



**REPORT
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
PARLIAMENTARY CONFEDERATION OF THE AMERICAS
HAVANA, CUBA
MARCH 4 TO 6, 2005**

Introduction

Section 18 of the Statutes of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA) stipulates that the Executive Committee is responsible for the organizational and administrative activities of the organization.

Under section 22 of the Statutes, the president of COPA may call special sessions in the event she considers it necessary.

A special COPA meeting was therefore called in Cuba to follow up on the regular meeting of the Committee held in San Juan, Puerto Rico, from September 23 to 25, 2004, in response to the need to discuss and reach decisions on the Haiti mission and the organization of the 6th General Assembly in Brazil.

The meeting of the Network of Women Parliamentarians originally scheduled for March 4 was postponed to a later date by the president of the Network, representative Ileana Rogel.

The special session was organized by the National Assembly of People's Power of the Republic of Cuba under the auspices of the chair and vice president of the International Relations Committee, Mr. Ramón Pez Ferro and Mr. Tubal Páez, and with the support of the COPA secretariats. It was held in Havana, the capital of the People's Republic of Cuba, on March 6 and 7, 2005, at the Palco Hotel and Havana International Conference Center.

Participants

Forty parliamentarians from six nations of the Americas attended the sessions: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Cuba, El Salvador, and Mexico.

The participants were:

Maria José Maninha (Brazil); Martha Hilda González (Mexico); Pierre Moreau (Québec); Ramón Pez Ferro (Cuba); Tubal Páez (Cuba); Edda Evangelina Acuña (Argentina); Miguel Di Salvo (Argentina); Mirta Rubini (Argentina); J. Rafael Machucáz (El Salvador); Izidro Acaballero (El Salvador); Humberto Centeno (El Salvador); Nelson Garcia (El Salvador); Guillermo Olmos Capilla (El Salvador); Fatima Houda-Pepin (Québec); Claude Boucher (Québec); Felipe B. Almaraz Calderón (Mexico); Víctor Humberto Benítez Treviño (Mexico); María Mercedes Colín Guadarrama (Mexico); Oscar González Pereda (Mexico); Cesar Santos Cantú (Mexico); Carlos Martín Jimenez Macías (Mexico); Juan Manoel Veja Rayet (Mexico); Jose Antonio Cabello Gil (Mexico); Aracely Escalante Jasso (Mexico); Letícia Gutierrez Corona (Mexico); Maria das Graças de Matos (Brazil); Orlando Fantazzini Neto (Brazil); Ivan Valente (Brazil); Edson Ezequiel (Brazil); Maria Aparecida Gama Loureiro (Brazil); José Maria Ferreira (Brazil); Sebastião Leal Júnior (Brazil); José Cardoso Távora (Brazil); Nilson Mourão (Brazil); Flora Izabel Rodrigues Cardoso (Brazil); Kleber Eulálio (Brazil); Wasny de Roure (Brazil); et Veira Reis (Brazil).

Agenda

The agenda of the special Executive Committee meeting was as follows:

PROGRAM

- March 4 Arrival of Executive Committee member parliamentarians and other participants at José Martí International Airport, Havana, Cuba.
Transfer to Palco Hotel, the event venue.
- March 5
- 8 a.m. Breakfast
Registration
- 9 a.m. Meeting of COPA Executive Committee
- Attendance and quorum
 - Word of welcome by Ricardo Alarcón de Quesada, president of the National Assembly of People's Power of the Republic of Cuba
 - Speech by Deputy Maria José Da Conceição Maninha, president of COPA
- 10 a.m. Break
- 10:15 a.m. Resumption of meeting
- Appointment of Martha Hilda Calderón as executive secretary of COPA
 - Report by the COPA president on the humanitarian policy mission to Haiti
 - Remarks by the COPA president regarding COPA attendance at the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO in Brussels, Belgium
 - Proposal to amend COPA statutes
 - Presentation of COPA activity program for 2005

- 2 p.m. Lunch hosted by the president of COPA
- 4 p.m. Resumption of meeting
- Presentation of work program in preparation for the 6th COPA General Assembly, which will be held in May 2005 in Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil
 - Adoption of documents and resolutions
 - General business
- 8 p.m. Dinner hosted by the National Assembly of People's Power of the Republic of Cuba
- March 6
- 8 a.m. Breakfast
- 9 a.m. Meeting of the president with the three COPA secretaries
- 12 h Adjournment
- March 7
- ALL DAY Departure of participants

Proceedings

March 5

The president of COPA opened the meeting by introducing participants and presenting the agenda, and expressed her satisfaction at holding the event in Havana. The president of the Cuban National Assembly of People's Power, Ricardo Alarcón de Quesada, then welcomed COPA Executive Committee members. He noted the importance of the meeting for Cuba and commented briefly on the country's international, social, and economic relations, expressing confidence in the future of these relations and wishing COPA success in its initiatives.

After these greetings, the president proceeded with analysis and approval of the Report on the COPA Good Offices Mission to Haiti, which took place from November 12 to 15, 2004. The president called upon Mr. Joelson Dias, a human rights lawyer who advised the mission and helped draft the report, to present a summary of the document. He noted that the social, economic, and political situation in Haiti had left a strong impression on COPA delegates and reiterated the need for COPA to take concrete action in cooperation with the appropriate authorities and international organizations. Proposals for action are the subject of a resolution entitled "The crisis in Haiti and the forging of a peaceful and lasting solution for the country's full political stabilization and socioeconomic recovery."

The delegations from Mexico, Québec, El Salvador, and Brazil agreed on the need for a resolution, but were unable to agree on the content. The main area of contention, raised primarily by the Québec delegation, concerned points 7, 8, and 14 of the resolution regarding funding and international technical assistance to Haiti, the organization of free elections in 2005, and the country's socioeconomic recovery. The Salvadorian delegation noted that the resolution legitimized Haitian authorities by attributing them unwarranted jurisdiction and authority.

The Mexican delegation suggested that COPA set up a permanent electoral observation mission to Haiti; that the Haitian issue be raised at the 6th COPA General Assembly by inviting authorities and experts to make a presentation; and that the resolution focus more specifically on the pacification of existing conflicts.

After numerous attempts to reach agreement, a committee made up of members of the Brazilian, Mexican, and Quebec delegations was struck to draft a consensus resolution under the coordination of Brazilian deputy Orlando Fantazzini. . Once ready, the new text is to be submitted to the 6th COPA General Assembly in Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil, for adoption.

Once this point of order concerning the Haitian mission was resolved, the assembly proceeded with the reading of the Report on COPA's attendance at the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in Brussels, Belgium, from November 24 to 26, 2004. The report, drafted by COPA president Maria José Maninha and COPA member parliamentarians Edson Ezequiel, Ivan Valente, Feu Rosa, and Orlando Fantazinni, was read by Mr. Ezequiel. After a largely diplomatic and not particularly incisive overview of the Conference that noted its declared support for the WTO process and legitimization of WTO policy, the representative declared that the COPA delegation had presented a parallel document to the final declaration stressing such issues as the importance of agriculture talks for member state economic development and growth, concerns over agricultural subsidies, and the need for mechanisms designed to reduce the imbalance between the industrialized and developing nations by promoting and protecting the interests of poorer countries. The Conference noted the preoccupation of the rich nations with trade in services and intellectual property issues. Lastly, the representative emphasized that the event had provided COPA with an outstanding opportunity to participate in discussions and that major advances had been made compared to the preceding WTO meeting in Cancun.

The next item on the agenda was a discussion of proposed amendments to articles 7, 14, 19, and 27 of the COPA Statutes. A consensus was reached.

The president then presented the program of COPA events and activities for the first half of 2005, notably a visit to the Mexican and Dominican parliaments in April and participation in the activities of various international parliamentary organizations and federations, including the 6th FIPA Plenary Assembly in May, and the Latin American Parliament and IPU General Assembly in April.

After the lunch at the Palco Hotel restaurant hosted by the COPA president, the work schedule for the 6th COPA General Assembly in Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil, in May 2005 was presented. The president stressed the need for COPA Executive Committee members and Secretariats to promote the event in their respective countries. The Canadian delegation suggested a change to the General Assembly program that would enable the COPA standing committees to meet on two afternoons. The Brazilian delegation announced that it would distribute a paper entitled "Public International Migration Policies" at the event, and that the NGO Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) would organize an information meeting on the International Criminal Tribunal. Participants also accepted the suggestion of the Mexican delegation to hold a special commission on federalism at the General Assembly with state and provincial parliaments. UNALE, NCSL, COMCE and their Argentinean counterpart organization will be responsible for organizing commission activities. Lastly, the Executive Committee determined that the standing committees would hold their meetings during the 6th General Assembly and that a list of guest experts and authorities would be drawn up by March 30, 2005.

Further to the next item on the agenda, the Executive Committee approved a note of support to the Cuban people, as suggested by Brazilian deputy Nilson Mourão. The note stressed the Cubans' just aspirations for integration and condemned the brutal economic embargo imposed on the country

The Québec delegation presented a resolution denouncing the actions of FARC in Colombia, as well as the kidnapping of Ingrid Bétancourt and her assistant Clara Rojas almost three years earlier. Brazilian deputies Orlando Fantazzini and Ivan Valente asked that the resolution also denounce paramilitary groups and the Colombian government. After a consensus was reached, participants approved a text denouncing the kidnapping and calling for action.

Argentinean deputy Mirta Rubini suggested that a special commission be set up at the 6th COPA General Assembly to deal with the 2005 Summit of the Americas slated for Argentina next November.

The COPA president presented a text by Senator Antonio Faz Alzamora of Puerto Rico on the undue interference of a U.S. court judge in the Puerto Rican general election. The president also drew attention to a text by *Rede Brasileira de Justiça Ambiental* (Brazilian network for environmental justice) accusing the *Petróleo Brasileiro S/A* oil company of causing severe environmental damage in Ecuador, mainly in Yasuni National Park, where it runs drilling operations that violate legal requirements and were never subject to impact studies to obtain regulatory approval. It was decided that a COPA delegation made up of deputies Nilson Mourão (Brazil) and Ricardo Ulcualngo (Ecuador) would visit Ecuador.

For the last agenda item, Mexican deputy and COPA treasurer Leticia Butierrez explained that several congresses and parliamentary assemblies had yet to honor their financial commitments to COPA, which could prevent them from attending the General Assembly. The Deputy provided the COPA account number and asked that the amounts due be paid.

Mexican deputy Víctor Humberto Benítez Treviño gave a brief summary of his book *La Sala Constitucional del Estado de México como Expresión del Federalismo del Siglo XXI* (The Mexican constitutional court as an expression of 21st century federalism) and offered several copies to participants.

Mexican deputy Cesar Santos Cantú announced that he was the new president of the Conference of Mexican State Legislatures and Legislators (COMCE) and that deputy Apolinar Casillas Gutiérrez was the new representative of the local legislatures of Mexico.

The president read a message from deputy Enrique Peña Nieto asking to resign from his position as executive secretary and be replaced by deputy Mirtha Calderón. His request was accepted and Ms. Calderón took over his position as COPA executive secretary.

Brazilian deputy Aparecida Gama provided a brief summary of the activities of the Network of Women Parliamentarians.

Once the agenda had been covered, Ms. Maninha turned the floor over to deputy Ramón Pez Ferro, who reported on the Cuban economic, social, and political situation. He discussed the U.S. economic blockade and explained how it differed from an embargo. He also noted that Cuba had high economic expectations with respect to its forthcoming entry into Mercosur. He congratulated participants and invited them to the dinner hosted by the National Assembly of People's Power of Cuba.

March 6

The March 6 agenda was devoted to the meeting between the COPA secretariats and the president.

Meeting discussions dealt with the 6th General Assembly in Foz do Iguaçu.

The Québec Secretariat proposed several changes to the program, subject to more thorough review by the president. The Mexican Secretariat asked for clarification regarding the distribution of invitations and promotion of the event.

The president asked all three secretariats to do everything they could to ensure the success of the event and agreed to hold a conference call with the three secretariats on April 12.

Conclusions

The special meeting of the Executive Committee in Cuba enabled participants to clarify a number of fundamental issues with respect to the organization of the 6th COPA General Assembly in Brazil, as well as important administrative matters for the smooth operation of COPA. This led to a better understanding between committee members and reinforced the central notion that institutional progress depends on teamwork, prolonging the vital exercise of democracy, and ensuring transparency in decision-making.

Furthermore, this meeting bears strong witness to the symbolic force of integration and acceptance. Held in a nation of the Americas marked by an economic and political blockade of over forty years, a diverse nation with a rich culture and ideology and a vibrant people, a nation set apart by a history of struggle and defiance, by its government and privileged geography, this meeting in Cuba is a vital reflection of the objective set forth in section 2 of the COPA Statutes, which calls for "the building of a community of the Americas founded on the respect for dignity and human rights, peace, democracy, solidarity between peoples, social justice and gender equity."

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Report made at
Brasilia, March 17, 2005

Maria José Maninha
President of the Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas

Deputy Edson Ezequiel

Deputy Ivan Valente

Deputy Nilson Mourão

Deputy Orlando Fantazzini

Deputy Vieira Reis

Deputy Wasny de Roure