

Foro Interparlamentario de las Américas
Fórum Interparlamentar das Américas



Forum interparlementaire des Amériques
Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas

Regulations

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The *Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA)* is governed by the rules and procedures set out in these *Regulations*.

Chapter I: Nature and Objectives

1. Nature

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.

In fulfilling its purpose, FIPA supports the principles set forth in the Inter-American Democratic Charter.

2. Objectives

The Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas has the following objectives:

- a) To contribute to the development of inter-parliamentary dialogue in dealing with issues on the hemispheric agenda.
- b) To increase the sharing of experiences, dialogue, and inter-parliamentary cooperation on issues of common interest to the member states.
- c) To help strengthen the role of the legislative branch in democracy, and in the promotion and defense of democracy and human rights.
- d) To promote the harmonization of legislation and development of legislation among member states.
- e) To contribute to the process of integration as one of the most appropriate instruments for sustainable and harmonious development in the hemisphere.



Chapter II: Composition

3. Members

- a) FIPA is comprised of the national legislatures of the OAS member states.

4. Observers

- a) The national legislatures in states with credited OAS observer status will be considered permanent observers of FIPA. The observer states may also be invited to attend plenary meetings of FIPA.
- b) The sub-regional and special parliaments in the hemisphere may be considered special observers to FIPA. The special observers may also be invited to attend plenary meetings of FIPA.
- c) The Plenary Assembly may confer, upon request, special observer status on parliaments or congresses in other hemispheres, as well as international agencies whose objectives and principles are consistent with those of FIPA.

Chapter III: Organs

The Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas will consist of four bodies: a Plenary Assembly, an Executive Committee, a Technical Secretariat, and working groups, including the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas.

5. Plenary Assembly

The Plenary Assembly is FIPA's highest body, composed of the delegations accredited by FIPA member legislatures.

5.1 Functions

- a) The Plenary Assembly shall elect the President of FIPA at the plenary meeting, to represent FIPA and serve as Chair of the Executive Committee. The President shall be elected for a period of two years and may be re-elected only once.



- b) The Plenary Assembly shall establish working groups on the recommendation of the Executive Committee to examine specific matters or specific tasks or projects.
- c) The Plenary Assembly shall issue recommendations and resolutions. The former shall be pronouncements on topics of political or general interest and the latter shall relate to institutional actions. The said recommendations and resolutions shall be submitted to the Plenary Assembly as proposals from the Executive Committee, from the working groups, or from the delegates.
- d) The Plenary Assembly shall make its recommendations and resolutions known to the OAS General Assembly, the presidential summits of the Americas, FIPA member legislatures, and other such bodies as the Plenary Assembly should decide to inform.

5.2 Meetings

- a) The Plenary Assembly shall meet every year.
- b) The Plenary Assembly shall determine which parliament will host the next plenary meeting based on invitations received.
- c) Delegations will be composed of representatives of national legislatures of the OAS member states; be chosen by the accredited national parliament or congress; have up to twelve (12) members of parliament/congress (this limit does not apply to the host parliament), and; insofar as possible, delegations should represent the diverse political parties/groups in each participating legislature, shall have representatives of both chambers in bicameral legislatures and should have female participation.
- d) The Chair of the plenary meeting shall be a member of the host parliament and will be elected by the Plenary Assembly.
- e) The host country's parliament will make the necessary arrangements for the meeting in consultation with the Executive Committee and with the support of the Technical Secretariat.
- f) The cost of organizing the plenary meeting will be borne by the host parliament.
- g) The agenda of the plenary meeting shall be approved by the Plenary Assembly on the recommendation of the Executive Committee.
- h) Member parliaments will be responsible for the expenses incurred to attend the event.

6. Executive Committee

The Executive Committee shall be responsible for carrying out the activities entrusted to it by the FIPA Plenary Assembly. The Executive Committee may request the support of the Technical Secretariat and other organizations in dealing with issues on FIPA's agenda.

6.1 Composition

- a) The representatives of the Executive Committee shall be active members of their respective national parliaments and shall not simultaneously hold office as cabinet ministers in the executive branch of their state.
- b) The Executive Committee shall be composed of:
 - *The President of FIPA;*
 - *Two representatives from each of the sub-regions listed under 6.1g);*
 - *One representative of the country hosting the next plenary meeting;*
 - *The President of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas;*
 - *The past-Presidents of FIPA.*
- c) If the President resigns, dies, or becomes ineligible to occupy the position because he/she is no longer a member of parliament or is appointed as cabinet minister in the executive branch of his/her state, the Executive Committee shall elect one of its members as an interim President until the next meeting of the Plenary Assembly.
- d) The national legislature of each country elected as member of the Executive Committee shall be required to provide, by written communication to the President, the name of the parliamentary delegate who shall serve as its member on the Executive Committee, within 30 days following that country's election to the Executive Committee. This delegate shall serve on the Executive Committee, subject to paragraph (e), for the entire term.
- e) If any member of the Executive Committee becomes unable to carry out his/her duties because of resignation, death, or loss of status as a member of the legislature of his/her country, or because he/she is appointed as cabinet minister in the executive branch of his/her state, the national legislature to which such member belongs shall appoint an alternate member to serve out the remainder of the term until the next plenary meeting.
- f) The member countries of the Executive Committee may be re-elected.

- g) For purposes of observing a balance in regional representation, the hemisphere shall be divided into the following four sub-regions:
- *North America:* Canada, Mexico and the United States.
 - *Central America:* Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama.
 - *Caribbean:* Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Guyana, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.
 - *South America:* Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.
- h) Each sub-region shall be free to decide on the method of its choice for electing the member countries which will represent it on the Executive Committee.
- i) Each member of the Executive Committee shall serve for a period of two years, subject to the following conditions:
- One of the two member countries representing a sub-region to the Committee will stand for re-election every year at the plenary meeting.
 - The term of a member of the Executive Committee who represents the country hosting the plenary meeting shall run from the month after the previous annual meeting until the month of the year in which the plenary meeting takes place in that country.

6.2 Functions

- a) The Executive Committee may submit recommendations to the Plenary Assembly with respect to items on the hemispheric agenda or with respect to the administrative policy of FIPA.
- b) The Executive Committee shall coordinate, in conjunction with the host country of the plenary meeting and the Technical Secretariat, the draft agenda and the plenary meeting timetable for discussing and dealing with matters considered necessary for the meeting.
- c) The Executive Committee shall advise the host country of the plenary meeting on matters considered important for the meeting.
- d) The Executive Committee shall receive requests from any legislature or international agency to participate as special observers to FIPA, and shall submit recommendations on such requests at the next meeting of the Plenary Assembly.

- e) The Executive Committee shall monitor the implementation of the Plenary Assembly recommendations, with the support of the Technical Secretariat and member legislatures.
- f) When the Plenary Assembly is not in session, the Executive Committee may issue statements on any issue or situation of hemispheric interest it considers urgent.

6.3 Meetings

- a) Meetings of the Executive Committee shall be presided over by the President of FIPA.
- b) The Executive Committee shall meet at least once a year.
- c) The costs of organizing the meeting shall be borne by the host parliament.

7. Technical Secretariat

7.1 Functions

The Technical Secretariat shall have the following functions:

- a) To provide technical assistance to the President of FIPA, the Executive Committee, and other members of FIPA in implementing the recommendations of the Plenary Assembly.
- b) To collaborate with the working groups to prepare documentation, conduct research, and pursue the other matters on which it is to report.
- c) To report annually to the Executive Committee on work and activities completed during the year. This report will be forwarded to the Plenary Assembly for approval.
- d) To coordinate the organization and conduct of the plenary meeting with the Executive Committee and the host country.
- e) To serve as secretariat for plenary meetings.
- f) To take and record the minutes and process documentation emanating from the Plenary Assembly, the Executive Committee, and the working groups.
- g) To administer and update the FIPA Web page.
- h) To serve as FIPA's institutional memory.

- i) To conduct, at the request of national legislatures and with the approval of the Executive Committee, comparative studies and projects on legislative harmonization.
- j) To keep national legislatures informed of the status of ratification of international treaties and agreements.
- k) To implement and coordinate an inter-parliamentary network.
- l) To inform the Permanent Council of the OAS on the activities of FIPA.

7.2 Secretariat Staff

- a) In order to carry out these functions the Technical Secretariat shall be composed of an Executive Secretary, who shall serve as secretary to the Executive Committee, and other staff as deemed appropriate.
- b) The Executive Secretary shall be appointed by the Executive Committee on recommendation of the FIPA President. The Executive Secretary shall be responsible for the appointment of other Secretariat staff, with the approval of the FIPA President.

8. Working Groups

- a) The working groups shall be established by the Plenary Assembly on the recommendation of the Executive Committee to examine specific matters or to carry out specific tasks, or projects.
- b) The working groups shall establish their own priorities during their meetings. When they have concluded their discussions they shall report back to the Plenary Assembly.
- c) The reports of the working groups may be presented orally or in writing at the plenary meeting.
- d) Working groups that meet outside the dates of the plenary meeting may meet via teleconferencing, the Internet or any other electronic means.

9. Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas

The Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas is a permanent working group of FIPA.

9.1 Functions

- a) To strengthen the leadership of female politicians through ongoing regional exchange actions.

- b) To promote the creation of conditions for equal opportunities, prioritizing the fight against poverty and the elimination of employment discrimination.
- c) To strengthen democracies in the countries of the Americas in an effort to achieve respect for human rights and conditions that promote equitable and sustainable social development.
- d) To promote the creation of mechanisms that encourage the participation of women in politics.
- e) To strengthen the active participation by women at all FIPA meetings, incorporating a gender perspective into each of the topics analyzed by the organization.

9.2 Meetings

- a) The Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas shall meet at least once a year, in conjunction with the plenary meeting and, while in session, shall establish its own priorities.
- b) All plenary meeting delegates committed to promoting the Group's objectives shall be entitled to be members of the Group and to participate in its debates.
- c) The Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas shall elect its president at a meeting held in conjunction with the plenary meeting, among the delegates of member parliaments attending the meeting. The election shall be presided over by a woman parliamentarian member of the host legislature. Each national delegation attending the meeting shall have two votes. The President of the Group of Women Parliamentarians shall be elected for a period of two years, with one opportunity for re-election.
- d) The President of the Group of Women Parliamentarians shall serve on the Executive Committee of FIPA. The President shall also be responsible for the implementation of the Group's work plan with the support of the Technical Secretariat and of member legislatures.



Chapter IV: Financing

10. Financing

The annual budget for the permanent operation of FIPA will be covered by the regular fees of each of its members, additional voluntary contributions from its members, funds from external cooperation and special donations.

- a) The Executive Committee will determine the regular fees for each of the member parliaments on the basis of the contribution each country makes to the OAS and will submit it to the Plenary Assembly for approval.
- b) Member parliaments that are able to do so may make additional voluntary contributions to the general budget of the organization.
- c) FIPA may arrange for non-repayable financing from international organizations or cooperation agencies to meet the need for operating funds or to carry out special projects. The Plenary Assembly will be notified of all funds received under this heading.
- d) FIPA may arrange for and accept any type of contribution, or public or private donation, that does not compromise its freedom of decision and action. The Plenary Assembly will be notified of all funds received under this heading.

Chapter V: Procedures

11. Plenary Meeting Procedures

- a) The President of FIPA will preside over the election of the Chair of the plenary meeting.
- b) The Chair of the meeting shall direct the work, ensuring that the rules are observed. Also, he/she shall open, adjourn and close the sessions, announce the results and declare the meeting closed.
- c) If necessary, the Chair of the meeting may select or appoint alternate members to lead some sessions or working groups during the plenary meeting.
- d) In giving the floor to participating delegates, the Chair of the meeting shall be guided by the terms of these FIPA Regulations.

- e) The Plenary Assembly may approve the inclusion of a new agenda item prior to the adoption of the agenda if it has the support of the majority of the votes. New agenda items may include draft recommendations or resolutions submitted by delegates for consideration by the Plenary Assembly. The author of the proposal shall have two minutes to present it verbally to the Plenary Assembly
- f) Any request to include a new agenda item submitted after the agenda has been adopted shall be referred to the Executive Committee for urgent consideration. The Executive Committee shall recommend the inclusion of the item on the agenda if it considers the topic urgent. In the latter case, the author of the proposal shall have two minutes to present it verbally to the Plenary Assembly.
- g) The recommendations and resolutions shall be approved by a simple majority vote of the delegates present, with the exception of amendments to the Regulations, which shall require the approval of two thirds of the votes.
- h) Each national delegation shall have two votes in the event that a recommendation or other matter requires delegations to vote.
- i) A participating delegate may address the meeting only with the Chair's consent.
- j) A participating delegate, with the consent of the Chair of the plenary meeting, may speak on any matter on the agenda.
- k) All matters not covered by these Regulations shall be decided by the Chair of the plenary meeting, acting on the recommendation of the Executive Committee.

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