

FIPA Progress from Mar del Plata to Port of Spain: Opening New Paths of Cooperation in the Americas

Report presented by the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA) at the Fifth Summit of Heads of States and Governments of the Americas

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago
April 17-19, 2009

Foro Interparlamentario de las Américas
Fórum Interparlamentar das Américas



Forum interparlementaire des Amériques
Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas

Table of Contents

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Supporting Summit Mandates: 2005-2009 Progress Report	4
2.1	CONTRIBUTING TO PROSPERITY	4
2.2	DEVELOPING HUMAN POTENTIAL.....	6
2.3	STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY	7
3.	Strengthening Cooperation between Parliaments and Governments in the Achievement of Hemispheric Goals.....	11
3.1	FIPA’S PARTICIPATION IN INTER-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES AND DIALOGUE WITH HEMISPHERIC INSTITUTIONS.....	11
3.2	OTHER MODELS FOR COOPERATION BETWEEN PARLIAMENTS AND GOVERNMENTS	12
4.	Conclusion	13
5.	Appendices	14
5.1	RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CONGRESS “TOWARDS A GENDER-SENSITIVE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE AMERICAS”	14
5.2	5TH PLENARY MEETING WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS	15
	<i>Working Group No.1: Trade and Integration.....</i>	15
	<i>Working Group No.2: Poverty Reduction</i>	16
	<i>Working Group No.3: Fight against Drug Trafficking.....</i>	17
5.3	DECLARATION PRESENTED AT THE 37TH REGULAR SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES	19



I am honoured and very pleased to submit the report “Progress by FIPA from Mar del Plata to Port of Spain: opening new paths of cooperation in the Americas.”

The Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA) was created in 2001 and brings together the national parliaments of the Americas with the commitment to contribute to the integration process as one of the most appropriate instruments for the sustainable and harmonious development of the hemisphere.

The Plan of Action of the Third Summit of the Americas, held in the city of Québec a few days after the creation of FIPA, acknowledged very especially the importance of the Forum as an instrument of cooperation between our countries. This plan urged the countries of the continent to encourage “the cooperation and exchange of experiences and parliamentary best practices between national legislators of the Hemisphere, while respecting the separation and balance of powers, through bilateral, subregional and hemispheric vehicles such as the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA).”

Since the Québec Summit, we parliamentarians have improved our understanding of the political, economic and social issues that affect our hemisphere. This knowledge, backed by an exchange of information and experiences among FIPA members, allows us to defend more effectively the interests of the peoples we represent. We presented some of these achievements in progress reports submitted in the framework of the 2004 Special Summit in Monterrey, and at the 2005 Mar del Plata Summit.

On the one hand, this report presents the achievements we have made through plenary sessions, working groups, training workshops and conferences, on such varied matters as the fight against drug trafficking, gender equality on legislative agendas, the implications of trade for development, or the struggle against poverty.

On the other hand, we would like to highlight the efforts made by FIPA to intensify communications and to define new frameworks for collaboration with the institutions of the Inter-American system.

The draft Declaration of Port of Spain, which will be adopted by our heads of States and Governments on Sunday, gives us a general idea of the actions expected from our leaders, whether they be in the environmental or energy field, in the fight against inequality or in the strengthening of citizens’ security and democracy. Those challenges are even greater in view of the fact that they arise in the context of an unprecedented economic and financial crisis. Therefore, they require not only more effective actions by executive institutions but also a strong involvement by legislatures within their areas of competence in matters of legislation, representation and control.

In this framework, we hope that the Special Parliamentary Dialogue, convened for the first time by FIPA and hosted by the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago in the framework of this 5th Summit, will help to open new paths of cooperation at the inter-American level and to advance in strengthening democratic institutions so as to better serve citizens.

Luiz Carlos Hauly
Member of the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies, FIPA President
April 2009

1. Introduction

The Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA) is an autonomous network committed to promoting parliamentary participation in the Inter-American system and to contributing to interparliamentary dialogue in dealing with matters on the hemispheric agenda, in keeping with OAS General Assembly Resolution 1673/99.

Being the only parliamentary association for national legislatures mirroring the OAS membership, FIPA's role is fundamental in achieving parliamentary participation on issues of importance to the hemisphere.

FIPA was officially constituted during its inaugural meeting, held in Ottawa, Canada, a few days prior to the Third Summit of the Americas, which took place in Quebec City in April 2001. More than 110 parliamentarians from 26 countries in the continent attended the meeting and adopted FIPA's rules and guidelines.



The FIPA Executive Committee meets in Brasilia, 2007

The Plan of Action of the Third Summit of the Americas specifically recognized the importance of FIPA in furthering the objectives of the Summits process on democratic governance. It called on the nations of the Americas to “encourage cooperation and exchange of experiences and parliamentary best practices between national legislators of the Hemisphere, while respecting the separation and balance of powers, through bilateral, subregional and hemispheric vehicles such as the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA);”

The report included below is the third one submitted by FIPA to the Heads of States and Governments of the Americas, following the progress reports submitted at the Special Summit of Monterrey (2004) and at the Mar del Plata Summit (2005).

The second section of this report presents some of the progress made on three major issues of the Summits: creating prosperity, realizing human potential, and strengthening democracy. The third section highlights the actions undertaken by FIPA to strengthen cooperation between governments and parliaments towards the fulfilment of hemispheric goals, as well as examples of existing cooperation models in other organizations.

In order to achieve its objective of encouraging hemispheric cooperation, FIPA needs to have the permanent commitment of the countries of the Americas. This commitment not only relates to the active participation of FIPA's legislature members, but also to the backing of the executive branches of government in strengthening FIPA's role as a predominant player in the Inter-American system.



2. Supporting Summit Mandates: 2005-2009 Progress Report

2.1 Contributing to Prosperity

Working Group on Trade and Integration, Fifth Plenary Assembly (Colombia 2006)

Mar del Plata Declaration, article 6, Fourth Summit of Heads of States and Governments of the Americas, 2005: *"...we reiterate that trade and investment opportunities are necessary for countries in fighting poverty and in their development efforts."*

Mar del Plata Declaration, article 15: *"...we will address the problems that come about because of trade barriers and unsustainable debt, and we will continue to reform the international financial architecture"*

Mar del Plata Declaration, article 18: *"We express our commitment to the progress of the negotiations on the Doha Development Agenda"*

FIPA's main activities are carried out during the annual plenary meetings and in the working groups, where the participating legislators learn more about and discuss different policy options with a view to submitting proposals to meet the political, social, and economic challenges facing the continent.

During FIPA's Fifth Plenary Assembly, held in Bogotá, Colombia, on November 19th-21st, 2006, legislators participating in the Working Group on Trade and Integration submitted a series of recommendations, including the following:

- All barriers to international trade must be eliminated, including tariffs or subsidies that distort international commerce;
- Complementary domestic policies intended to take advantage of opportunities for international insertion should be encouraged, particularly policies on infrastructure, education, State modernization, rural, agricultural and fishery development, and science and technology;
- Policies that favour energy integration should be created, taking into account the challenges related to non-renewable resources and the opportunities offered by renewable resources such as bio-energy, wind energy and other sources.
- A fund with enough resources to facilitate the transition to a freer system of trade and further integration should be established for the countries of the Americas and the Caribbean, particularly to facilitate connectivity in the region, infrastructure development (air, land and maritime transport), and the promotion of small and medium-sized businesses, in line with the WTO "Aid for Trade" initiative.
- It is recommended that FIPA members submit these recommendations to their respective parliaments and executive branches, that they work together with their own FIPA national executive representatives to ensure specific progress towards their implementation."

Trade Knowledge Workshops 2007 & 2008

Aware of the need to provide parliamentarians with the necessary tools to be well informed, take responsible decisions, and give concrete answers to their constituents, FIPA has set to the task of organising international trade knowledge workshops.

- First Trade Knowledge Workshop for Parliamentarians (Ottawa 2007)



Parliamentarians learn about trade rules during the Ottawa workshop

On March 18th-20th, 2007 FIPA conducted the first *Trade Knowledge Workshop for Parliamentarians*, hosted by FIPA's Canadian Section in Ottawa, Canada. The workshop originated in the need to provide parliamentarians with more and better capacity-building opportunities, particularly in connection with trade law. The workshop was attended by 16 parliamentarians from Bolivia, Canada, Colombia, Dominica, El Salvador, Haiti, Jamaica, and Mexico.

It was intended to provide parliamentarians with basic information on trade regulations and policies in a way that should be relevant to their own and their constituents' interests. Furthermore, considering that trade policies affect so many areas, such as poverty, development, social movements, and gender issues, the workshop was also aimed at providing a framework for discussing these matters within a trade policy context.

- Workshop on "Trade Liberalization – WTO, Doha Round, and Challenges to Development" (Costa Rica 2008)

From November 6th-8th, 2008, a workshop on "Trade Liberalization – WTO, Doha Round, and Challenges to Development" was held in San José, Costa Rica, for parliamentarians of Central American and South American countries.

The event, co-hosted by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica, FIPA, and the World Trade Organization (WTO), was attended by 32 parliamentarians from Costa Rica, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, and the Dominican Republic. As international trade has an impact on all sectors of society, the workshop was an opportunity to learn about trade, gain a more in-depth knowledge of the operation of organizations like the WTO, and analyse the relationship between trade liberalization and the fight against poverty and inequality.



2.2 Developing Human Potential

Working Group on Poverty Reduction, Fifth Plenary Assembly (Colombia 2006)

During FIPA's Fifth Plenary Assembly, held in Colombia, the members of the Working Group on Poverty Reduction submitted a series of recommendations aimed, among other things, at:

Mar del Plata Declaration, article 1: "...we reaffirm our commitment to fight poverty, inequality, hunger, and social exclusion in order to raise the standard of living of our peoples and strengthen democratic governance in the Americas."

- Making social spending more effective;
- Making employment a priority for social transformation to be achieved;
- Find a way to implement the resolutions and initiatives presented by the FIPA work groups in our own countries in such a way that they become a binding force;
- Ensure State resources fulfill their mission by fighting corruption and encouraging parliamentarians to propose transparency laws in their countries.

The presentations made by various experts during the event were focused on the different mechanisms available to implement poverty reduction strategies. Particularly, a series of measures were proposed for improving the effectiveness of the legislative branches in monitoring government plans to fight poverty.

The Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas

Declaration of Quebec, Third Summit of Heads of States and Governments of the Americas, 2001: *"We are committed to the promotion of gender equality, and to achieving the full participation of all persons in the political, economic, social and cultural life of our countries."*

Mar del Plata Plan of Action, article 5, Fourth Summit of Heads of States and Governments of the Americas, 2005: *"To ensure equal access for men and women to the benefits of social protection and ensure attention to gender issues in labour and social policies."*

Created in 2003, FIPA's Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas consists of women representatives from all the regions of the Americas (North, Central, South, and the Caribbean). The group's objectives, which seek to complement FIPA's goals, are to work towards gender equality.

Taking into account the concerns of men and women parliamentarians throughout the hemisphere, in late 2005 FIPA's Group of Women adopted an action plan with four themes for action:

- Encouraging the involvement of women in politics through engagement and education;
- Building the capacity of men and women parliamentarians to implement international human rights conventions, with special emphasis given to the question of gender;
- Facilitating networking between parliamentarians interested in gender equality;
- Including and expand a gender perspective in all FIPA activities so as to make the issue a crosscutting one.

During the Fifth Plenary Assembly, FIPA's regulations were amended allowing the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas to become a permanent working group of FIPA, and also enabling the integration of the Chair of the Group into the FIPA Executive Committee, which would ensure the inclusion of a gender perspective in all of FIPA's tasks.

The Congress “Towards a Gender-Sensitive Legislative Agenda for Development in the Americas” was held at the seat of the Senate of the Republic of Colombia in Bogotá on November 20th-21st, 2008. It was attended by 37 men and women parliamentarians from Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Haiti, Grenada, Guatemala, Jamaica, Mexico, Peru, Dominican Republic, and Saint Lucia. The Congress consisted of six work sessions focused on economic policies and gender, international crisis, development and gender, as well as on social policies, environmental policies, and political and electoral reforms from a gender perspective.

Recommendations made at the congress included the following:

- To include a gender perspective as a central and cross-cutting dimension in the formulation of public budgets at the central, regional and local levels;
- To recognize the need to raise the visibility and equitable remuneration of women’s labour in trade agreements;
- To promote the linkage between the Legislative power and grass-roots social organizations so as to guarantee compliance with the quota law.



Peruvian Congresswoman Hilaria Supa defends the rights of indigenous women at the FIPA Congress

In order to implement these recommendations, a proposal was made to appoint a representative from each parliamentary institution who would regularly report to FIPA’s Plenary Assembly on the progress made in the area of gender.

2.3 Strengthening Democracy

Strengthening Cooperation and the Exchange of Experiences and Best Practices among Parliaments

Knowing that international cooperation, alliances, and the achievement of common goals are only possible when the parties concerned, in this case parliaments, get to know each other, since October 2006 FIPA has provided them with its official newsletter, a quarterly publication known as *ParlAmericas*, so that parliamentarians may have the means to be informed and share projects and activities. Moreover, since December 2008, FIPA’s blog, *BlogAmericas*, has been made available to legislators through the Web site www.e-fipa.org with a view to encouraging the exchange of legislative initiatives and ideas through a modern means of communication.

Québec Plan of Action, Third Summit of Heads of States and Governments of the Americas, 2001: *“Encourage cooperation and exchange of experiences and parliamentary best practices between national legislators of the Hemisphere, while respecting the separation and balance of powers, through bilateral, subregional and hemispheric vehicles such as the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA);”*



Table: Excerpts of the online discussion “V Summit of the Americas: The role of Parliaments and its associated implications”

held through the FIPA blog between December 1, 2008 and April 13, 2009

“In many Latin American countries legislators in strong centralising presidential systems see that their scope for action is very restricted. In these years of democracy, the effectiveness of parliaments has improved¹, but that has not meant that decisions are made in multilateral parliamentary bodies to impact the political mandates of their Executive branches.

Joint action at the Summit helps to strengthen the direct legitimacy of national and regional parliaments, but it is also an unavoidable bridge over which the interests of civil society are of necessity transmitted. Society’s growing acknowledgement of its rights and obligations means that the State is no longer the only player to define the social order. Social players have adopted new forms of social existence that do not depend entirely on state politics. The citizen has taken on not only the role of social observer but also that of a builder of a collective community which is capable of producing changes, and that of the subject of cross-border relations. Parliamentarians are the channels used by that new internationalised society to express itself.”

Excerpt of *“Multilateralism, Parliamentary Diplomacy and Political Dialogue”*
Rut Diamint, University Torcuato di Tella (Argentina)

“What do we mean by integration? To some this is just a cliché repeated over and over again to please the ears, but no commitment at all. Integration should be used to refer to the complex processes whereby countries develop strategic alliances that do not weaken their individual potential but, much to the contrary, strengthen it through mutual consent in a transparent and organized manner.

Our region has huge opportunities in this regard, which become actually a “must” in view of the current situation. Free trade agreements opening the door to investments, trade and diversification; cooperation agreements on power generation; and the development of joint production areas to encourage foreign investments in the region are clear examples of how we may seize the current situation to become a strong international market player with plenty to offer.

For Barack Obama’s election to be truly meaningful for Latin America, it needs to be accompanied by a powerful integration component that will turn us into an essential player. This does not mean underestimating the importance that the USA bears to our region, a position in any case shared by other world economies such as the European Union or Japan. In considering our future, what matters is our ability to overcome the roadblocks to development resulting from Government red tape. Today, more than ever, the search for development calls for change in our region. Such is the demand of those who democratically casted their vote for us.”

Excerpt of *“Obama and Latin America: the Right Time for Regional integration”*
Deputy Iván Moreira Barros (Chile)

“I fully agree [with the Draft Declaration] on the importance of developing social protection schemes and achieving equal access to basic social services such as water supply, housing, healthcare, food and sanitation for men and women alike. Indeed, my major project as a Senator in Colombia has been promoting a set of laws precisely aimed at reaching these goals as a way of showing that the Legislative can also contribute to making the necessary social changes. [...] Likewise, I think that it is very important that this event serve as a tool to watch over our democratic institutions.”

Excerpt of *“Remarks on the Declaration of Commitment: Securing Our Citizens’ Future by Promoting Human Prosperity, Energy Security, and Environmental Sustainability”*
Senator Cecilia López Montaña (Colombia)

“As parliamentarians, it is very difficult for us to promote or explain ideas or decisions taken by Summit members when we were not party to those decisions or familiar with the context in which they were made.

We must have a presence at the next Summit meeting and must be actively involved in the Summit process. Individually as politicians we cannot accomplish this goal. However, it is feasible through the concerted efforts of parliamentarians of their member countries through FIPA.

We must document how FIPA can bring efficiency to the Summit process, implementing Summit resolutions and policies in our respective legislatures, and how our members can serve as an important partner to the Summit by liaising with stakeholders in our countries at the grassroots level.”

Excerpt of “*Towards Parliamentary Participation in the Summit of the Americas*”
James Bezan, Member of Parliament (Canada)

“I think that Parliamentarians play a significant role within several population sectors, since we act as communication channels between them and the government. On the other hand, and from an economic standpoint, we are aware of the US hegemony and should not forget our economic dependence on our Northern neighbour. Efforts should therefore focus on maintaining diplomatic relationships with the USA without creating unnecessary conflict, while also seeking to open new markets and start strengthening trade and diplomatic relationships with Asia, Oceania, Africa, and the European Union.

Being a Parliamentarian does not only entail speaking on behalf of our fellow citizens abroad but also trying to solve internal conflicts, thus responding to the needs of the people that elected us. I hope that the next Summit of the Americas will give Parliamentarians the opportunity to become more deeply engaged in the Summit process so that in the future we can enjoy large-scale parliamentary engagement and multilateralism.”

Excerpt of “*The Mexican Parliament and its Role in the Current Situation*”
Deputy Salvador Ruiz Sánchez (Mexico)

“The three key themes of the Summit are true collective challenges: human prosperity, energy security and environmental sustainability. In fact, the last two are prerequisites for the first one, since countries’ growth will be difficult to achieve in the long term without sufficient energy sources and healthy ecosystems.

Latin American parliaments can play a leading role in adopting public policies and measures that promote the creation and redistribution of wealth for social inclusion, but the execution of said policies and measures rests with our governments. In our countries, we notice that governments only minimally satisfy the needs of our peoples: drinking water supply, electric power, telephony, roads, health care and education services still fall short of their requirements.

Given this context, it is crucial that Parliaments be entrusted with a bigger role than simply legislating and overseeing. The pressure exerted by fair popular demands has largely turned congresspersons into agents for the execution and provision of public works and services. [...]People really value these efforts since they contribute to their wellbeing, but such efforts must be institutionalized”.

Excerpt of “*Parliamentary Labour and Human Prosperity*”
Congressman Yonhy Lescano Ancieta (Peru)

Working Group on the Fight against Drug-Trafficking, Fifth Plenary Assembly (Colombia 2006)

Québec Plan of Action: *“Promote bilateral and multilateral cooperation and information exchange on policies and actions concerning drug prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and supply control, and develop educational campaigns to promote public awareness of the risk of drug consumption;”*

The fight against drug-trafficking is a daily combat. As they enjoy a privileged relationship with their constituents, parliamentarians are in the line of fire.

During FIPA's Fifth Plenary Assembly, held in Colombia, the legislators participating in the Working Group on the Fight against Drug-Trafficking recommended that:

- Parliamentarians encourage countries to update their laws, as well as seek alignment in such standards similar to what Latin America tried to achieve at the end of the last century. In this uniform legislation, activities such as illicit drug trafficking, money laundering, corruption and transshipment of illicit drugs should be regarded as crimes;
- Parliamentarians try to reform the education system in order to strengthen the teaching of values and non-use of these harmful substances.

Haiti: Training for candidates for the 2009 elections

On 2nd-3rd April, a delegation of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas participated in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in the launching of the training programme for men and women candidates, hosted by the Canadian Parliamentary Center and MINUSTAH. The women legislators shared their experiences with women candidates and members of women's associations, with the purpose of providing them with hands-on experience on issues related to electoral campaigns, communication strategies, and reconciliation of political and family life, among other topics. This was the second time FIPA participated in a mission to Haiti to consolidate the democratic process and encourage the participation of Haitian women in the elections.

Mar del Plata Plan of Action, article 66: *“To cooperate with solidarity with the Haitian people in their efforts to revitalize the democratic institutions...”*



Members of FIPA's Group of Women Parliamentarians with candidates to the 2009 elections in Haiti

3. Strengthening Cooperation between Parliaments and Governments in the Achievement of Hemispheric Goals



FIPA Executive Committee members meet with the Canadian minister of Foreign Affairs during the 2007 OAS General Assembly

Since the beginning of 2006, FIPA has increased efforts to seek more active cooperation between the Executive and Legislative branches of the several countries regarding the hemispheric agenda.

In a proposal send to the Chair of Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG), two main reasons for further involving Parliaments in the Summits process were invoked:

First, Parliaments are needed to intensify the implementation of Summits mandates:

- Transnational issues require transnational solutions. Pandemia, drug trafficking, free trade negotiations, organized crime, etc., are all issues that need to be dealt with collectively. Increasingly knowledgeable

about international issues, parliamentarians are aware that they have a role to play in international cooperation which complements and supports the role that governments have traditionally played.

- Although the inter-American summits are a governmental mechanism, many of the mandates adopted by Heads of States and Governments have implications for the legislative branch. Congresses are requested to ratify inter-American or international agreements. They are also asked to incorporate those international agreements into the national legislation. And, in all cases, through the annual budget approval process, congresses are asked to approve the credits that will be granted to the different government organs to implement policies.

Second, parliamentarians are needed to reach out to people:

- In recent Summits it became obvious that there was a disconnection between the Summit process and the people. By promoting a people-centered approach involving consultation processes, civil society participation, etc., leaders have shown determination to re-build the broken links.
- Parliamentarians can play a very important role in this outreach process. They are in touch with their constituents on a daily basis and can thus act as a bridge between citizens and government, bringing the concerns of citizens into decision-making processes at the national and hemispheric levels, and informing constituents of national policies and international agreements, and the impact these will have on their lives.

3.1 FIPA's Participation in Inter-American Activities and Dialogue with Hemispheric Institutions

In June 2007, during the 37th General Assembly of the OAS held in Panama, FIPA submitted a Declaration before several heads of delegations and the OAS General Secretary, which was issued by its Executive Committee and called on an official recognition of the national parliaments' contribution to the Summits process, as well as on a formal recognition of FIPA's special cooperation to this process (see Appendix 3).



These meetings were followed by others held in Ottawa, Washington, and Port of Spain with OAS and Fifth Summit officials. FIPA also made official presentations before the OAS Permanent Council in March 2006 and October 2007, and participated as an observer to the 38th General Assembly of the OAS held in Medellin, Colombia, in 2008.

These exchanges have helped revitalize the dialogue with Inter-American institutions, paving the way for achieving concrete mechanisms for collaboration.

3.2 Other Models for Cooperation between Parliaments and Governments

It is important to underscore that other institutions have already adopted similar mechanisms to those sought by FIPA, welcoming the inclusion of the parliamentary dimension in the work of intergovernmental organizations.

A good example is the case of the Interparliamentary Union /UN. Since the early 1990s, the Interparliamentary Union has been working with the United Nations to make international relations and decision-making more transparent as well as more effective. The underlying idea is to create a direct line of communication between the United Nations and the national parliaments that are members of the IPU.

In 2002, this cooperation was formalised with the adoption of a UN General Assembly resolution whereby the IPU was granted observer status. Cooperation activities between the two organizations include an annual Parliamentary Hearings at the United Nations. The two organizations also work closely together to advance specific issues through many joint operational activities, publications and meetings.

Another example of cooperation is the World Trade Organization (WTO) Parliamentary Conference. Created in 2003 by the Interparliamentary Union and the European Parliament, its main purpose is to boost WTO's external transparency and to make this intergovernmental organization provide explanations to legislators, as representatives of the people.

Particularly, within the framework of the last Session of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO, a document was approved on "Guidelines for Relations between Governments on International Trade Issues", which established three basic principles:

- Parliament should receive relevant and timely information from the government regarding trade initiatives so that it may analyse them before decisions are made;
- Parliament should have a real opportunity to use the information obtained to gain an influence on its own country's trade policy;
- Parliament should have the opportunity to follow up on its government's decisions on the matter.

4. Conclusion

These concrete actions undertaken by FIPA to contribute to the Inter-American agenda are only an outline of the Forum's huge potential as a tool for cooperation and development. However, the lack of official mechanisms at a hemispheric level allowing national parliaments and FIPA, the organization encompassing them, to contribute more actively towards fulfilling the development goals on the continent, while respecting the independence of powers between the Legislative and the Executive branches, is a clear indicator that such potential should be explored more thoroughly.

The FIPA Executive Committee is committed to promoting ongoing communication with the OAS and the institutions of the Inter-American system with a view to overcoming today's constraints and outlining new effective and inclusive cooperation frameworks in our continent.

* * * *



Participants in the 5th FIPA Plenary Meeting – Colombia 2006



5. Appendices

5.1 Recommendations of the Congress “Towards a Gender-Sensitive Legislative Agenda for Development in the Americas”

Adopted on November 21, 2008

We, women and men parliamentarians from across the Americas meeting for the Congress: “Towards a Gender-Sensitive Legislative Agenda for Development in the Americas” on November 20-21 in Bogotá, Colombia, make the following recommendations to be presented to our respective parliaments:

Economic Policies and Gender

- To take the first step in the design of an Action Plan so that parliaments in America have greater influence in development matters and that the latter promote gender equality.
- To include a gender perspective as a central and cross-cutting dimension in the formulation of public budgets at the central, regional and local levels in a way that makes them balanced and sustainable and does not translate into piecemeal programs and projects that are marginal or subsidiary in nature.
- To recognize the need to raise the visibility and equitable remuneration of women’s labour in trade agreements, leading to formal employment with the corresponding social protection and security guaranties.

International Crisis, Development and Gender: Implications for the Americas

- The world crisis particularly affects women, but crises can also provide opportunities. Therefore one must be creative so that the new order that has to be set up is not merely a superficial tweak to the current situation, but in-depth surgery based on an integral, inclusive and sustainable vision, and that gender inequality as well as other numerous existing inequalities are overcome.
- To adopt new criteria to ensure the economic competitiveness of countries, ensuring that this does not lead to precarious income and new forms of exploitation.
- To redefine the existing relationship between productive and reproductive labour so that women and men play an active role in both areas.

Social Policies, Gender and Development

- To adopt a social rights approach, especially a gender approach, in the design of social policies, keeping in mind that this represents a window of opportunity or a favourable scenario for the promotion of a dialogue between social and gender issues.
- To recognize the following advantages in having a gender approach in social policies: (i) Consistency in the values between legislation and reality (ii) Institutional sustainability of the legislative, executive and judicial powers (iii) Greater social and political legitimacy (iv) Better social policies because it allows to detect existing types of discrimination to correct them.
- Human rights should be recognized in social policies as is the case with criminal policies.

Environmental and Sustainability and Gender

- To develop new environmental and gender paradigms.
- To take into account the culture and dignity of indigenous peoples in sustainable development.
- To do a gender-sensitive audit of investments in natural resource sustainability.

Democracy, Political-Electoral Reforms and Gender

- To promote the linkage between the Legislative power and grass-roots social organizations so as to guarantee compliance with the quota law.
- To raise the awareness of the media with the purpose of making the political participation of women more visible and to transform gender stereotypes.
- To propose public financing for political participation that promotes the inclusion of women.

CECILIA LÓPEZ MONTAÑO

Senator of Colombia
President of FIPA's Group of Women
Parliamentarians of the Americas

CÉLINE HERVIEUX-PAYETTE

Senator of Canada
Former President, FIPA

Juana Laverde Castañeda

Rapporteur

5.2 5th Plenary Meeting Working Group Recommendations

Adopted by the FIPA Plenary Assembly on November 21, 2006

Working Group No.1: Trade and Integration

1. It is important to continue to pursue the integration agenda of the Americas, urging FIPA member countries to reach a hemispheric agreement in which all bilateral agreements converge.
2. WTO members are urged to resume multilateral trade negotiations to conclude the Doha Development Round, particularly regarding opening up agricultural markets.
3. All barriers to international trade must be eliminated, including tariffs or subsidies that distort international commerce. At the same time, the capacity of countries to support the most sensitive sectors must be preserved.
4. In the search for further integration, all barriers among FIPA member countries that violate human rights and deny people freedom of movement must be brought down.
5. Complementary domestic policies intended to take advantage of opportunities for international insertion should be encouraged, particularly policies on infrastructure,



education, State modernization, rural, agricultural and fishery development, and science and technology.

6. Policies that favour energy integration should be created, taking into account the challenges related to non-renewable resources and the opportunities offered by renewable resources such as bio-energy, wind energy and other sources.
7. Mechanisms should be created to protect intellectual property, free competition and abolish counterfeiting.
8. Work is needed on sustainable development programmes, and programmes to alleviate poverty and improve living conditions should be created.
9. FIPA member countries are urged to consider that the emergence of China and India means policies to deal with global competition must be formulated without delay. FIPA members are requested to organize a dialogue with these countries on this issue.
10. A fund with enough resources to facilitate the transition to a freer system of trade and further integration should be established for the countries of the Americas and the Caribbean, particularly to facilitate connectivity in the region, infrastructure development (air, land and maritime transport), and the promotion of small and medium-sized businesses, in line with the WTO "Aid for Trade" initiative.
11. Continuous dialogue should be sought between FIPA members and the United States, encouraging that country's active participation in FIPA.
12. It is recommended that social issues be debated to achieve the wellbeing of our peoples.
13. It is recommended that FIPA members submit these recommendations to their respective parliaments and executive branches, that they work together with their own FIPA national executive representatives to ensure specific progress towards their implementation, and that the chairpersons of each FIPA national chapter report on the progress achieved by their countries at the next FIPA Plenary Meeting.

James Bezan
Canadian Member of Parliament
Chair of Working Group No.1

Sandra Ovalle García
Rapporteur

Working Group No.2: Poverty Reduction

The Plenary Assembly recommends the following:

1. Consolidate growth strategies.
2. Make social spending more effective (by determining who should be given priority).
3. Favour international cooperation among member countries.
4. Work on a political component to poverty reduction. There also needs to be an economic component involving higher taxes for individuals with higher incomes. Economic policies must also have a social component. Employment must be a priority if social transformation is to be achieved.

5. Promote universal education and eliminate illiteracy.
6. Reduce infant morbidity.
7. Assure a healthy environment.
8. Provide training in new job areas.
9. Exchange information on programmes that have proven successful in some countries.
10. Invest in science and technology.
11. Reduce the phenomenon of migration.
12. As lawmakers, find a way to implement the resolutions and initiatives presented by the work groups in our own countries in such a way that they become a binding force.
13. As an ethical imperative for the region, ensure State resources fulfill their mission by fighting corruption and encouraging parliamentarians to propose transparency laws in their countries.
14. Create a work group devoted exclusively to studying how the tax burden affects socio-economic development in the economies of the member countries. The group's mission would be to conduct a study to establish principles and find alternatives that provide a fair and impartial tax system to ensure social development and create jobs by increasing the production and wealth of each Member State.

Iván Alejandro Moreira Barros
Deputy, Chamber of Deputies of Chile
Chair of Working Group No. 2

Isabel Cristina Jiménez Losada
Rapporteur

Working Group No.3: Fight against Drug Trafficking

ECONOMIC RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Parliamentarians are urged to work actively in their own countries and on the international scene in the interest of multilateral trade agreements that seek to change the economic status quo.
2. Countries must work internally to obtain the necessary funding and resources to establish crop-substitution and job-promotion programmes. Such programmes will make it possible to reduce social inequalities.
3. To increase the likelihood of success of crop-substitution programmes and prevent recidivism, they should encompass training, food security, transport and access to markets.

SOCIAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

4. Considering that demand is a powerful stimulant to production, recognized by the anti-drug strategy in the hemisphere, it is recommended that educational programmes be developed at the school, family and community levels, as well as gender and ethnic oriented, and youth programmes to impart new values that prevent drug consumption.



5. It is also recommended that the mass media be careful about using images that create false icons and that encourage violence and consumption of narcotics. The media's responsibility and active involvement in the fight against drug trafficking and the creation of conditions that prevent violence and hallucinogenic substance abuse are encouraged.
6. It is recommended that an international forum be convened to address the mass media's role in imparting values that aid the war on drugs.
7. It is recommended that parliamentarians try to reform the education system to strengthen the teaching of values and non-use of these harmful substances.
8. Parliamentarians should participate more actively in the discussion on social values and more effectively promote the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Drug Trafficking.

LEGAL AND SECURITY RECOMMENDATIONS

9. Parliamentarians should encourage countries and negotiate with them to update their laws, as well as seek alignment in such standards similar to what Latin America tried to achieve at the end of the last century. In this uniform legislation, activities such as illicit drug trafficking, money laundering, corruption and transshipment of illicit drugs should be regarded as crimes. For consumption cases, we firmly recommend the punishment be gradual.
10. Parliamentarians will promote and attempt to convene a meeting with the OAS and the UN to discuss creating an inter-American or international court against drugs, as well as an agency responsible for interdiction.
11. It is suggested that an effort be made to reinforce and increase international support for countries forced to wage war on drugs and to deal with money laundering, corruption and transshipment.
12. It is recommended that FIPA parliaments promote the United Nations plan for the fight against drugs in their countries.

Mrs. Sandra Husbands
Senator of Barbados
Chair of Working Group No.3

Felipe Ortiz
Rapporteur

5.3 Declaration presented at the 37th Regular Session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States

Adopted by the FIPA Executive Committee on June 1, 2007, in Brasilia, Brazil

CONSIDERING:

That the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA) is an independent network composed of the national legislatures of the member states of the Organization of American States (OAS), whose purpose is to promote parliamentary participation in the inter-American system and to contribute to inter-parliamentary dialogue in dealing with issues on the hemispheric agenda, pursuant to Resolution 1673/99 of the OAS General Assembly.

FIPA's objective to "contribute to the process of integration as one of the most appropriate instruments for sustainable and harmonious development in the hemisphere";

That Heads of State and Government of the Americas decided, in the Plan of Action of the Third Summit of the Americas, to "Encourage cooperation and exchange of experiences and parliamentary best practices between national legislators of the Hemisphere, while respecting the separation and balance of powers, through bilateral, subregional and hemispheric vehicles such as the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA)";

The contribution made by FIPA since 2001 in advancing the hemispheric agenda, described in the report "From Quebec city to Mar del Plata: Progress by the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas", presented to Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Americas at the Fourth Summit of the Americas in Mar del Plata, on November 3, 2005, and to the OAS Permanent Council in Washington DC on April 12, 2006;

The importance that, in addressing the issue of "Energy for Sustainable Development", the central theme of the 37th Session of the OAS General Assembly, the voice of parliamentarians be taken into account;

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

1. FORWARDS the recommendations adopted by the Plenary Assembly of FIPA on November 21, 2006, on the issues of Trade and Integration, Poverty Reduction, the Fight against Drug Trafficking, Gender Equality and Cultural Diversity to the OAS General Assembly and, in particular, its recommendation stating that "Policies that favour energy integration should be created, taking into account the challenges related to non-renewable resources and the opportunities offered by renewable resources such as bio-energy, wind energy and other sources".
2. CALLS for OAS member governments to consider national parliaments as front-line actors in the oversight and implementation of commitments that stem from the General Assembly Declaration on "Energy for Sustainable Development," as a means of ensuring that regional commitments in this area be translated into national legislation and policies that respond to the needs of the citizens they represent.
3. ASKS that the OAS General Assembly take note of the recommendation of the FIPA Executive Committee that representatives of member parliaments seek means through which legislators can contribute to the implementation of a regional energy agenda that fosters the harmonious and sustainable development of the hemisphere, during the Sixth FIPA Plenary Meeting.
4. CALLS for a strengthening of the collaboration between national parliaments and the OAS,



through the establishment of two-way direct communication between FIPA and the OAS, the provision of parliamentary input to regional negotiations and debates when appropriate, and through the attribution of a special status that would allow FIPA to participate as an observer in meetings of the Organization.

5. CALLS for a formal recognition of the contribution made by national parliaments to the Summits of the Americas process and EXPRESSES its intention to submit to the Summits Implementation Review Group (SIRG) a proposal for FIPA to be recognized as a special parliamentary observer in this process.

Foro Interparlamentario de las Américas
Fórum Interparlamentar das Américas



Forum interparlementaire des Amériques
Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas

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