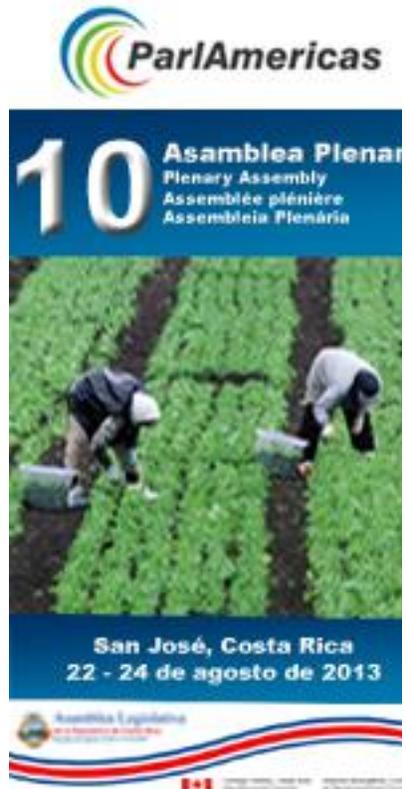




ParlAmericas Express



Plenary Assembly 10: Economic Development

ParlAmericas Plenary Assembly 10 took place from August 22 to 24, 2013. **More than 80 parliamentarians** from the national legislatures of **24 countries** in the hemisphere gathered in San José, Costa Rica to discuss topics of mutual concern.

The overarching theme of the plenary was **Economic Development**, with working



ParlAmericas Board member new VP of Colombian Chamber

In July, the Colombian Congress elected **Germán Alcides Blanco Álvarez, ParlAmericas Secretary Treasurer**, as First Vice-President of the Chamber of Representatives.

Representative Blanco is a conservative member of the Chamber for the department of Antioquia, Colombia for the 2010-2014 term. He was



Organization of American States

OAS Regional Seminar: The Fight Against Drugs

ParlAmericas is collaborating on a **new project** with the Organization of American States (OAS): Strengthening the Capacities of Legislators from Central America, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic.

The project follows a Memorandum of Understanding between ParlAmericas and the OAS, which entered into force in

groups on **Food Security, Connecting Women's Rights to Food Security, and Natural Resource Development**. The respective Chairs of the working groups were Member of Parliament of Jamaica **Hugh Buchanan**, Speaker of the National Assembly of Suriname **Dr. Jennifer Simons**, and Member of the Chamber of Deputies of Chile **Ignacio Urrutia Bonilla**.

The invited speakers were a diverse group of subject experts whose presentations informed and enriched the discussions and recommendations developed at the plenary.

The keynote speaker was **Dr. Ricardo Rapallo** from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Regional Office for Latin America and Caribbean.

Xavier Cabada from El Poder del Consumidor in Mexico and **Dr. Hugo Ramiro Melgar-Quiñonez** from McGill University in Canada were the experts for the working group on food security.

The expert presenter for the working group organized by the Group of Women Parliamentarians was **Dr. Cristina Tirado** from the Pan American Health Organization in Brazil. The Group also heard from **Guadalupe Valdez**, Member of the Chamber of Deputies of the Dominican Republic and Regional Coordinator of the Parliamentary Front Against Hunger in Latin America and the Caribbean.

elected to the position of First-Vice President of the Chamber with 131 votes. Elections for the Chamber's executive committee - including First and Second Vice-President - take place annually.

Representative Blanco is a native of Antioquia, where he **began his political career as a member of the Departmental Assembly** (2001-2007) and served as its President in 2006. He has an extensive background in local public affairs and has served on numerous committees.

Representative Blanco received his law degree from the Latin American Autonomous University of Medellin - where he specialized in Political Culture - and holds a Masters' Degree in Governance from Medellin University.

For his constituents, Representative Blanco's new role as Chamber Vice-President signifies recognition of his **leadership in the Chamber, longstanding and active participation in legislative duties, and strong commitment to his compatriots**.

Representative Blanco began his mandate with ParlAmericas in 2010 at Plenary Assembly 07. At this plenary, he nominated Colombia to represent the sub-region of South America on the Board of Directors (then the Executive Committee). Following this, authorities from the Congress of the Republic of Colombia designated Representative Blanco to the ParlAmericas

February 2012 and establishes a framework to enhance cooperation and interaction in areas of common concern, in particular, democracy, legal systems, and the rule of law.

The project's first regional seminar, **Legislative Activity and New Alternatives in the Fight Against Drugs**, took place in San José, Costa Rica the day before ParlAmericas Plenary Assembly 10, so that parliamentarians could participate in both events.

The **general objectives** of the project are to:

- 1) Strengthen the capacity of legislative institutions to **modernize and modify processes**
- 2) Strengthen **political pluralism**
- 3) Reinforce **political dialogue** within legislative institutions, reinforcing the legitimacy of legislators and their roles in relation to democratic institutions and civil society
- 4) Create **cooperative spaces** for the exchange of ideas and experiences among legislators, political leaders, and civil society

The project empowers parliamentarians to exercise their legislative duties through open and transparent political dialogue, where the majority decides, yet minority voices are heard.

The topic of the first regional seminar - combatting drugs - is a **pressing issue in the hemisphere** requiring increased dialogue building on the release of the **OAS**

In the natural resources development working group, participants heard from **Carlos Manuel Rodríguez** from Conservation International in Costa Rica and **Gleyse Peiter** from Rede Nacional de Mobilização Social e Conselho Nacional de Segurança Alimentar in Brazil.

The outcome of the working groups was a set of recommendations approved by the plenary as a whole, which will be shared with all Parliaments of the hemisphere.

WHERE: San Jose, Costa Rica
WHEN: 22-24 August 2013

Board of Directors.

He was subsequently elected Secretary Treasurer by his colleagues on the Board, making him a member of the Executive Committee, a position he continues to hold.

In 2012, Colombia was re-elected for a seat on the ParlAmericas Board of Directors, and Representative Blanco was re-designated to represent Colombia to continue his valuable contribution to the development of the Board and the governance of ParlAmericas.

WHERE: Bogota, Colombia
WHEN: 20 July 2013

comprehensive report "The Drug Problem in the Americas".

Parliamentarians are key actors in the development of new approaches and drug policies that take into consideration each country's unique situation, along with regional and hemispheric implications.

ParlAmericas sponsored the participation of parliamentarians in the regional seminar, thanks to the support of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada (DFATD). ParlAmericas Secretary Treasurer Germán Blanco also spoke on a panel.

The regional seminar contributed to the enhanced cooperation between ParlAmericas and the OAS. The project is in line with the interests of the Board of Directors, which has expressed a desire for closer programming alignment.

WHERE: San Jose, Costa Rica
WHEN: 21 August 2013

About ParlAmericas: We made our Twitter debut

ParlAmericas is taking its commitment to facilitating hemispheric dialogue somewhere new: the Twitter world.

We look forward to engaging with parliamentarians from throughout the Americas and with all ParlAmericans with an interest in promoting hemispheric dialogue on topics of mutual concern.

We tweeted from our most recent plenary meeting in Costa Rica using hashtag **#PlenaryAssembly10** and will continue to share information and resources related to the event.

You can find our **Twitter stream** [here](#). We encourage you to follow along and join the conversations.

Resource Center

* Please note that ParlAmericas does not necessarily endorse the views espoused in articles profiled
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The Drug Problem in the Americas

In a new report, the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (OAS) reflects on hemispheric discussions and new approaches to drug policies.

What Food Security in Latin America Reveals

This two-part article in *The Economist* explores the complexity of the problem of food insecurity in Latin America. (Spanish)

Preconditions for Establishing Structural Fiscal Balances in Latin America and the Caribbean: The Case of Brazil

In this *Inter-American Development Bank* paper, Paulo Levy discusses Brazil's economic dynamics in relation to structural fiscal balance rule.