

Facing the New Challenges of the Century

Over 40 parliamentarians from 11 countries of the Americas participated in the Seventh Plenary Assembly of FIPA, hosted by the Senate of Mexico, which took place in Mexico City from November 17-19, 2010.

The meeting brought together legislators and experts to address new and emerging challenges related to preparedness and response to natural and human-induced disasters and emergencies; regional security and transnational crime; and the participation of civil society in the strengthening of democracy.

During the Opening Ceremony at the Mexican Senate, FIPA's President, Brazilian Deputy Luiz Carlos Hauly, speaking on hemispheric integration, said that a Parliament of the Americas has the potential to become reality. "We are 35 countries, with a thousand million people in the region who have the right to dream of integration in all senses."

Mexican Senator Adriana González Carillo, as host of the event, stated that the Plenary Assembly represented the opportunity to solidify the process of institutional strengthening of the Americas, as it encourages the necessary reforms to intensify the rule of law, to promote fair trade that supports sustainable

development, and to mitigate the effects of climate change and pandemics.

Attendees at the Opening Ceremony included distinguished individuals such as Senator Manlio Fabio Beltrones, President of the Senate of Mexico;



FIPA President Luiz Carlos Hauly at the Opening Ceremony of the Seventh Plenary Assembly in the Senate of Mexico.

Deputy Amador Monroy, Vice-President of the Mexican Lower Chamber; the Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Patricia Espinosa; and Senator Julio César Cobos, Vice-President of Argentina and President of the Senate.

The Plenary Assembly opened with an address called *Challenges for the Americas in the 21st Century*, by Dr. Roberto Newell, President of the Mexican Institute for Competitiveness, which

focused on new economic challenges and prospects for the region.

The work group sessions focused on the establishment of concrete measures to meet up with the current and future social, environmental and security demands the hemisphere is

Photo: © Courtesy of the Senate of Mexico

facing. The Plenary Assembly ended with the adoption of several recommendations aimed at overcoming challenges through stronger regional and hemispheric cooperation, increased transparency, and accountability, as well as a broader engagement with citizens during the process of policy-making.

The United Nation's Assistant Secretary General for Disaster Risk Reduction, Margareta Wahlström,

participated in the last session of the Assembly. Speaking about disasters and emergencies, she emphasized the relevance of women during these situations, and commended the efforts of the Group of Women Parliamentarians on this matter.

The Plenary Assembly also enacted a resolution condemning the acts of violence that occurred in Ecuador on September 30, 2010, against the Executive of that country.

The Assembly also elected Haiti, and re-elected Canada, Colombia and Mexico, to represent sub-regions on the Executive Committee for a two-year term.

Delegates accepted the invitations of Paraguay and Panama to host the Plenary Assemblies in 2011 and 2012 respectively.

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Haitian Parliamentarians and the Global Post-Quake Complex

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Haiti's political authority is being fragmented, privatized and globalized in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake, according to a study I recently conducted for the London School of Economics (LSE).

Hundreds of disparate agencies have rushed into the vacuum caused by the literal collapse of many of Haiti's state institutions; almost 20% of federal government employees died, and 27 of 28 federal government buildings, including the Presidential Palace, were destroyed.

International aid donors, religious groups, NGOs, community associations and private companies all serve social service functions that political science considers the preserve of the state.

There's heavy involvement of international NGOs in the construction of temporary shelters, camp management, food aid distributions, health care, education and skills training.

The importance of this global presence in Haiti is illustrated by the fact that the UN/NGO 2010 "Flash Appeal" budget for Haiti (which represented the UN's estimate of required funding to address humanitarian needs) was US\$1.4 billion (US\$1 billion of which was funded) –

surprisingly close to the size of Haitian government's own total budget (US\$1.3 billion in expenditures, US\$1 billion in revenues).

This clearly benefits Haitian people. Where the state has failed to provide them with social protection, the international community has stepped in to increase, supplant and improve access to relief and reconstruction.

The Challenges

Yet, this intensive involvement of international and private actors presents a challenge to Haitian parliamentarians and policymakers and has implications for local democracy and sovereignty.

The degree of contestation over the recent elections in Haiti show that Haitians clearly believe that the public sector still matters, but in crucial ways, the policymaking autonomy of the Haitian state is curtailed by the power of the donor/NGO global governance complex.

For instance, many decisions about how social service funding is allocated are made by unelected expatriate staff or in boardrooms far from Haiti.

There's a danger that the state's role in Haiti will become that of a convener or coordinator of disparate agencies, rather than a manager and provider of services.

Given that many decisions are made in aid coordination forums, often held in walled enclaves where the primary languages are English and French, rather than Creole, there's a potential accountability gap between the UN/NGO leadership and ordinary Haitian people.

And given the limited time periods of many aid agency

managers, who are often hired on relatively short term contracts, the Haitian relief and reconstruction effort is constantly in flux, making it difficult for Haitian citizens to understand and predict how social service allocation will occur.

The Opportunities

The globalization of social service governance in Haiti has in some ways eroded the power of Haitian parliamentarians. Yet it also offers them new opportunities to link up with international actors to further their agendas.

Although parliamentarians' power over the budget of social services of the thousands of aid agencies in Haiti is limited, they can and should play a role in monitoring and shaping the humanitarian agenda on behalf of the constituents that elected them.

To aid in their decision-making Haitian parliamentarians have unprecedented access to social policy expertise from around the world. They also potentially have access, through coordinating and liaising international agencies, to more funds for social programs.

They have the potential to position themselves as intermediaries between

ordinary Haitians and international aid efforts.

However, Haitian parliamentarians will need to take the initiative to learn how to operate in the complex and globalized networks of public and private actors.

Haitians have unprecedented opportunities to link up and create alliances with like-minded actors around the world, to push for broad and inclusive human security and development.

Policy success in this context requires the political savvy, strategy and maneuver that political actors like parliamentarians often find natural.

But it will require learning how to operate in a new and changing political environment – global network politics – that goes beyond traditional constituent service and national bargaining.

It requires an understanding of the international aid system, an appreciation of the many stakeholders involved, the motivations, interests and values of different aid agencies and the potential areas of collaboration.

Photo: © Matthew Bolton / outreach-international.org



A meeting on health services at the UN Logistics Base in Port-au-Prince held in English.



Strengthening Hemispheric Security in the Americas

Events over the past year have highlighted the fragility of security in countries across the Americas.

Transnational organized crime is an international issue; organized crime illegally transacts trillions of dollars worth of business world-wide, and no country is immune to its effects.

Transnational crime by definition crosses national borders and efforts to combat it must also be transnational in scope. No one country can solve this problem alone but a cohesive and collaborative action plan will greatly enhance hemispheric security.

Security presents many shared challenges, but parliaments have the opportunity to make improvements to citizen security through international exchanges and by being cognisant of the transnational nature of crime.

Canada has ratified international instruments used to counter transnational crime, such as the *United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*. The Convention provides tools for global co-operation against transnational crime at a global level, supporting international information-sharing and law enforcement collaboration.

Instruments created within the inter-American system include the *Inter-American Convention against Corruption*, which came into force in 1997 and was ratified by Canada in 2000.

In 1986, the Organization of American States (OAS) created the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission, which recently adopted a new *Hemispheric Drug Strategy*, placing special emphasis on the impact of

It presents a manifold threat with multiple characteristics and dangers to societies.

However, threats must be studied and understood individually and in a wider context to best develop a cohesive response.

In this regard, parliaments play a vital role in ensuring that security measures are not implemented in an arbitrary way. Through their oversight role, parliaments ensure that national

laws reflect the nation's needs and priorities.

These parliamentary actions are perhaps most effective in a democratic system where the legislative branch holds true powers to debate, approve, enact and oversee the implementation of security laws and policies.

Democratic institutions uphold the rule of law and advance the rights and freedoms of citizens.

Photo: © EFE Agency



American, Colombian, Mexican and Uruguayan drug dealers working for the Sinaloa Cartel are detained by the Mexican Police.

poverty and the phenomenon of social exclusion, and which underscores the principle of common and shared responsibility in hemispheric and regional cooperation.

Transnational crime manifests itself as terrorism, trafficking in humans, illegal arms and drugs, money laundering, and in other forms of emerging threats such as cyber crime.

security responses are developed transparently and with full accountability.

To be effective, parliamentary oversight needs to occur at the development, decision-making, implementation and evaluation stages of a national security policy.

In essence, parliaments act as a “check and balance” to ensure that policies and

In this context, countries' parliamentary institutions can facilitate the efforts of developing countries as they address their security challenges. In particular, experiences and technical exchanges can be shared.

Inter-parliamentary dialogue, the sharing of lessons learned and best practices and discussions of common problems and objectives can help to strengthen democracy in the hemisphere.

It is on this basis – the importance of inter-parliamentary exchange – that the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA) was created and that the Canadian section of FIPA operates.

Randy Hoback is a Member of the Parliament of Canada. He is the Chair of the Canadian Section of FIPA and he currently holds the position of Interim President of FIPA.



Changes on the Executive Committee

The 24th Meeting of FIPA's Executive Committee was held in the city of Curitiba, Brazil, on February 19-20, 2011.

Following the Brazilian general elections held in late 2010, Deputy Luiz Carlos Hauly was appointed Secretary of Finance of the State of Parana, Brazil, taking a leave of absence from his position as parliamentarian. This required the selection of an interim president for FIPA.

Participants — comprising parliamentarians from Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Ecuador, Haiti, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, and St. Lucia — selected an Interim President to serve until September 2011.

The new Interim President of FIPA is the representative of the North America region on the

Executive Committee, Canadian Deputy, Randy Hoback. FIPA members gathered at the Plenary Assembly that will take place in Asuncion, Paraguay, will vote for a new president.

The Executive Committee also discussed a new initiative between FIPA and the Parliamentary Centre of Canada, which deals with the subject of citizen security at the hemispheric level.

Other issues that were addressed included the approval of the audited financial report for the year 2009-2010, as well as a budget and work plan for the current year. Preparations for the upcoming Assembly in Paraguay were also discussed.

Photo: © Cesar Brustolin



The members of the Executive Committee discuss preparations for the next Plenary Assembly in Paraguay.

About FIPA

The Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA) is an independent network made up of the national legislatures of the member countries of the Organization of American States (OAS) committed to promoting parliamentary participation in the inter-American system.

Calendar 2011

- ◆ **24th Executive Committee Meeting**, Curitiba, Brazil, Feb. 19-20
- ◆ **Budget Oversight Training Workshop for Central America**, Costa Rica, March 31 - Apr.1
- ◆ **41st OAS General Assembly**, San Salvador, El Salvador, Jun. 5-7
- ◆ **Trade Workshop with WTO**, TBC
- ◆ **25th FIPA Executive Committee Meeting**, TBC
- ◆ **8th FIPA Plenary Assembly**, Asunción, Paraguay, Sept. 7-10

A New FIPA Coming Soon

At the 7th Plenary Meeting of FIPA, the Executive Committee proposed a motion to change the name of FIPA to FIPA-ParlAmericas, which was unanimously supported by all participating delegates.

The adoption of the new name will take place alongside the launching of a new image and website for the organization.

It is expected that the new and upgraded website will improve communications, as it will make use of social networking and other virtual

tools to disseminate information more rapidly and efficiently.

These changes will positively affect the production and distribution of this newsletter. Its online format will allow for more numerous and in-depth contributions, and a richer content, that will be accessible to a wider audience. The print format will continue but will be distributed by request only.

These new changes are expected to take place by the end of June 2011.

FIPA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Interim President

- Randy Hoback, MP, Canada

North America

- Randy Hoback, MP, Canada
- Senator Adriana González Carrillo, Mexico

Central America

- Deputy Víctor Juliao, Panama
- Vacant

Caribbean

- Senator Edmonde S. Beauzile, Haiti
- Speaker of the House Rosemary Husbands-Mathurin, St. Lucia

South America

- Representative Germán Blanco Alvarez, Colombia
- Senator Alberto Grillón Conigliaro, Paraguay

Former FIPA President

- Senator Céline Hervieux-Payette, Canada

President of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas

- Member of the National Assembly Linda Machuca Moscoso, Ecuador

Eighth Plenary Assembly Host Country

- Senator Alberto Grillón Conigliaro, Paraguay

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