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The National Assembly of Haiti continues its legislative work despite the great challenges it faces.

After the quake

Through its Haiti Parliamentary Support Project (PAPH), the Parliamentary Centre has built over the years a strong relationship with Haiti's Parliament. Following the earthquake, it worked daily with the island's parliamentary authorities, notably to develop a three-phase plan.

Phase I, which ended in late April 2010, was aimed at responding to the emergency, to ensure in the short term, the survival and minimal operation of the Haitian Parliament. Phase II, which covers the transition period from April to December 2010, plans to continue providing the institutional and operational support needed for Parliament to function. Phase III, spanning four to five years and beginning in 2011, aims to build on the lessons of the past four years, and to rebuild the institution over the long term.

Parliament's Response

Haiti's Parliament kept very active through its special committees, and it quickly reorganized. It was one of the first voices to hold the Executive to account by demanding answers from the Prime Minister.

The deputies met every day over the weeks following the earthquake. The Lower

House summoned the Prime Minister and certain other ministers to report on the situation after a lack of response in the first few days. Similarly, the Prime Minister was questioned in the Senate concerning the follow-up on humanitarian

on humanitarian assistance monitoring and follow-up. The Senate met behind closed doors to pass resolutions on the crisis, and held numerous meetings with experts, civil society groups and unions. Also, the senators made numerous

emergency act allowing, among other things, for the injection of approx. US\$14 billion in funding to rebuild Haiti, and an amendment to section 232 of the existing elections act, which extends the Executive's mandate. Since then, the opposition and civil society groups have demanded the resignation of the Head of State, accused of violating the Constitution.

This young parliament is setting out on a long, hard road to overcome the challenges awaiting Haiti. It is taking a leadership role in protecting the common good in the face of a gigantic effort of national reconstruction.

Photo: Courtesy of the Honourable Don Boudria/Parliamentary Center.



The temporary headquarters of the Haitian Parliament at the National Police Academy.

assistance. Parliament spoke for Haitians as a whole and forced debates by establishing parliamentary committees to provide a structured response to the emergency. By taking a series of measures in quick succession, Parliament showed its concern for the well-being of the voters and the people.

Furthermore, the deputies and senators held an extraordinary session for partial presentation of the special commission's report

radio appearances, critically speaking about the crisis management, and emphasizing the need to work together on the reconstruction.

Hence, thanks to Parliament's actions, public consultations led to a number of resolutions that were included in the Haitian Reconstruction Plan presented at a donors' conference on March 31.

Finally, amid controversy, Parliament passed an

Marie-Édith Hilaire works for the Haiti Parliamentary Support Project of the Parliamentary Centre of Canada.

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Chile Adopts New Legislation on Refugee Protection

Neither Chile's recent earthquake nor its change of government has halted the country's legislative activity. On March 11, Chile's Senate unanimously approved the *Law for the Protection of Refugees*.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the law advances the development of refugee protection legislation in Latin America and establishes Chile's reputation, and that of the rest of the region, as a haven for individuals forced to flee their home countries because of violence and persecution.

The new law incorporates the international obligations set out in the *1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees* and the *1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees*.

It also includes universal and regional definitions of "refugee" and establishes a comprehensive legal framework for the creation and protection of guarantees and

obligations for refugees and asylum seekers, in addition to setting out regularization and orientation procedures.

Moreover, it establishes a special procedure for dealing with minors who arrive in the country by themselves, including provisions on granting permanent residence permits and obtaining other documents.

The law provides for the creation of a Commission for Recognition of Refugee Status, which will advise the Ministry of the Interior and provide the necessary information in determinations to grant, refuse, suspend, cancel or revoke refugee status.

According to UNHCR statistics, there are nearly 2,000 refugees and asylum-seekers in Chile, from over 30 countries.

In 1999, the Chilean government and UNHCR signed a framework agreement to launch a refugee resettlement program,

making Chile the first South American country to have a program of this nature.

Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay have since started similar initiatives, and Paraguay will soon join them.

few Caribbean islands. Nearly all the countries in the region have set up national bodies, laws and procedures for determining refugee status.

To date, 20 Latin American countries, including Chile, have adopted the *2004*

Photo: © UNHCR /I. Carmona/D. Guerrero



Refugee girl from Sri Lanka chatting with her Chilean classmates.

Considerable progress has been made in strengthening the legislative and institutional framework for refugee protection in the region.

The vast majority of Latin American countries have acceded to the *1951 Convention* and the *1967 Protocol*, with the exception of Cuba, Guyana and a

Mexico Declaration and Plan of Action.

This document set out concrete actions for developing appropriate public policies, strengthening the framework for protection and finding solutions to fit Latin America's current refugee context.



Parliamentarians against Hunger

Luiz Carlos Haully, Brazilian Deputy and President of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA), together with parliamentarians from national, sub-national, regional and sub-regional legislative bodies, as well as representatives of civil society, participated in the First Forum of the Parliamentary Front Against Hunger in São Paulo, Brazil, on March 4 and 5.

Organized jointly by the São Paulo Legislative Assembly and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Forum provided an opportunity for exchanging ideas and perspectives, in order to establish common strategic directions that guarantee the Right to Food in the region and to focus national budgets in the fight against hunger.

This first forum is part of the *Hunger-Free Latin America and the Caribbean Initiative*, proposed in 2005 by Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, and former Guatemalan President Óscar Berger.

In 2006, at the request of the Initiative's member countries, the FAO adopted the Initiative as one of its priorities for action in the region, and, in 2008, leaders from all countries in the region agreed to support it.

Given the context of the Initiative, the FAO felt it essential to work with the legislatures in the region to ensure the institutionality of the fight against hunger, since the legislative power sets legal frameworks and approves budget programs.

At the Forum, President Haully referred to the recommendations made by the Working Group on Food Security during the Sixth FIPA Plenary Meeting in Ottawa, Canada, in 2009. He explained that FIPA member countries could create programs against hunger and share effective measures in that regard.

"Parliaments provide a legitimate voice to the people," President Haully said, adding, "Hence, it is important to strengthen the role of parliamentarians

Photo: © FAO



The problem of hunger in the region isn't production, but access to food.

throughout the process of global decision making."

Latin America, including the Caribbean, was the only one of the five regions worldwide to successfully reduce the number of hungry people between 1990 and 2005, from 53 million to 45 million, according to studies by the FAO.

However, in the last few years, the number has risen again to 53 million, 9 million of whom are children under the age of 5.

Countries with Constitutional Protection to the Right to Food

1. Argentina
2. Bolivia
3. Brazil
4. Colombia
5. Cuba
6. Ecuador
7. Guatemala
8. Nicaragua
9. Dominican Republic
10. Paraguay
11. Venezuela



The Executive in Panama

The 21st meeting of FIPA's Executive Committee was held in Panama City, Panama, on January 29 and 30. In response to the earthquake in Haiti on January 12, the parliamentarians adopted a resolution in which they committed to actively support their Haitian parliamentary colleagues and to work at the regional level to prevent and respond to future natural disasters.



Photo: Courtesy of the National Assembly of Panama

Executive Committee members discuss the situation in Haiti.

Participants — comprising parliamentarians from Brazil, Canada, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, and Trinidad and Tobago — decided to include emergency preparedness as one of the main themes to be addressed at the 7th FIPA Plenary Meeting, to take place in Mexico in November.

Other themes on the agenda for the Plenary Meeting include regional security and trans-national

crime, as well as the role of civil society in strengthening democracy.

The Executive Committee also discussed preparations for a trade workshop for parliamentarians to be held in Mexico in May, a meeting of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas to be hosted by the Assembly of Ecuador, and the design of a new training program for parliamentarians funded by CIDA.

CIDA-FIPA Agreement

The Government of Canada, through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), will provide FIPA with C\$2.7 million in funding over the next five years.

This funding will support the project on *Strengthening the Role of Parliaments in Democratic Governance and Sustainable Development in the Americas*. The project will be implemented in cooperation with the

Parliamentary Centre of Canada, which will administer the funds, and provide expertise.

The project will include training to improve parliamentary practices and increase the contribution of parliamentarians in creating policies at the hemispheric level. The project also seeks to boost inter-parliamentary cooperation and build consensus on key issues for the region, including gender equality.

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 2010

- **Workshop on the Doha Round**, Mexico City, Mexico, May 20-22
- **22nd Executive Committee Meeting**, Asuncion, Paraguay, June 4-5
- **40th OAS General Assembly**, Lima, Peru, June 6-8
- **Meeting of the Group of Women Parliamentarians**, Quito, Ecuador, Aug. 12-13
- **7th Plenary Meeting**, Mexico City, Mexico, Nov.

FIPA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President

- Deputy Luiz Carlos Hauy, Brazil

North America

- Mr. James Bezan, MP, Canada
- United States of America (delegate to be confirmed)

Central America

- Deputy María Estela de la Cruz, Dominican Republic
- Deputy Victor Juliao, Panama

Caribbean

- Mr. Stanford Callender, MP, Trinidad and Tobago
- Speaker of the House Rosemary Husbands-Mathurin, St. Lucia

South America

- Senator Nancy Patricia Gutiérrez, 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

Seventh Plenary Meeting Host Country

- Senator Adriana González Carrillo, Mexico

FIPA
500-165 Sparks St.
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5B9
Canada
Tel : +1 613-594-5222
Fax : +1 613-594-4766
info@e-fipa.org
www.e-fipa.org

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