

### **III. SPECIALIZED ORGANIZATIONS**



## **SPECIALIZED ORGANIZATIONS**

Chapter XVIII of the Charter defines the specialized organizations as intergovernmental organizations established by multilateral agreements and having specific functions with respect to matters of common interest to the American States. They enjoy the fullest technical autonomy, but are to take into account the recommendations of the General Assembly and the Councils. This chapter summarizes the reports that the following Specialized Organizations presented pursuant to articles 127 and 91.f of the Charter:

- the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO);
- the Inter-American Children's Institute (IACI);
- the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM);
- the Pan American Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH);
- the Inter-American Indian Institute (III); and
- the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA).

## **PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION**

Established in 1902 by the Second International Conference of American States, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) is the inter-American system's specialized organization in health matters and is the World Health Organization's Regional Office for the Americas (AMRO/WHO). Its mission is to "lead strategic collaborative efforts among Member States and other partners to promote equity in health, to combat disease, and to improve the quality of, and lengthen, the lives of the peoples of the Americas." In its efforts to improve health, PAHO targets society's most vulnerable sectors: mothers and children, workers, the poor, the elderly, refugees, and displaced persons. Its priorities are equity for those who do not have access to health and, in keeping with the principles of Pan Americanism, it urges the countries to work together on matters of common concern.

Since February 2003, when the new Director of PAHO, Dr. Mirta Roses Periago, took up her post, work is underway on a reorganization of the Organization aimed at making it more efficient and flexible, and better able to respond to the needs of the peoples of the Americas. Key factors in this transition to a new phase in PAHO's work are the new budget, new working methods, a new structure emphasizing direct support to countries, and a Strategic Plan for 2003-2007.

PAHO focused on areas of regional consensus, strategic partnerships were formed to defend equity and overcome disparities and divides in health status, and reliable data were generated to meet public health goals in the Americas: to create and promote a genuine culture of health, expand healthy environments, guarantee high-quality and safe health care services, provide effective responses to the population's health care needs, and improve understanding and reactions to key aspects of public health.

The Organization continued its emphasis on special population groups—the disenfranchised or victims of discrimination, such as the poor, minority ethnic groups and women, children, and the elderly—by targeting critical issues with an integral approach designed to reduce inequalities and eradicate social exclusion.

### **44<sup>th</sup> Directing Council of PAHO**

The Directing Council of PAHO met in Washington from September 22 to 26, 2003 in order to discuss the current health situation. The topics included: Primary Health Care in the Americas: Lessons Learned Over 25 Years and Future Challenges; Family and Health; Sustaining Immunization Programs – Elimination of Rubella and Congenital Rubella Syndrome; the Contribution of Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses (IMCI) to the Attainment of the Millennium Development Goals; Influenza Pandemic: Preparation in the Western Hemisphere; Dengue; and Impact of Violence on the Health of the Populations in the Americas. Another item on the agenda was: Election of Three Member States to the Executive Committee on the Expiration of the Periods of Office of El Salvador, Jamaica, and Uruguay. The newly elected members of the Executive Committee are Argentina, Barbados, and Costa Rica.

### **The Strategic Plan for 2003-2007**

The Strategic Plan for 2003-2007 focuses on three areas:

### *Population Groups*

PAHO will continue to work with member states to identify those groups for whom inequalities in health outcomes or access to health services can be addressed through available, cost-effective interventions. To this end, PAHO will focus on low-income and poor populations, women, children, and ethnic and racial groups, especially indigenous peoples.

### *Key countries*

While PAHO cooperates with all member states, it must give special attention to the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC), whose high levels of debt re-payment leave little national income for increasing health sector expenditure, as well as other countries whose populations' health status is extremely poor and whose health institutions and infrastructure are extremely weak. PAHO will continue to lead strategic collaborative efforts among countries and partners and maximize wider development initiatives to accelerate health improvements in the most vulnerable countries. The priority countries selected on the basis of these criteria are Bolivia, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, and Nicaragua.

### *Priority Technical Areas*

The overall goals of PAHO's technical cooperation are to promote health and reduce excess mortality, morbidity, and disability throughout the life cycle, particularly among the poor and other groups that experience inequities in health. To achieve these goals, PAHO will be working in the following areas:

- Prevention, control, and reduction of communicable diseases; PAHO is developing surveillance networks for emerging and re-emerging diseases. PAHO's program continues to include efforts to combat Chagas' disease, dengue, onchocerciasis, lymphatic filariasis, geohelminths, and leprosy as public health problems. It is also highly active in efforts to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis.
- Prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases; work is being done on prevention of uterine cervical cancer and of violence.
- PAHO is also applying a multisectoral approach through the CARMEN initiative (the whole set of actions to reduce multiple risk factors for noncommunicable diseases) and IMCI (integrated management of childhood illness). Promotion of healthy lifestyles and social environments; healthy growth and development: including efforts to monitor tobacco use, the development of adolescents, and healthy environments.
- Promotion of safe physical environments: work is being done on improving the health of workers with the "Toolbox for Promoting Healthy Workplaces," especially in the informal sector in Central America.
- Disaster preparedness, management, and response. The Pan American Sanitary Bureau represents the inter-American system in the Inter-Agency Task Force for implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. The Bureau is also participating in the preparation of the Inter-American Strategic Plan for Policy on Vulnerability Reduction, Risk Management, and Disaster Response backed by member states of the OAS. PAHO contributed to the health and potable water sections of the ECLAC Manual for Estimating the Socio-economic Effects of Natural Disasters.
- Ensuring universal access to integrated, equitable, and sustainable health systems. The pivotal areas in PAHO's work on health policies and systems are an extension of social

protection in health; reorientation of health sector reforms; strengthening of the steering role of health authorities, and the economics, funding, and regulation of health care. One of the purposes of technical cooperation is to ensure that such processes are firmly rooted in the development, execution, and evaluation of public health policies and national objectives. Promotion of effective health input into social, economic, environmental, and development policies: PAHO organized the conference and workshop on climate change and health effects in the Caribbean. It also organized the Inter-American Environmental Health Information System (SISAM), a dynamic tool for providing countries with an information system covering basic institutional and service quality aspects and facilitating coordination of sectoral initiatives.

## INTER-AMERICAN CHILDREN'S INSTITUTE

The Inter-American Children's Institute is a specialized organization that helps create public policy on children's behalf in the Americas, promote the relationship between the State and civil society, and cultivate a critical awareness of the problems affecting children in the Hemisphere.

Based on its Strategic Plan for 2000-2004, the IIN has revamped both its programs and administration. Thus it has gradually moved toward a new balance between operating expenses and personnel expenses, increasing the number of products, technical tools for designing, monitoring, and evaluating policies and programs, assistance models, and communication tools. The levels of quality, effectiveness, and efficiency attained have induced a significant increase in the demand for IIN services in the region.

In 2003, the IIN carried out 160 activities in 31 countries:

- 119 technical interventions: assistance, training programs, workshops, conferences, courses.
- 41 political interventions: negotiations, agreements, diplomacy, and participation in fora on children's issues.

Many of these activities were conducted from headquarters, such as distance training courses, international competitions, and other forms of "virtual" learning, which have become a regular feature of IIN operations. Special mention should be made of the part played by the [www.iin.oea.org](http://www.iin.oea.org) website, which is receiving a vastly increased number of visits, and by the following Internet pages, created in order to strengthen specific lines of action: [www.cariin.org](http://www.cariin.org); [www.cetinf.org](http://www.cetinf.org); [www.coordinacion.org](http://www.coordinacion.org).

An effort was made to continue deepening ties of cooperation with civil society organizations as a means of expanding participation, improving quality and efficiency, and optimizing the use of human and material resources in the area of children's issues. In 2003, agreements and were struck and arrangements made covering cooperative efforts and activities with 30 of these civil society organizations in 14 countries.

Coordination and cooperation activities were also carried out with 17 public and private, regional and global international agencies and organizations.

The Area of Communications has greatly boosted the IIN's image in regional media by producing videos and illustrated books and through the services it provides over the Internet. In a new Strategic Plan, an effort will be made to consolidate a real communications strategy for the Institute.

Following a model fostered by the Director General's office, in 2003 the Administration Area, with the help of the OAS Department of Financial Services, consolidated an improvement in management, rendering it both more modern and transparent and able to produce first class reports on budgetary, financial, and administrative topics for the political organs of the IIN and the OAS. The hook-up with the OASES system will make it possible to address the growth needs posed by a greater demand for services, without the need to increase the number of staff or raise costs.

The IIN budget for 2003, from the Regular Fund of the OAS, was US\$1,567,700: the equivalent of 2 percent of the OAS' overall budget.

In order to fulfill its mission, mandates, and services, the IIN has brought in funds from cooperation agreements, governments, international organizations, NGOs, and other sources of financing. The specific funds obtained from those sources and the funds administered by the OAS totaled US\$343,701.00 at the beginning of 2003. The IIN also managed to persuade national counterparts to allocate funds for projects receiving technical assistance from the IIN and administered by those same counterparts. In 2003, those counterpart funds totaled US\$1,913,404, or 60 percent of the IIN's resources.

The Director General's office expects to receive backing in 2005 for the development of a strategy aimed at doubling the budget for operating expenses. The revamping of the IIN translated into an expansion of its services in relation to the rights of the child, in the context of growing involvement by the Institute in work with and on behalf of the children of the region. The INN's budget has been moving toward a 50/50 split between personnel and operating expenses. However, achieving that goal cannot be done by further pruning of staff—which has already been reduced to a less than desirable level—but rather by increasing operating resources by amounts that in absolute terms are not substantial. Support for this strategy to strengthen the inter-American system's specialized organization for children will make it possible to comply with the priority mandates of the Summits, general assemblies, and Directing Councils: namely, those that have to do with children.



## **INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION OF WOMEN**

Created by the Sixth International Conference of American States (Havana, 1928), the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) is the OAS' advisory body on gender-related issues in the Hemisphere. Its purpose is to promote and protect the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of women and, in this context, it reports to the governments on the progress accomplished and the problems that need to be addressed, and suggests ways those problems can be resolved.

For 2003, the CIM's activities were driven by the 2002-2004 Biennial Work Program and the mandates approved by the Thirty-first Assembly of Delegates of the CIM, by the mandates assigned by the OAS General Assembly at its thirty-third regular session, and by the mandates of the Summit of the Americas process. The CIM devoted greater and special attention to activities related to implementation of the Inter-American Program on Women's Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality (IAP).

### **Mainstreaming the gender perspective into ministerial level meetings**

In 2003, the CIM developed recommendations for mainstreaming the gender perspective into the programs and policies of the ministries of education. Those recommendations were presented at the Third Meeting of Ministers of Education, held in Mexico City from August 11-13, 2003. In December 2003, the CIM convened a follow-up meeting (SEPIA III), with government and civil society experts, to analyze the results of the ministerial meeting and promote strategies for including the gender perspective in ministry policies and programs. The CIM's Principal Delegates, experts from the ministries of education, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) with experience in the area of gender and education were invited. In 2004, the recommendations emerging from that meeting will be sent to the ministries of education, the Inter-American Committee on Education, all CIM delegates, and the participants. A similar strategy will be pursued, in collaboration with the OAS Office of Science and Technology, with a view to making recommendations regarding mainstreaming of the gender perspective into the meeting of Ministers of Science and Technology to be held in 2004.

Pursuant to the mandate of the Assembly of Delegates to support and promote the implementation in the Hemisphere of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and full participation by women in conflict prevention and peace-building, the CIM, with the support of Women Waging Peace (WWP) successfully pressed for inclusion of the item on women, peace, and security in the Declaration of the Special Conference on Hemispheric Security held in Mexico, in November 2003. In July a videoconference was conducted to review gender mainstreaming in hemispheric security issues and to analyze women's contributions to hemispheric peace and reconstruction processes. The panelists included the Chair of the OAS Permanent Council's Committee on Hemispheric Security and representatives of women's organizations working on peace and reconstruction in Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. The videoconference was transmitted via Internet on the OAS website.

## **Gender training at the OAS**

2003 saw the culmination of the first phase of the joint CIDA/CIM-OAS project, launched in 2001 with the support of the Government of Canada and the General Secretariat, to train OAS employees, including directors and field personnel, in mainstreaming the gender perspective into all the Organization's programs and policies. The training began in November 2002 and so far has benefited 199 staff members involved in project design, execution, or evaluation. The CIM was actively involved in preparing the program and in November 2003 the Executive Secretary of the CIM was appointed Director of the project and follow-up to it.

## **Women's participation in power and decision-making structures**

The CIM continues to co-sponsor, and is a member of the Executive Council of, the Program for the Support of Women's Leadership and Representation (PROLEAD) of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), which funds projects to promote women's leadership in the Hemisphere. Last year, in partnership with the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy (UPD) and PROLEAD, CIM co-sponsored the "First Andean Course on Democratic Governance for Young Women Leaders." The CIM also teamed up with the UPD to organize the working session entitled "Is Financing an Obstacle to the Political Participation of Women?" Furthermore, together with the Council of World Women Leaders, the CIM organized the first world meeting of representatives of the gender units of intergovernmental organizations.

## **Women's Human Rights and the Eradication of Violence against Women**

The CIM continues to promote ratification of the Convention of Belém do Pará by all the OAS member states. Pursuant to a mandate of the Assembly of Delegates of the CIM (CIM/RES. 224/02), which was subsequently adopted by the OAS General Assembly [AG/RES. 1942 XXXIII-/03], the CIM is carrying out preparatory work on developing a follow-up mechanism to the Convention of Belém do Pará. Once the CIM has completed its work, the Secretary General should convene, in coordination with the CIM, a meeting of member states at which they may take a decision on the most appropriate way to follow up on the Convention. The pertinent information can be found in document CIM/CD.15/03 rev.1 and its addendum.

The CIM is continuing its work on the project entitled "International Trafficking of Women and Children for Sexual Exploitation in the Americas." The XXI Assembly of Delegates of the CIM adopted resolution CIM/RES. 225/02, which acknowledges the importance of the subject and instructs the CIM to continue its work. At its thirty-third regular session, the OAS General Assembly adopted resolution AG/RES. 1948 (XXXIII-O/03) requesting the CIM to present an annual progress report and instructing the Secretary General to appoint an OAS coordinator on the issue, to be housed in the Permanent Secretariat of the CIM.

The CIM also received financing from USAID to continue phase 2, that is to say, research into institution-strengthening in Mexico, Bolivia, and Belize in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM). With the IOM as executing agency, that organization and the CIM will initiate research in the English-speaking Caribbean.

In November 2003, with the support of the OAS Department of Public Information (DPI), a videoconference was held on the subject of "Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women, Adolescents, and Children: Sharing Best Practices to Prevent and Protect the Victims and to Punish the Traffickers" in order to create awareness of the problems posed by trafficking of persons in Latin America and the Caribbean. The videoconference lasted two hours and was

sponsored by the IIN and the CIM. The moderator was Ms. María Elena Salinas, a distinguished news reporter for the Spanish-language television channel UNIVISION. The panelists were experts on this issue from the IOM and from the governments and civil society of the Dominican Republic and Costa Rica, as well as from the US State Department's Office to Combat Trafficking in Persons and from the CIM. The videoconference was transmitted via Internet on the OAS website.

### **Fulfillment of the Mandates of the Summit of the Americas**

The CIM continues to work on implementation of the mandates emerging from the Summit of the Americas. Following are some of the actions and projects undertaken to comply with them: 1) Work with the IACHR, especially on developing gender mainstreaming recommendations for the Ministers of Justice or Ministers or Attorneys General of the Americas and in the area of violence against women; 2) Implementation of the "Inter-American Program on the Promotion of Women's Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality" Gender mainstreaming in ministerial level meetings (SEPIA III, Gender and Education); and follow-up to SEPIA I, Gender and Labor, and SEPIA II, Gender and Justice; 3) Gender training within the OAS for staff involved in formulating policies and developing projects; 4) Continuation of research projects on violence against women and trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation in the Americas, and implementation of the recommendations to emerge from both those projects.

### **Promotion and dissemination**

To commemorate its 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, the OAS Staff Association co-sponsored an event in which eleven girls between the ages of 8 and 13, from various countries in the Hemisphere, painted a mural on the subject of women's achievements. A video was made of the work in progress. In addition, a video is being made with the OAS Office of Public Information on women and leadership.

The CIM is continuing to update its website, which includes articles, links to other websites, and information on the achievements, activities, meetings, and reports of the CIM and the Permanent Secretariat.

## **PAN AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY**

Established by the Sixth International Conference of American States (Havana, 1928), the Pan American Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH) offers technical cooperation, training at research centers, publications and technical meetings in the fields of cartography, geography, history, and geophysics.

### **Election of officers**

At the XXXVII Meeting of the Directing Council, held in Guatemala from October 6-10, 2003, Mr. Santiago Borrero Mutis of Colombia was elected Secretary General of the PAIGH for the 2003-2005 period. On December 8, via official certified vote, Mr. Rodrigo Barriga Vargas and cartographer Ms. Alejandra Coll Escanilla of Chile were elected Chair and Vice Chair of the Cartography Committee, respectively.

### **Technical cooperation**

In the context of the OAS Agenda, calls were issued for Proposals for Technical Assistance Projects for 2004 and for Nominations for the "Silvio Zavala" Colonial History of America Award. The former elicited 59 proposals. For 2003, 26 research and training projects were approved, to be executed in 12 countries, at a total cost of US\$162,570.00. Thirteen works competed for the second award, which was won by Diana Bonnett with "Tierra y Comunidad, un problema irresuelto" [Land and Community, An Unresolved Issue]. The prize was awarded in February 2004 during PAIGH's 76<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.

During this same period, the four working committees held their respective technical meetings, which take place every four years. These meetings are extremely important for the Institute and have implications for the Inter-American Democratic Charter, since they provide an opportunity to analyze the progress and achievements of projects being executed, and to prepare and plan policies and lines of action and research for each committee for the next four years.

Thus, the Technical Meeting of the Cartography Commission of the PAIGH on the future of fundamental data in the member states and the region, held in San José de Costa Rica on June 24-27, was attended by representatives of 12 member states and observer countries. The meeting addressed requests to boost the production of and access to territorial digital information for sustainable development, in a context of citizen participation.

The Technical Meeting of the Geography Commission "American Geography and its Challenges to Sustainable Development," held in Lima, Peru on August 3-6, 2003 was attended by 35 geographers from member status. It was held in San Marcos University (UNMSM) and inaugurated by the Minister of Education of Peru.

The Technical Meeting of the History Commission was held in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, from August 18-22, 2003 at the same time as the First South American History Congress and the V Pan American History Symposium, a major hemispheric academic event attended by distinguished historians of the Americas.

The Technical Meeting of the Geophysics Commission was held at the Autonomous National University of Mexico (UNAM) in Mexico D.F., from October 21-24, 2003, at the same time as the First Congress of the Americas on Environmental Geophysics, an event attended by

specialists keen to discuss issues and methodologies relating to water management, climate changes and their impact, waste management, and recycling.

For the second time, the Institute was asked to participate in technical aspects of demarcation of the border between two of its member states, at the request of the governments of El Salvador and Honduras. It is worth underscoring that the assignment of this responsibility to the PAIGH, with the backing of the General Secretariat of the OAS, meant that it was granted an active role in solving a border differendum between two states: an indication of trust in the Institute, in its neutrality, and in its technical capacity to handle such matters.

### **Publications**

In the publications area, the Institute earmarked the sum of US\$24,563.00 for its periodicals and occasional publications. They included the following journals: *Revista Cartográfica* No. 74-75, *Revista Geográfica* No. 132, *Revista de Historia de América* No. 130, *Revista Geofísica* No. 57, and – electronically (e-mail) and via the Institute’s website -- *Air Bulletins* Nos. 274 (January-April), 275 (May-August), and 276 (September-December).

Of particular note among its occasional publications were *Estudios sobre historia y ambiente en América* [Studies on history and the environment in America], Volume II (Norteamérica, Sudamérica y el Pacífico) [North America, South America, and the Pacific] and *Visión de América Latina* [Vision of Latin America]: A Tribute to Leopoldo Zea.

### **Statutory Meetings**

The 59th Meeting of Authorities was held in Mexico City, Mexico, on June 5 and 6. The Financial Planning and Evaluation Committee (APEF) met in Mexico City on August 5 and 6. Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala, was the venue of the 60th Meeting of Authorities on October 5, followed by the XXXVII Meeting of the Directing Council, from October 6 to 10. The latter approved 33 resolutions.

## **INTER-AMERICAN INDIAN INSTITUTE**

Created by the 1940 Pátzcuaro International Convention, the basic objectives of the Inter-American Indian Institute are to collaborate in the coordination of the member states' indigenous policies and to promote research and training for persons dedicated to indigenous communities' development.

### **Budget**

At December 31, 2003, Chile, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, and Peru were up to date in their quota payments, and Nicaragua paid three years of arrears. The 2003 quotas paid represent 77 percent of the annual total.

### **Headquarters agreement**

The headquarters agreement with the Government of Mexico was signed on February 6, 2003 and ratified by the Senate on April 29, 2003. The decree was signed by President Vicente Fox Quesada on July 18, 2003.

### **Library**

The III Library remained in storage for almost twelve years. Now the Institute's staff has unpacked and shelved the entire collection of 10,000 books and 40,000 magazines. 30,722 publications and 11,204 articles in magazines pertaining to the collection have been catalogued.

### **Historical Archives**

The Institute's staff has organized some 20 percent of the archive of documents predating 1980. Digitalization of these documents continued in order to protect them physically and subsequently to provide the indigenous peoples with copies of the material.

### **Internet Page**

The Institute's web page ([www.indigenista.org](http://www.indigenista.org)) was launched in late June 2002. By March 31, 2003, it had registered 280,000 visits. 2.5 gigabytes of information (in Word) had been downloaded. Between launching of the site and December 2003, there were 785,000 visits, resulting in the downloading of 8.79 gigabytes of information in Word.

### **Publications**

As of January 31, 2004, the four issues of the Institute's magazine *América Indígena* corresponding to 2003 had been published, free of charge, on the Institute's web site. Jointly with the National Committee for the Development of Indigenous Peoples (CDI) and Abya Yala, World Bank (Norwegian Trust), the III also published a book entitled "Pueblos indígenas y derechos constitucionales en América Latina: un panorama" [Indigenous peoples and constitutional rights in Latin America: a survey], by Cletus Gregor Barié. A further 30 works were published on CD.

## **INTER-AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR COOPERATION ON AGRICULTURE**

Founded in 1942, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture is the inter-American system's specialized organization for the agricultural sector. It stimulates, promotes, and supports the member states' efforts to further agricultural development and enhance rural life.

During 2003, IICA engaged in cooperative activities with the member countries and also took important measures to comply with the mandates on agriculture and rural life of the Third Summit of the Americas and with the terms of the Declaration by the Ministers of Agriculture, meeting in Bávaro, Dominican Republic, in 2001. Specifically, IICA carried out the following activities:

In cooperation with key players in agriculture—public and private sectors, academia, and civil society—it updated national and regional technical cooperation agendas for 2002-2006.

It prepared, for accountability purposes, annual reports for the authorities of each member states, describing activities carried out in each country in 2002 as part of the execution of the technical cooperation agendas.

It prepared a hemispheric agenda to promote the sustainable development of agriculture, food security, and the prosperity of rural communities in the Hemisphere. That agenda focuses on thematic and multidisciplinary activities that cut across the strategic areas dealt with by the Institute and make it possible to address member states' development priorities.

Ties between IICA and the Pan American Health Institute were strengthened, with joint efforts focusing on the eradication of the hunger and malnutrition suffered by numerous people in Latin America and the Caribbean. Various initiatives also got under way in the framework of the Inter-Agency Group for Rural Development, which includes IDB, IFAD, the World Bank, FAO, IICA, ECLAC, USAID and GTZ.

The Institute signed an agreement with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, establishing closer ties for more effective promotion of processes conducive to rural development, equal rights for rural and urban areas, social peace, and democracy.

The "Inter-American Program to Promote Agricultural Trade and Businesses and Food Safety," which is headquartered in Miami, got underway. Its objective is to help member states make a successful entry into world markets by offering high quality information and services to the agricultural and agro-industrial sector; and to join, promote, and develop export capacities in order to facilitate access to international markets.

An outside experts' assessment was carried out of the Agricultural Health and Food Safety Program, as a result of which the Executive Committee of IICA adopted the work plan development in response to the recommendations made in that assessment and approved the request to member states to consider making contributions over and beyond their quotas to facilitate implementation of those recommendations.

IICA established a new human resources management system, which includes innovations with respect to the classification and remuneration system, a revamping of hiring practices, new performance evaluation processes, and the introduction of human resource development tools.

A strategy was approved for collecting quota arrears to the Institute, in which member states behind in their payments are urged to formalize arrangements for payment of the quotas they owe the Institute so that it can fully comply with its mandates.

Meetings held included the Second Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Rural Life and the XII Regular Meeting of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture. The AGRO 2003-2015 Plan of Action was signed at the Ministerial Meeting. It includes guidelines for agriculture in the Americas during that period. The last day of the meeting was devoted to an analysis by the ministers of the activities of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture (JIA). Under the title “More than food on the table: agriculture’s true contribution to economic development,” IICA presented the findings of research showing that agriculture plays a much more important part in economic and social development than national accounts data suggest. Another study prepared by IICA – “Ministerios de agricultura de cara al siglo XXI: Desafíos y oportunidades” [Ministries of Agriculture at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Challenges and Opportunities] – was also presented at the Meeting.