7:33 am
Asunción	Escuela Graduada N° 3 Republica del Brasil	N° 6	6:50 am	7:30 am
Asunción	Colegio Presidente Franco	N° 1	7:45 am	NA
Asunción	Universidad Católica	N° 1	8:10 am	8:30 am
Asunción	Universidad Católica	N° 4	8:10 am	NA
Asunción	Escuela Nacional de Niñas	N° 2	8:34 am	9:00 am
Asunción	Escuela Nacional de Niñas	N° 5	8:49 am	9:05 am
Asunción	Colegio Cristo Rey	N° 4	9:12 am	9:30 am
Asunción	Colegio Cristo Rey	N° 3	9:15 am	9:30 am
Asunción	Colegio Virgen de Fátima	N° 5	9:45 am	10:10 am
Asunción	Colegio Virgen de Fátima	N° 12	9:45 am	10:07 am
Asunción	Colegio Virgen de Fátima	N° 9	9:45 am	NA
Asunción	Colegio San José	N° 12	10:25 am	10:50 am
Asunción	Colegio Monseñor Lasagna	N° 3	11:00 am	NA
Asunción	Escuela San Antonio de Padua	N° 10	11:38 am	11:50 am
Asunción	Escuela San Antonio de Padua	N° 3	11:35 am	11:50 am
Asunción/Santísima Trinidad	Colegio San Vicente de Paúl	N° 5	11:30 am	NA
Asunción	Colegio Naciones Unidas	N° 10	NA	NA
Asunción	Escuela Republica del Perú	N° 22	11:55 am	12:10 pm

City/District	Name of voting centre	No. of polling station	Arrival time	Departure time
Asunción/ Santísima Trinidad	Escuela Técnico Javier	Nº 4	3:30 pm	5:30 pm
Asunción/ Santísima Trinidad	Escuela Técnico Javier	Nº 2	3:30 pm	5:30 pm

- 2) The second team, made up of representatives of Mexico and Argentina, that is to say Mr. **Mario López Valdez**, Ms. **Silvia Caballero** and Ms. **Monica Casazza**, observed the voting operations in 10 polling stations of the city of Asunción. Observation was carried out for each voting centre visited in its entirety and not for each polling station.

City/District	Name of voting centre	No. of polling station	Arrival time	Departure time
Asunción/Santísima Trinidad	Colégio Nacional Vicente Ignacio Iturbe	NA	9:15 am	NA
Asunción/Santísima Trinidad	Colegio privado americano de Asunción	NA	10:05 am	NA
Asunción/Santísima Trinidad	Colegio Nacional Nuestra Señora de la Asunción	NA	11:00 am	NA
Asunción/Santísima Trinidad	Colegio Privado Alemán Concordia	NA	11:30 am	NA
Asunción/Santísima Trinidad	Escuela Republica Oriental del Uruguay	NA	12:20 pm	NA
Asunción/Santísima Trinidad	Colegio Técnico Javier	NA	NA	NA
Asunción/Santísima Trinidad	Escuela Nacional Profesor Silvia Miranda	NA	NA	NA
Asunción/Santísima Trinidad	Colegio Nacional Carlos A. López	NA	NA	NA
Asunción/Santísima Trinidad	Colegio Privado San Agustín	NA	NA	NA
Asunción/Santísima Trinidad	Colegio Experimental Paraguay Brasil	NA	3:30 pm	NA

- 3) The third team, made up of representatives of Québec, that is to say Mr. **Alexandre Cloutier**, Mr. **Jacques Paquet** and Mr. **Stéphane Dolbec**, observed the voting operations in 16 polling stations of the city of Asunción and the Central department.

City/District/Department	Name of voting centre	No. of polling station	Arrival time	Departure time
Asunción/La Encarnación	Escuela San Antonio de Padua	Nº 2	6:40 am	7:30 am
Lambaré/Central	Escuela Santo	Nº 12	7:45 am	8:00 am

City/District/Department	Name of voting centre	No. of polling station	Arrival time	Departure time
department	Domingo de Guzmán			
Lambaré/ Central department	Escuela Santo Domingo de Guzmán	Nº 11	8:00 am	8:20 am
Lambaré/ Central department	Escuela Santo Domingo de Guzmán	Nº 18	8:30 am	9:00 am
Asunción/La Recoleta	Colegio Ysaty	Nº 2	9:10 am	9:25 am
Asunción/La Recoleta	Colegio Ysaty	Nº 10	9:25 am	10:45 am
Asunción/La Recoleta	Colegio General Pablo L. Ávila	Nº 18	10:15 am	10:25 am
Asunción/La Recoleta	Colegio General Pablo L. Ávila	Nº 8	10:30 am	10:40 am
Asunción/La Recoleta	Colegio San Cristóbal	Nº 2	10:55 am	11:10 am
Ypacarai/ Central department	Escuela Superior No 82 Republica de Honduras	Nº 1	1:25 pm	1:35 pm
Ypacarai/Département Central	Escuela Superior Nº 82 Republica de Honduras	Nº 2	1:35 pm	1:45 pm
Aregua/ Central department	Escuela Nº 86 Domingo Martínez Deirala	Nº 12	2:00 pm	2:15 pm
Luque/ Central department	Colegio Nacional Elizardo Aquino de Luque	Nº 4	2:30 pm	2:45 pm
Asunción/La Recoleta	Colegio Goethe	Nº 2	3:07 pm	3:22 pm
Asunción/San Roque	Colegio Juan Ramón Dahlquist	Nº 3	3:35 pm	3:50 pm
Asunción/San Roque	Colegio Juan Ramón Dahlquist	Nº 19	4:00 pm	5:45 pm

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 VII 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 Paraguayan 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 three 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, Asunción, and in the Central Department, 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. The compiled results are as follows:¹²

7.1 The polling stations

At most of the voting tables observed, electors began to vote at 7:00 a.m. as provided for by law. However, voting got off to a late start in a number of instances, when voting-table officers were absent and had to be replaced by their substitutes or, in the absence of the latter, by electors in line to vote.

	YES	NO	No answer
Suitable polling station site and setup	34	3	10
Polling station is complete	36	1	10
Presence of security forces	35	2	10
Presence of candidate/party representatives	34	3	10
Presence of election advertising on site	0	37	10
Acts of voter intimidation	0	33	14

The layout of some voting centres was such as to give electors scant elbow room, but this seemed to be customary and was not the cause of much complaint from electors.

At the *Santo Domingo de Guzman* voting centre, in the town of Lambaré in the Central Department, electors could not identify the voting table for which they were registered because the lists were not in the right place.

COPA observers also noted that, on entering voting centres, electors frequently did not receive the information they required to locate their voting table, and that voting tables situated on upper floors could be difficult to reach for persons with reduced mobility.

7.2 Election materials

Generally speaking, election materials were provided in sufficient quantity and met prescribed standards.

¹² These results are but a reflection of the observations made by the members of the COPA delegation.

	YES	NO	+ or -	No answer
Voting booths ensuring voter secrecy	28	8	1	10
Voters list	37	0	0	10
Ballots in sufficient quantity	37	0	0	10

However, the layout of some polling stations could cast doubt on the secrecy of the vote. At the *Colegio General Pablo L. Avila* voting centre, in the Recoleta neighbourhood of Asunción, the voting booths for tables 11 and 13 were positioned in such a way as to make it possible to see who electors were voting for. The same may be said with regard to table 12 at the *Virgen de Fátima* voting centre, in Asunción.

The ballot boxes, made of soft transparent plastic, were placed at the front of the voting tables. Electors deposited their ballots through a slot in the ballot box. Election staff kept a close eye on the boxes at all times. However, COPA observers noted that the boxes could be filled to overflowing quite quickly, in which case ballots above the level of the slot could fall out or, if the staff looked away for even a moment, be stolen. However, such incidents were not actually observed.

	Very good	Good	Poor	Very poor	No answer
Election materials	32	3	1	1	10
Work of polling station officials	26	7	2	1	11

For the most part, polling-station officials did an exemplary job. However, it was observed that where election workers had not folded and signed the ballots in advance, the time it took to vote was significantly longer.

At the *Colegio Nacional Elizando Aquino* in Luque (Central Department), the third team of observers, arriving at 2:30 p.m., noted that electors had to wait between 20 and 30 minutes before they could vote.

It was also observed that some voting-table officers, such as those at the *Colegio Técnico Javier* voting centre, in Asunción, lacked training. This slowed down operations to the extent that, in some cases, it took almost 12 minutes to complete all stages.

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	2	32	13
Complaints by voters	3	31	13

However, at table 18 of the *Santo Domingo Guzman* voting centre, in Lambaré, the representatives of the Colorado Party complained about changes in the composition of the

voting table. They maintained that section 177 of the Elections Act had been violated, since there had been no name-draw to replace the absent officers. One elector also complained that she had not been able to vote even though her name appeared on the voters' list.

At table 4 of the *Colegio Nacional Elizando Aquino* voting centre, in Luque (Central Department), an elector complained that she had not been able to vote because the name on her identification card differed from that on the voters' list.

At table 3 of the *Escuela Graduada N° 3 Republica del Brasil* voting centre, an elector complained about the intervention of a national observer while she was exercising her right to vote.

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	37	0	10
Presence of more than one voter in the voting booth	1	36	10
Electoral staff compliance with procedures	37	0	10
Voter understanding of procedures	36	1	10
Presence of unauthorized persons in the polling station	1	36	10
Visit by other international observers	6	29	12
Visit by national observers	19	15	13
Orderly conduct of voting	35	1	11
Interruption in voting during the day	1	33	13

At table 3 of the *Escuela Graduada N° 3 Republica del Brasil* voting centre, election workers explained the lack of organization early in the day by the fact that the country had returned to paper ballots as a result of its decision to abandon electronic voting.

At approximately 8:30 a.m., the third team of observers witnessed serious altercations at tables 11 and 18 of the *Escuela Santo Domingo de Guzman* voting centre, in Lambaré. The tensions seem to have been due, in the first case, to the arbitration of a civic assembly delegate in the re-composition of a voting table whose officers and substitutes were absent and, in the second case, to the work done by the representatives of the political parties. At the *Colegio Juan Ramon Dahlquist* voting centre, a few minutes before the closing of the polls, the same team of observers witnessed an altercation between the representatives of political parties.

At approximately 8:30 a.m., the second team of observers witnessed an altercation at the voting centre located at the *Colegio Nacional Nuestra Señora de la Asunción*. The same team observed that the mandatory identification cards were sometimes old and bore a photo that was unclear, which increased the difficulty of exercising one's right to vote.

7.5 Vote count

The COPA observers witnessed the counting of the votes at the *Colegio Experimental Paraguay Brasil*, *Escuela Técnico Javier* and *Colegio Juan Ramón Dahlquist* voting centres. The first two are in the Santísima Trinidad neighbourhood, the third in the San Roque neighbourhood of Asunción. The vote count took place in a calm and serious manner, was done transparently, and in conformity with the provisions of the Elections Act.

However, at the *Colegio Juan Ramón Dahlquist* voting centre, the third team of observers was quite concerned by the presence at each voting table of members of the national police force, who were taking note of the presidential election results in order, they said, to report to their superiors.

It should be noted that according to section 194 of Paraguay's electoral code (Act 834/96), police authorities are allowed to place at the disposal of the presiding officer of each table enough police officers to ensure a free and orderly election.

8. MISSION CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

At the end of its mission, the COPA delegation gave a summary account of its observations in a press release (Appendix VIII).

Despite a few minor irregularities, the members of the delegation were satisfied that the Elections Act was respected and that, notwithstanding certain tensions, the election was orderly.

They were impressed by electors' enthusiasm and their readiness to take part in this important electoral event. They also drew attention to the fine job done by election personnel and by the representatives of the political parties. They concluded that, generally speaking, the election was carried out in an exemplary fashion.

They were gratified to note a 65% voter-participation rate, and an absence of violence or unrest when the results were announced.

The COPA delegation did not directly witness any of the irregularities or fraudulent practices identified as being of most concern by the representatives of the institutions and organizations involved in the electoral process and who were met during the mission, namely, (1) vote-buying; (2) duplication of identification cards; (3) the replacement, by supporters of the party in power, of voting-table officers proposed by opposition parties that were absent on the morning of the election; and (4) tampering with or loss of elections statements in transit, preparatory to the transmission of preliminary results. The delegation was not able to observe the transit of elections statements or the quick count. However, it did witness tensions and altercations between political party representatives and election workers in some voting centres where substitute voting-table officers had to be appointed to fill an absence on the morning of the vote.

The COPA delegation expressed concern about the issues surrounding the validity and quality of the voters' list, whose accuracy was very largely called into question by the institutions and organizations directly involved in the electoral process.

With regard to election materials, it was found that the plastic ballot boxes could fill to overflowing quite quickly, in which case ballots above the level of the slot could easily fall out or be stolen. However, such incidents were not actually observed.

Although the Elections Act permits the presence of police officers at each voting table to ensure an orderly vote, the delegation was concerned by the fact that, when ballots were being counted at the *Colegio Juan Ramón Dahlquist* voting centre, in Asunción, members of the national police force were on hand to take note of the presidential election results in order, they said, to report to their superiors. While this may have been an isolated case, it does seem to be at odds with the principle of non-intervention of security forces in the electoral process.

In light of these observations, the COPA Observation Mission recommends that Paraguayan election authorities call upon the country's legislators to make legislative or administrative changes, for the next elections, with a view to:

- ensuring that the voters' list is made more accurate and reliable, in order to allay doubts, increase confidence on the part of both the political parties and the public, limit the risk of election irregularities and foster a smooth election process on polling day;
- if paper ballots are used in the next elections, improving the quality of election materials, in particular with regard to the size of ballot boxes, so as to preclude potential irregularities;
- defining more precisely the role, obligations and rights of the security forces present at voting centres.

Lastly, the members of the COPA delegation would like to make special mention of the warmth and cordiality with which they were received, both by the representatives of institutions and organizations involved in the electoral process who participated in working sessions, and by the voters and election workers encountered at voting centres.

9. APPENDICES

Appendix I – Invitation letter

Tribunal supérieur de justice électorale

Asunción, le 12 février 2008

Monsieur le Président,

À l'occasion des élections générales qui se tiendront le 20 avril prochain, le Tribunal supérieur de justice électorale (TSJE) de la République du Paraguay organise une mission d'observation électorale, composée d'invités étrangers. Le jour du scrutin, le président et le vice-président de la République seront élus, ainsi que les sénateurs, les députés, les gouverneurs et les parlementaires du MERCOSUR.

Dans le cadre de cette mission, le TSJE serait honoré de compter votre organisation parmi les participants. Cette activité bénéficiera sans aucun doute de votre apport précieux, entre autres sur le plan des connaissances dans le domaine électoral. Cependant, pour des raisons financières, il nous sera malheureusement impossible de couvrir les frais qu'entraîne votre participation.

La mission d'observation électorale aura lieu dans la capitale d'Asunción du vendredi 18 avril jusqu'au lundi 21 avril 2008, période durant laquelle se déroule notre programme de travail électoral.

Pour toutes questions, information additionnelle ou, pour nous informer de votre participation lors de cette mission d'observation électorale, je vous prie de contacter M. Pedro Calonga, assistant de la Direction des relations internationales et du protocole de la justice électorale, par courriel au protocolo@tsje.gouv.py, par téléphone au (595)21-6180-213 ou par fax au (595)- 21-6180-217.

Veuillez agréer, Monsieur le Président, mes sentiments les plus distingués.

*Dr. Rafael Dendia
Président*

*Monsieur le Président
Confédération parlementaire des Amériques (COPA)
M. Carlos Jiménez Macias*

TRIBUNAL SUPÉRIEUR DE JUSTICE ÉLECTORALE
Direction des relations internationales et du protocole
Ave. Eusebio Ayala no. 2759 et Santa Cruz de la Sierra, code postal 1888
Asunción - République du Paraguay

Appendix II – Resolution

Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA)

Cancun, Quintana Roo, Mexico
March 15 , 2008

RESOLUTION ON THE DISPATCH OF AN ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION TO PARAGUAY

WHEREAS general elections are to be held in Paraguay on April 20, 2008;

WHEREAS the participation of parliamentarians from COPA in multilateral electoral observation missions is a matter of priority in order to attain its objective of contributing to the strengthening of parliamentary democracy and to the edification of a community of the Americas founded upon respect for human rights and dignity, peace, democracy, solidarity among peoples, social justice, and equity between women and men;

WHEREAS COPA has received on February 12, 2008 an invitation from the President of the Superior Tribunal of Electoral Justice of Paraguay to set up a delegation of COPA parliamentarians to participate in an electoral observation mission in Paraguay ;

We, members of the Executive Committee of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas gathered in Cancun, Quintana Roo, Mexico, on this fifteenth day of March 2008,

DECLARE our support for and our solidarity with Paraguayan society and the democratic institutions of that country in organizing general elections next April 20;

PROPOSE the dispatch of a COPA electoral observation mission to the general elections in Paraguay, with due respect for the national sovereignty of that country;

PLEDGE OURSELVES, in forming a delegation of parliamentarians from the Americas, to uphold the principles of regional balance and political pluralism and in making sure that the observation mission will carry out its task in an independent and impartial manner as stipulated in the By-laws of COPA Electoral Observation Missions.

2008-03-30

Appendix III – Letter of acceptance

P R E S I D E N C I A

16 de marzo de 2008

Dr. Rafael Dendia
Presidente
Tribunal Superior de Justicia Electoral Oficinas Centrales
Dirección de Relaciones Internacionales y Protocolo
Av. Eusebio Ayala No 2759 y Santa Cruz de la Sierra
Código Postal 1888
Asunción
REPUBLICA DEL PARAGUAY

Objeto: Elecciones generales del 20 de abril de 2008

De mi consideración:

Atendiendo la invitación que el Tribunal Superior de Justicia Electoral de la República del Paraguay, hiciera el día 12 de febrero de 2008 a la Confederación Parlamentaria de las Américas (COPA), para que participe como observadora electoral en las próximas elecciones generales que se desarrollarán en dicho país, para elegir Presidente, Vicepresidente, Senadores, Diputados, Gobernadores y Parlamentarios del Mercosur, el día 20 de abril del presente año; y considerando que, uno de los objetivos fundamentales de la COPA 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 de genero, el Comité Ejecutivo de nuestra organización ha decidido autorizar, por medio de una resolución adjunta, que una delegación de la COPA asista como observadora al procesos democrático que tendrá lugar en ese hermano país de Paraguay.



La delegación de la COPA cumplirá su misión entre el 16 y 21 de abril de 2008, y le comunicaré a la mayor brevedad su composición.

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, Asesor 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.

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

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

Se adjunta documentación: Resolución sobre el envío de una misión de observación electoral en Paraguay

c. c. Diputado Jean-François Roux, Presidente de la Comisión de Democracia y Paz de la COPA

Appendix IV – Letter of designation



Senado de la República Mexicana, 11 de abril de 2008

Dr. Rafael Dendia
Presidente
Tribunal Superior de Justicia Electoral Oficinas Centrales
Dirección de Relaciones Internacionales y Protocolo
Av. Eusebio Ayala No 2759 y Santa Cruz de la Sierra
Código Postal 1888
Asunción
REPUBLICA DEL PARAGUAY

Objeto: Elecciones generales del 20 de abril de 2008

Estimado Presidente:

En consideración a la decisión que el Tribunal Superior de Justicia Electoral de la República del Paraguay decidiera el día 12 de febrero de 2008 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, Senadores, Diputados, Gobernadores y Parlamentarios del Mercosur el día 20 de abril del presente año, es un placer informarle que la misión de observación electoral de la COPA, que se llevará a cabo entre el 16 y 21 de abril de 2007 en la Ciudad de Asunción, estará compuesta de las personas siguientes :

Jefa de la misión:

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

Miembros:

Dra. Silvia Caballero, Diputada de la Provincia de Buenos Aires, Argentina

Sr. Ernesto Angulo Milla, Diputado de la Asamblea Legislativa de El Salvador

Sra. Claudia Corichi García, Senadora del Congreso de la Unión Mexicana

Sr. Mario Lòpez Valedéz, Senador del Congreso de la Unión Mexicana

Sr. Eduardo Nava, Senador del Congreso de la Unión Mexicana

Sr. Tomàs Torres Mercado, Senador del Congreso de la Unión Mexicana

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

Sr. Alexandre Cloutier, Diputado de la Asamblea Nacional de Québec


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

Sra. Mailén Vélez, Asesora política de la Senadora Acuña

Lic. Stéphane Dolbec, Director de la cooperación internacional del Director General de Elecciones de Québec y experto en materia electoral

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 V – Press release, April 16, 2008

Delegation of representatives of the Americas to observe Paraguayan elections

Asunción, April 16th 2008 – The parliamentarians of the **Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas Confederation** (COPA) arrived today in Paraguay to observe the general elections that will be held on the 20th of April. The senator of the province of Buenos Aires in Argentina and 1st Vice-President of COPA, Edda Acuña, will head up the electoral observation mission from April 16th to the 21st.

The delegation will also include El Salvador Legislative Assembly member Ernesto Angulo Milla, Senator of the Congress of the Mexican Union Mario López Valedéz, Senator of the Congress of the Mexican Union Eduardo Nava, member of the Chamber of deputies of Brasil Nilson Mourão, member of the Legislative Assembly of the Federal District of Mexico Martín Carlos Olavarrieta, and member of the National Assembly of Québec, Alexandre Cloutier.

Invited by the Superior Tribunal of Electoral Justice of Paraguay as observers of the electoral process, the the COPA parliamentarians will cover the maximum possible number of polling stations on the day of elections. The delegation will also meet with key actors that play a role in the electoral process in order to better assess the state of the organisation of the elections. Candidates, as well as the heads of political parties and civil society organizations will be among those consulted by the COPA delegation. Following the mission, the parliamentarians of the Americas will present a report of their observations to the Paraguayan electoral authorities as well as to those of the COPA.

This is the 7th mission for the COPA. By taking an increasingly active role in election monitoring throughout the Americas, the COPA has established its strategic importance in the consolidation of democracy.

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. For additional information on previous COPA electoral observation missions, please visit the following website: www.copa.qc.ca.

Appendix VI – Program

COPA ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION

**APRIL 16 TO 21, 2008
ASUNCIÓN, PARAGUAY**

PROGRAM

(2008-04-30)

TUESDAY, APRIL 15

All day

Settling in of the members of the delegation at the *Excelsior* Hotel

Accreditation of the observer parliamentarians by Paraguay's Superior Tribunal of Electoral Justice

Confirmation of the appointments scheduled on the program

Confirmation of car rentals

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16

All day

Settling in of the members of the delegation at the *Excelsior* Hotel

Accreditation of the observer parliamentarians by Paraguay's Superior Tribunal of Electoral Justice

Meeting with representatives of institutions and organizations active in the electoral process

4.00 pm

Meeting with Ms. **Maria A. Cano Radil**, President of *Tiempo Nuevo* and Senate Candidate for the Colorado Party

In the evening

Observation of the Colorado Party's campaign closing rally

Working dinner with the members of the mission: preparation of the members of the mission

THURSDAY, APRIL 17

- 9.00 am** Meeting with Mr. **Rafael Dendia**, president of the Superior Tribunal of Electoral Justice of Paraguay
- 11.00 am** Meeting with Mr. **Miguel A Sanguier**, President of the Chamber of Senators of Paraguay
- 12.30 pm** Meeting with Mr. **Oscar Rubén Salomón**, President of the Chamber of Deputies of Paraguay
- 2.00 pm** Meeting with Mr. **Gerald McCulloch**, Executive Director, Mr. **Victor Gonzalez Acosta**, Vice-President and Ms. **Graciela Narvaja Jones**, Director of the *Camara de Comercio Paraguayo-Americana (AmCham)*
- 4.00 pm** Meeting with Ms. **Idalina Gómez Hansen**, Coordinator the rural sector of the *Comité de Iglesias para Ayudas de Emergencias (CIPAE)*, accompanied by Ms. Julia Cabello Alonso of *Tierra Viva* and other colleagues
- 6.00 pm** Meeting with M. **Gustavo Volpe**, president of the *Union Industrial Paraguaya*, accompanied by his colleagues
- In the evening** Observation of the Patriotic Alliance for Change's campaign closing rally
- Working dinner with the members of the mission: debriefing and sharing of observations with a view to the drafting of the mission report

FRIDAY, APRIL 18

This part of the program was organized by Paraguay's Superior Tribunal of Electoral Justice

- 10.00 am** Meeting with Ms. **Bianca Ovelar**, Presidential candidate *Partido Colorado (ANR)*
- 12.00 pm** Meeting with Mr. **Fernando Lugo**, Presidential candidate *Alianza Patriótica para el Cambio (APC)*
- 3.00 pm** Meeting with Mr. **Lino Cesar Oviedo**, Presidential candidate *Unión Nacional de Ciudadanos*
- 5.00 pm** Meeting with Mr. **Pedro Fadul**, Presidential candidate *Patria Querida*

8.00 pm Reception for the international observers offered by Paraguay's Superior Tribunal of Electoral Justice- Yacht & Golf Club *Paraguayo*, Galas Salon

SATURDAY, APRIL 19

11.00 am Meeting with Messrs. **Agustín Carrizosa**, Executive President, and **Alvaro Caballero**, General Coordinator of the *Centro de Informacion y Recursos para el Desarrollo* (CIRD)

4.00 pm Meeting with Ms. **Maria Emma Mejía**, Chief of the Organization of American States (OAS) Mission to Paraguay and former Columbian Foreign Affairs Minister

7.00 pm Working meeting of the members of the mission:

- debriefing and sharing of observations with a view to the drafting of the mission report;
- preparation for election day:
 - deployment plan
 - observation teams

Hotel *Excelsior*

SUNDAY, APRIL 20 : ELECTION DAY

All day Deployment of the observers and observation at the polling stations of the capital region, Guatemala City

Around 4.00 pm Witness the counting of the votes

8.00 pm Working meeting of the members of the mission:

- sharing of observations;
- determination of a common position;
- preparation of the press release and approval by the entire mission;

Hotel *Excelsior*

MONDAY, APRIL 21

In the morning COPA Press release

All day Departure of participants for their places of origin

TUESDAY, APRIL 22

All day Departure of participants for their places of origin

Appendix VII– Observer’s grid



**PARAGUAYAN GENERAL ELECTIONS
April 20, 2008**

ELECTION OBSERVER’S GRID

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Name of observer: _____

City/District: _____

Voting Center: _____

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
Voting booths ensuring voter secrecy		
Voters list		
Ballots in sufficient quantity		

	Very good	Good	Poor	Very poor
Election materials				
Work of polling station officials				

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 other international observers		
Visit by national 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 VIII – Press release, April 21, 2008

COPA Electoral Observation mission

PARLIAMENTARIANS CONGRATULATE THE PARAGUAYAN PEOPLE FOR THE SUCCESSFUL CONDUCT OF THE ELECTIONS

Asunción, April 21st 2008 – A delegation of six parliamentarians of the **Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA)**, headed by Ms Edda Acuña, 1st Vice-President of COPA and senator of the province of Buenos Aires in Argentina, observed the general elections of April 20th 2008. The COPA delegation also included: Ms Silvia Caballero; Member for the province of Buenos Aires, Argentina; Mr. Ernesto Angulo Milla, Member of the Legislative Assembly of El Salvador; Mr. Mario López Valdez and Mr. Eduardo Nava, Senators of the Congress of the Mexican Union; Mr. Alexandre Cloutier, Member of the National Assembly of Québec; and four electoral advisors. The members of the delegation noted that the ballot took place in a calm environment, respectful of the electoral laws in force during these elections.

On election day, the members of the delegation went to the capital, Asunción, and to the Central Department in order to observe balloting in almost fifty polling stations. In spite of a few irregularities, the members of the delegation noted that the electoral process was respected and that the vote was held in an orderly way. “I was impressed by the enthusiasm of the electors and their willingness to participate in this important electoral event”, declared Senator Acuña. In addition, the members of the delegation underlined the rigour with which the electoral personnel, as well as the representatives of the political parties, accomplished their task.

Upon arriving on April 16th, and in addition to the electoral observation conducted in the polling stations, the members of the COPA delegation held important meetings with the country’s presidential candidates, leading authorities of the Congress and of the Electoral Justice, as well as with representatives from the civil society, all with the aim of obtaining information on the situation prevailing in the country.

This was the 7th electoral observation mission by the COPA which has established its strategic importance in the consolidation of democracy by taking an increasingly active role in election monitoring throughout the Americas. Founded in Québec City in 1997, this organisation brings together over 300 parliamentary assemblies of unitary, federal and federated states, as well as the regional parliaments and interparliamentary organizations of the Americas.