



# ParlAmericas Express



## Budget Oversight Workshop

ParlAmericas' next capacity-building workshop, Strengthening Parliamentary Budget Oversight (Caribbean) - Phase 2, will be held **February 5-6, 2014** in **Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago**.

This workshop will feature expert panellists who have firsthand experience related to the topics to be covered: **challenges and best**



## 10th Plenary Assembly Report

The 10th Plenary Assembly Report is now available on the ParlAmericas website. Delegates and other participants will receive a hard copy shortly, as will Presidents and Speakers of the legislative chambers of ParlAmericas' member parliaments.

This Plenary Assembly took place in August, and covered the topics of **natural resources development, food security,**

## Highlights



# 2013

## Reflecting on 2013

As 2013 comes to a close, the staff at the International Secretariat of ParlAmericas is reflecting on the accomplishments of the organization over the last year. Here are five highlights:

1. Parliaments and Extractive Industries: How to Improve Oversight and Increase Collaboration - Seventeen parliamentarians attended this two-day regional workshop in

**practices for Public Accounts Committees (PACs), cooperation between parliament and the Supreme Audit Institution, and key audit products** such as financial statements and value-for-money audits. Parliamentarians from the Caribbean who participate in the workshop will also meet in small groups where they will discuss issues in the context of large and small parliaments.

The **objectives** of this workshop are:

- To build on the discussions about parliamentary budget oversight mechanisms and other issues of concern to PACs that took place during ParlAmericas' capacity-building workshop in 2012
- To provide a space for parliamentarians and Auditors General from the Caribbean to continue sharing best practices
- To enhance practical skills related to auditing

This workshop will **build on the themes and key findings of a two-day** workshop held in January 2012 in Antigua and Barbuda, which enhanced regional knowledge sharing on budgetary oversight in the Caribbean.

The 2012 workshop received positive feedback from parliamentarians. In the event's evaluation, 95 percent of respondents rated the relevance of discussed topics as "high" or "very high". Many respondents indicated a desire for follow-up activities in order to continue making progress in applying the best practices discussed.

and **connecting women's rights to food security**. More than 75 parliamentarians participated in engaging discussions in working groups, leading to recommendations passed by the Plenary Assembly and shared with all national legislatures.

The report features the full text of these recommendations, the Annual Report of the President, and a resolution presented by the Board of Directors. It includes summaries of the keynote speaker's presentation and **articles by the invited experts**, results of the **elections for positions on the Board of Directors** and within the **Group of Women Parliamentarians**, and more.

Below are excerpts from the report:

***Welcoming Words by the Secretary-Treasurer of ParlAmericas, Germán Alcides Blanco Álvarez, Vice-President of the Chamber of Representatives of Colombia***

*Germán Blanco welcomed the delegates to the First Session of the 10th Plenary Assembly and offered his thanks for their attendance. He noted that parliamentarians from 24 of the 35 member national legislatures of ParlAmericas had registered for the plenary... Germán Blanco signalled the great importance of the topics to be covered.*

***Keynote Address: Challenges to Realizing the Right to Food in the Hemisphere – Dr. Ricardo Rapallo***

Colombia. With the guidance of Revenue Watch, they took part in rich discussions to increase knowledge about best practices in relation to the extractive sector in South America.

2. **Annual Gathering of the Group of Women Parliamentarians** - This Gathering, hosted by the National Assembly in Paramaribo, Suriname, featured the animated debates of 53 parliamentarians from 21 countries, as summarized in the report *Women in Power: Recent Changes in the Political Arena*.

3. **Board of Directors meetings** - The Board met three times in 2013. Much of their work focused on ensuring ParlAmericas' solid foundation for the future. This included finalizing the new institutional Regulations and strategizing around the diversification of funding sources.

4. **10th Plenary Assembly** - ParlAmericas held its 10th Plenary Assembly in Costa Rica in August.

5. **Collaboration with the Organization of American States (OAS)** - ParlAmericas embarked on a joint program with the OAS to strengthen the capacities of legislators in Central America, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic. The first of a series of regional seminars in this program, ***Legislative Activity and New Alternatives in the Fight Against Drugs***, was held before the 10th Plenary Assembly.

Stay tuned in the New Year for the **outcomes** of the follow-up workshop to be held in Trinidad and Tobago. Outcomes and recommended follow-up actions for PACs to work effectively, and the best use of key audit products will be shared with all ParlAmericas member parliaments.

**WHERE:** Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

**WHEN:** 5-6 February 2014

*It is important to stress that even though food security legislation is essential, sometimes it is not sufficient to guarantee food security and/or food sovereignty. Therefore, it is necessary to develop complementary laws that manage access to resources (water laws, land laws, seed laws, and agricultural financing laws), laws that promote efficiency and transparency in the agrifood chains, and laws that encourage healthy habits and regulate advertising.*

If you would like a hard copy of the report mailed to you, please contact the International Secretariat at: [info@parlAmericas.org](mailto:info@parlAmericas.org).

**WHERE:** San José, Costa Rica

**WHEN:** 22-24 August 2013

We are looking forward to our **upcoming events in the New Year**. Staff is already busy planning the next workshop, Strengthening Parliamentary Budget Oversight (Caribbean): Phase 2, which will take place in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

Other upcoming events include the 33rd Board of Directors meeting, the 2014 Annual Gathering of the Group of Women Parliamentarians, and the 11th Plenary Assembly to be held in Santiago de Chile.

### Stay in Touch!

ParlAmericas will start the New Year by reviewing our emailing lists. We want to ensure that you wish to continue receiving this newsletter and other occasional emails from us.

### About ParlAmericas: Challenges and Opportunities

Learn more about ParlAmericas in this discussion paper from International IDEA: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance: Challenges and Opportunities in Fostering Political Participation and Representation in Regional Organisations: A Case Study of ParlAmericas and the Organization of American States (OAS).

Excerpt: "This paper analyses the mandates and functions, as well as the strengths of and challenges faced by ParlAmericas, both from an institutional point of view, as well as from the perspective of fostering political participation and representation. The paper argues that more should be done to evaluate the real impact of this forum, particularly to understand how debates, activities and recommendations issued by ParlAmericas take shape in national parliaments."

### Resource Center

\* Please note that ParlAmericas does not necessarily endorse the views in articles profiled \*

### Increased Political Participation Helps Narrow Global Gender Gap in 2013

The World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap Report 2013* finds that 86 out of 133 countries improved their global gender gap between 2012 and 2013. The area of political participation saw the greatest progress.

**Latin American Economic Outlook 2014: Logistics and Competitiveness for Development**

A new publication from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reveals that after a decade of growth, Latin America's economic prospects are becoming more complex due to: 1) declining trade, 2) moderation of commodity prices, and 3) uncertainty surrounding external monetary and financing conditions.

**Jamaica - Parliamentary Oversight of Public Finances: An Institutional Review**

This Working Paper from the World Bank argues that sound legislative oversight of public finances is crucial to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of public spending.