



Foro Interparlamentario de las Américas
 Fórum Interparlamentar das Américas

Forum interparlementaire des Amériques
 Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas



ParlAmericas

Volume I Issue 1 English

What will the legislators do to respond to the trust of their voters ?

Haiti after the vote

The inter-American community has closely observed the recent events in Haiti where, after a two year hiatus, a new legislature was inaugurated this past May 9th. ParlAmericas asked two congressmen and two senators from different parties what they see as the main challenge during their mandate and why.

According to Senator **Edmonde Supplice Beauzile**, Deputy Speaker of the Senate and member of the Fusion party, her actions will reflect the election platform of the Haitian Coalition of Women Leaders (COHFEL). "I must respond to the priorities established and validated by the [COHFEL] assembly," she said.

"The most urgent of these priorities, which responds to a national need, is to pass a framework law that will institutionalize the deconcentration of basic social services and give life to decentralization, as this is the best option for sustainable local development," she maintained. She also noted that, "It is necessary for women parliamentarians to ensure that the legal framework responds to the needs of women who head single-parent families."

For the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, **Jean David Geneste**, from the Alyans party, "the primary challenge is to facilitate the production of suitable and dynamic legislation that responds to the demands of an integrated process to promote sustainable development through education and decentralization."



Photo: MINUSTAH

By voting, Haitians renewed their confidence in democracy. In his opinion, "Since Haiti was created as a nation in 1804, the leaders have failed to understand that education is a necessary and indispensable priority for lasting development." That is why, "we have always had centralized government, indifferent to the needs and fundamental rights of Haitian citizens."

According to Senator **Kély Bastien**, of the ruling Lespwa party, "The main concern is

the contribution of parliament to building the rule of law, through institutional strengthening," as well as "the implementation of a realistic program of legislation in line with national priorities, such as education, health care, infrastructure, security, jobs, and investments." "To achieve this," he added, "parliament must improve the

organization and operation of the standing committees, train their staff, establish tools and mechanisms to control the government's actions, and provide the institution with a modern structure suited to its mission."

Finally, Congressman **Gérard Thérémène**, of the Konba party, wants to sponsor a bill for "free legal services in the rural area" during his parliamentary

mandate. "The objectives of this bill," he explained, "are to contribute to rural emancipation, to make the law known in the rural environment, to have the rural population contribute to the establishment of the rule of law, and to promote law that takes the concerns of the rural world into account." The congressman argues for "Inventing the means to educate the population in the practice of democracy," and more concretely, "to protect their rights." For him, "The *sine qua non* for ensuring that our fledgling democracy takes root is to organize a coherent system for training our people in the most elemental notions of the law."

Opinions were edited for reasons of space. A complete version found on the FIPA Web page: www.e-fipa.org

In this issue:	
Sustainable tourism in Grenada	2
The Legislature in Colombia	3
Our first issue!	4
About FIPA	4
Looking for mentors	4
No to terrorism	4



Grenada seeks path for sustainable tourism

Photo: Grenada Board of Tourism



Scenes and landscapes of daily life in Grenada

The policy objectives for Grenada's tourism recognize that sustainability must be part of a successful industry. This is borne out in three policy statements:

- To ensure that tourism development is consistent with the protections and conservation of the country's natural and cultural resources, build environments and the nation's moral values

Senator **Brenda Hood**, FIPA Executive Committee member and Grenadian Minister for Tourism, Civil Aviation, Culture and the Performing Arts shares insight on sustainable tourism, an industry of significance for many countries of the Americas.

The concept of sustainable tourism has different meanings and connotations in different parts of the world, and even among academics. Regardless, sustainable tourism embraces three key elements:

- Appropriate conservation and sustained utilization of nature, culture and history
- Adding value to/ valorizing local communities
- Appropriate guiding of visitors so that they come in contact with nature, culture and history of local areas and communities

Based on these elements, sustainable tourism considers keeping a balance between conservation and protection on the one hand, and the social and economic impacts of tourism on the other hand.

Tourism is essentially the sale of experiences to visitors, and the development of products that will act as catalysts and facilitators for the sale. Because tourism cuts across many sectors in the economy, the challenges that confront those sectors do have an impact on tourism. Some of these challenges include the indiscriminate

destruction of forests and wild life, degradation of beaches as a result of sand mining, decline in coral reefs as a result of siltation, and loss of heritage buildings as a result of the pressures of urbanization. Notwithstanding, because tourism is about quality experience, the only tourism that will be successful in the long term, must be sustainable.

For any country to build a sustainable tourism industry, there are some sufficient and necessary requisites. These are:

- An inventory and appreciation of the country's tourism resources (people, information, materials/ things and finance)
- An understanding of the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders and collaborators, and actions based on that understanding
- Mainstreaming of sustainable tourism into national policies across sectors
- Building awareness among local residents and stakeholders
- Policies that are developed and informed by appropriate research based on the need to conserve the natural environment, local culture and history
- Legislative framework (laws, regulations and agreements)
- Human resources capacity that is sufficiently trained, experienced and motivated

- To foster the most appropriate form and scale to tourism development in harmony with the resource endowment of the islands and aspirations of the people
- To ensure that the tourism plant and essential infrastructure services keep pace with the demands of the sector within the context of the established carrying capacity

In addition to the above, if sustainable tourism is to be effective the communities where these tourism projects are developed must be seen as part of the development process.

They must benefit financially and socially, this way they will protect and preserve the sustainability of the project.

Finally the education system of the country must be involved in order for the tourism industry to be seen as very important for the economic development of the country, sustainable tourism courses must be part of the curriculum and, most importantly, relevant statistics must be made available to get a better understanding of the impact of the industry on the country.

Sustainable tourism must be seen in a holistic way with a good understanding of its impact on the country as a whole.



Congress information

The Legislature in Colombia

Chamber of Representatives (2006–2010)

- ◆ 65 representatives
- ◆ 22 parliamentary groups
- ◆ 15 women
- ◆ 150 men
- ◆ 2 representatives for Afro-Colombians
- ◆ 1 representative for native peoples
- ◆ 1 representative for Colombians abroad
- ◆ Main parties:
 - Liberal 22% (centre-left)
 - La U 18% (centre-right)
 - Conservative 17% (right)
 - Cambio Radical 12% (centre-right)
 - Polo Democrático 5% (left)
 - Other 26%

Senate of the Republic (2006–2010)

- ◆ 102 senators
- ◆ 10 parliamentary groups
- ◆ 13 women
- ◆ 89 men
- ◆ 2 senators for native peoples
- ◆ Main parties:
 - La U 20% (centre-right)
 - Conservative 18% (right)
 - Liberal 17% (centre-left)
 - Cambio Radical 15% (centre-right)
 - Polo Democrático 10% (left)
 - Other 20%

The Political Constitution of Colombia (1991) establishes the general structure of the State and declares that the public power consists of the legislature, the executive branch and the judiciary.

Legislative functions are vested in the Congress of the Republic, which is composed of two chambers: the Senate and the Chamber of Representatives. Senators and representatives are elected on the same date for four-year terms with a possibility of indefinite re-election—the former on a national ballot and the latter in territorial districts, in addition to the special districts. The election (March 2006) and start of the new legislative period (July 2006) have led to implementation of the Political Reform approved in 2003, which introduces significant amendments to the functioning of Congress.

This constitutional amendment strengthened the political party system, amended the allocation of seats in the institution by applying the *d'Hondt* method, and established a system of parliamentary groups aimed at consolidating party positions during voting in Congress.

Each chamber has a board of directors, a speaker (senator and representative), a secretary general, an administrative structure and commissions made up of members of Congress. Those commissions, which deal with specific topics, and which are constitutional

(permanent) and legal in nature, are designed to study bills.

In addition to the legislative functions that include issuing, interpreting, amending and repealing laws and codes in all branches of the law, as well as amending the Constitution, it is the responsibility of the Congress of the Republic to exercise political control over the government through debates and censure motions against ministers, to elect the highest authorities of the control bodies (Office of the Comptroller General, Office of the Attorney General, Public Defender's Office) and the justices of the Constitutional Court, and to judge the President and other high-ranking officials.

Photo: Congreso de la República de Colombia



View of Colombian Congress in session



Our first issue!

Dear Colleagues,

I am very pleased to present the first issue of *ParlAmericas*. This new FIPA newsletter is designed to showcase the important work we do helping our countries build democracies that respond to their citizens' needs. I encourage you to contribute to the newsletter by telling us about legislative developments in your parliament or by submitting article ideas!

We have dedicated a special section in this issue to the Colombian Congress, which will be hosting us in November for the Forum's Fifth Plenary Assembly

Meeting. I hope you will join us at that time to discuss poverty reduction, the war on drugs, trade and integration challenges, and to take part in the fourth meeting of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas.

Finally, let me extend my sincere gratitude to all those who helped draft this first issue and, of course, to the Canadian International Development Agency and the member parliaments of FIPA for their financial support.

I look forward to seeing you in Bogotá. Happy reading!

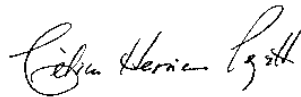


Photo: Arlette Pedraglio



Senator Hervieux-Payette, President

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). Through regular meetings and virtual exchanges, FIPA members have committed themselves to carrying on an inter-parliamentary dialogue on issues of common interest and to representing the views of parliamentarians in the process of hemispheric integration.

5th Assembly in Bogotá

The Plenary Assembly will be held in Bogotá, Colombia, from November 19 to 21. The working groups will address the following issues:

- Trade and integration
- Poverty reduction
- Fight against drug trafficking
- Gender equality

Contact us

FIPA
500-165 Sparks St.
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5B9
Canada

Phone: +1 613 594-5222
Fax: +1 613 594-4766
info@e-fipa.org
www.e-fipa.org

Looking for mentors

FIPA's Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas is seeking women parliamentarians interested in participating in a mentorship project. The project will connect newly elected women parliamentarians with more experienced women colleagues from across the region in order to provide assistance, advice and support useful in overcoming the challenges of political life. For more information or to participate please contact Ms. Sabra Ripley at the FIPA Technical Secretariat.

No to terrorism

Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, the United States, Grenada, Guatemala and Trinidad and Tobago, joined the member states of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption by depositing their instrument of ratification this past year.

In 2005, parliamentarians at FIPA's Plenary Meeting in Brasilia reiterated "the urgent need for ratification [...] and enforcement of the international instruments for confronting terrorism, particularly the Inter-American Convention against Terrorism," while respecting human rights.

FIPA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President

- Senator Céline Hervieux-Payette, Canada

North America

- James Bezan, MP, Canada
- Mexico (representative to be confirmed)

Central America

- Deputy Erick Mauricio Rodríguez Gavarrete, Honduras
- Deputy Gudy Rivera Estrada, Guatemala

Caribbean

- Senator Sandra Husbands, Barbados
- Senator Brenda Hood, Grenada

South America

- Senator Alejandro Velázquez, Paraguay
- Deputy Iván Moreira Barros, Chile

Host country

- Senator Nancy Patricia Gutiérrez Castañeda, Colombia

