



PARLIAMENTARY CONFEDERATION OF THE AMERICAS

JUNE 2008

8TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF COPA

DEAR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

It is our pleasure to invite you to take part in the **8th General Assembly of COPA**, to be held in Mexico next September 9th to 13th and hosted by the Senate of the Republic and the Congress of the State of Mexico, with a view to pursuing the objectives of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas, strengthening democracy and consolidating the continental integration of the parliaments of the Americas.

The General Assembly is the forum for debating, analyzing and closely examining issues relating to continental integration, the strengthening of democracy and the establishment of social justice, which is why we covet your participation in this important event, which will bring together parliamentarians from all regions of the continent and create a favourable environment for agreements that will strengthen the foundations of true inter-American cooperation.

As the General Assembly will bring together delegations from the parliaments of the unitary, federal and federated states, regional parliaments and interparliamentary organizations of the continent, as well as guests and personalities from all the countries of the Americas, your presence would be most desirable.



We have attached the preliminary program of the event and several documents on our Assembly's general theme, **"The Americas in the face of contemporary challenges: food crisis, climate change, migration and development"** to help you choose which of the six COPA standing committee proceedings you wish to participate in.

We lay great importance on your notifying the appropriate authorities of your parliament of your intention to take part in this event so you will be able to make adequate advance preparation and satisfy in timely fashion the Mexican government's entry or visa requirements with respect to your country.

For further information, please visit COPA's Mexican webpage www.diputados.gob.mx/copa. To confirm your attendance at the Assembly, please contact Hugo Vadillo Zurita at the Technical Secretariat, by telephone at + 52 55 57 16 82 53 or + 52 55 56 28 13 00, extensions 1256, 6232 and 6229, or by email at presidencia.copa@gmail.com or copa@congreso.gob.mx

We look forward to welcoming you to the 8th General Assembly of COPA.

Yours sincerely

Senator Carlos Jiménez Macías
President of COPA

Deputy Caritina Saénz Vargas
Executive Secretary

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"If we allow this crisis to go unchecked, much of what has been achieved over the past four years in Haiti could easily unravel," warned Ban Ki-Moon at a high-level meeting on food security in Haiti.

"We need more humanitarian aid now to mitigate the impact of high prices on Haiti's already des-

perate population. And at the same time, we need steps to boost agricultural production and help insulate the poorest from the continued volatility of world commodity markets," remarked the UN Secretary-General.

Ban Ki-Moon pointed out that, though it is first and foremost the Haitian Government's responsibility to address the cri-

sis, the UN is obligated to support every effort made on that front. He added that, beyond the delivery of food assistance, Haiti's national production must be energized and jobs must be generated through labour-intensive activities. Source: *United Nations Information Service*, 02/06/2008

OBAMA MAKES HISTORY



On June 3, 2008, Barack Obama seized his moment in history by becoming the first black Democratic presidential candidate. The Illinois senator won the support of 2,132 delegates, surpassing the 2,118 needed to win the contest. The nomination will be made official at the Democratic National Convention in Denver, Colorado, at the end of August.

The Democratic contest mobilized over 35 million democratic and independent voters in all 50 States. "Tonight, I can stand before you and say that I will be the Democratic nominee for President of the United States," declared Obama before going on to praise Hilary Clinton for the perseverance and conviction she showed throughout the primaries, which lasted nearly six months. "We've certainly had our differences over the last 16 months, but I assure you that, as this intense campaign ends, our party and our country are better off because of her", Obama told the audience, confiding that when the United States finally wins the battle for universal health care, it will be thanks to Hilary Clinton.



Some experts see Obama's declaration as indicative of the type of appointment he may offer Hilary Clinton, namely a cabinet post as health secretary. Be that as it may, such an outcome could only be possible following intense and arduous negotiations with Clinton who, not later than yesterday, told Democrats she was hoping to run for vice-president.

For her part, in a speech she gave in New York, Clinton congratulated Obama on his campaign. However, she did not acknowledge defeat, stating "I will be making no decisions tonight." Rather, she said she would first consult with party leaders.

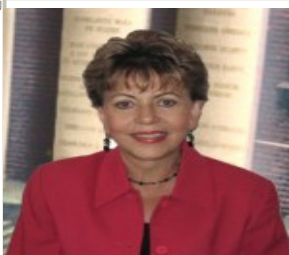


According to Obama, the main difference between himself and the Republican nominee will be found in their economic policy and their strategy regarding Iraq. "McCain offers four more years of Bush economic policies that have failed to create well-paying jobs, or insure our workers, or help Americans afford the skyrocketing cost of college," Obama said. "We spend billions of dollars a month on a war that isn't making the American people any safer," he added.

In order to continue pursuing his dream of becoming President of the United States, Obama's nomination must first be made official by the party, which means he must secure the support of additional super-delegates, support they will surely give now that the final two primaries, South Dakota and Montana, are over. Source : *El Universal de Mexico* newspaper and the BBC in Spanish, 04/06/2008



BETTER ACCOUNTABILITY IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS MANAGEMENT *



Among the elements that are indispensable in ensuring government runs smoothly, the public service is generally understood to designate the collective human resources that enable the various administrative entities to successfully perform the functions for which they were created. So that it may carry out its mission adequately, the public service is divided into a number of hierarchical levels that correspond to the degree of responsibility the different positions carry.

Any State that considers itself modern must, as a basic principle, endeavour to ensure its governmental functions are carried out as efficiently as possible, bearing in mind that as the number and scope of public and parapublic administrative tasks increase, so do the financial and human resources needed. In other words, available resources cannot be managed using the traditional tools of the administrative hierarchy.

Hence the need to create a new culture within the public service in order to increase accountability in public affairs management. Moreover, we must not forget that as a society, we are directly affected by the changes that take place in the various fields of human activity and by the way in which these changes influence power relationships.

In the particular case of Mexico, the functions of the federal public administration require new mechanisms designed to reinforce governmental institutions so that they may be more effective in developing and implementing policies that will enhance the welfare of society as a whole.

To build a more authentic democracy, it is fundamental that public servants be held accountable, just as it is a priority that we repress, in accordance with the law, practices that allow high-ranking public servants to use their discretionary powers to benefit a political party. Likewise, we must ensure public office is not used as a springboard for the fulfilment of personal ambitions, as such behaviour is inherently harmful to society.

It is with all this in mind that I presented to the plenary assembly of the Chamber of Deputies of Mexico a resolution and draft order to amend section 8 of the federal Act respecting the administrative duties of public servants, with a view to requiring all high-ranking public servants to submit a detailed report on the management of their administrative entity and, at the same time, prohibiting the discretionary use of privileged information. The proposed additions to section 8 of the federal Act respecting the administrative duties of public servants are intended to impose the following obligations on all high-ranking public servants:

V.- On completing a term as a public servant of the federal public administration, a secretary or undersecretary must file a written report with the Chamber of Deputies detailing the present status of the administrative entity or under-secretariat for which the public servant was responsible.

Similarly, on or before the 30th calendar day following the end of the term and at the request of the Chamber of Deputies or the Senate, the former secretary or undersecretary of State must appear before the relevant committee to render an account of the activities carried on during the term.

The resolution I presented was referred to the Constitutional Affairs Committee of the Chamber of Deputies for examination and analysis. We hope it will be approved as it would bring about better accountability of public servants.

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CENTRAL AMERICA AND BRAZIL AGREE TO ENTER INTO TALKS LEADING TO A FREE TRADE



The presidents of the Central American nations and their Brazilian counterpart, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, agreed on May 29 in San Salvador to enter into talks next September leading to a free trade agreement.

"We spoke of an eventual associative treaty between Mercosur and Sica (Central American Integration System). The chancellors (Foreign Affairs ministers) and Foreign Trade ministers have examined the question," said El Salvador president, Elias Antonio Saca.

"Negotiations for a free trade agreement between Central America and Mercosur have been a challenge for Brazil and our Mercosur partners for some time. The difference is that our relations

with the Central American nations are now experiencing unprecedented vitality with respect to trade, investments and cooperation," stated Lula da Silva.

The presidents gave their support to the "Iniciativa América Latina y el Caribe sin Hambre" (Initiative Hunger-Free Latin America and the Caribbean), aiming to provide assistance to the most vulnerable countries in that part of the continent and, on a multilateral level, they reaffirmed the need to strengthen the United Nations System and reform its Security Council.

Among other items on the agenda, the delegates discussed the production of food and biofuels, particularly ethanol, food security, and cooperation on several fronts, namely agriculture, climate change and the prevention of natural disasters.

Source: AFP, 30/05/2008



FERNANDEZ RE-ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC WITH OVER 53% OF THE VOTE

Incumbent Dominican President, Leonel Fernandez, was re-elected on May 16 for the 2008-2012 term. More than four million Dominicans cast their ballots and 53.83% opted to keep Fernandez, the Dominican Liberation Party (PLD) candidate, in power. The Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD) candidate, Miguel Vargas came in second with 40.48% of the vote, followed by Amable Aristy of the Social Christian Reformist Party (PRSC) with 4.59%.

Leonel Fernandez does not describe himself as a right- or left-wing Chief of State, but rather as a "21st century leader, a realistic leader in today's world." In a speech he gave after receiving the definitive election results, the re-elected President stated his intention of implementing a social policy that will encompass the health, education and housing sectors and complement the country's economic development. He also expressed his gratitude to expatriate Dominicans who, in a proportion of 60%, placed their trust in him.



Certain political figures see a Pandora's box awaiting the President: on the one hand, the threat of soaring fuel costs (already in the neighbourhood of US\$130) to the Dominican economy and, on the other hand, the dangerous game of chess being played with food production and distribution, involving intense speculation and protectionist measures that, in the international arena, are upsetting trade relations between producing and consuming countries.

President Fernandez has proven beyond a doubt that he is capable of overcoming difficult situations, and pulling through honourably. Clearly, he has understood that solutions are the key to facing a challenge. He works assiduously to stand out as a leader whose sense of responsibility is undeniable. Witness his success in entering into a free trade agreement with the United States, negotiations for which were begun under the previous government, and in signing a crude oil supply agreement with Venezuela to ease his country's fuel bill. Source: *Listin Diario*, daily newspaper, Dominican Republic, 18/05/2008.

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