

DEPARTMENT OF DEMOCRATIC AND POLITICAL AFFAIRS

The Department of Democratic and Political Affairs is responsible for all political matters, including promotion of democracy and prevention and resolution of conflicts. It also coordinates the Offices of the General Secretariat in the Member States. The Department is composed of the Office for the Prevention and Resolution of Conflicts; the Office for the Promotion of Democracy; and the Offices of the General Secretariat in the Member States.

Office for the Prevention and Resolution of Conflicts (OPRC)

The Office for the Prevention and Resolution of Conflicts (OPRC) helps build the capability of governments to analyze conflicts, manage institutional crises, and design and implement conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms in the Hemisphere.

In 2004, the OPRC advanced implementation of the Program to Strengthen Democratic Dialogue in Central America (PCA), based on an institutional framework developed in conjunction with the countries of the region. This subregional program provided technical assistance to the National Dialogue in Honduras and began to supply technical support to Guatemala's Presidential Office for Legal Assistance and Resolution of Land Disputes (CONTIERRA). It also provided technical assistance to the Government of Nicaragua in connection with the "Sectoral Dialogue Tables" in that country, a three-way dialogue process involving government, civil society, and the cooperating community. In Panama, the subregional program provided technical advisory services to the Government through the Ombudsman's Office, whereas in El Salvador it assisted the Presidential Commission for Democratic Governance and crafted a course on the Inter-American Democratic Charter for officials of the Foreign Ministry. During this reporting period, work was also done to help establish a Central American School of Higher Learning on Promoting Dialogue and Conflict Resolution. The OPRC carried on efforts to set up a Conflict Prevention and Resolution Systems Program in Bolivia (PSPRC).

In January 2004, the Government of Colombia and the OAS General Secretariat (GS/OAS) signed an agreement to establish the Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP/OAS). Then, with resolution CP/RES. 859 (1397/04) of February 6, the Permanent Council authorized the establishment of the Mission and spelled out the technical nature of its mandate, whereupon the Mission got under way. Since then, the Mission has focused on carrying out its mandate: verification of the ceasefire and cessation of hostilities, demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration initiatives. During this same period, negotiations between the Government and the *Autodefensas* (Self-defense Forces) have made good progress. The demobilization of 3,000 paramilitary by the end of 2004 figures among the major accomplishments. The MAPP has received funding from the Bahamas, Colombia, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the United States.

The OPRC and the Government of Peru staged the "Regional Forum: Latin American Experiences in Dialogue and Consensus-Building and the Challenge of Institutionalizing Them," in Lima, Peru, from March 17 to 19, 2004.

The OPRC teamed up with the Inter-American Defense College (IDC) and the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) to conduct an International Seminar on Conflict and Crisis Management, from June 6 to 10, 2004.

In cooperation with the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), work got under way to design a handbook on dialogue.

Within the Organization, the Office worked with the Department of Human Resource Services (DHRS) on conducting the Special Program to plan, design, and stage a series of workshops on conflict resolution for staff of the General Secretariat and its offices. The curriculum was devised and the first workshops were targeted at supervisors. These workshops are intended to build a capacity within the Organization to manage, prevent, and resolve conflicts in the workplace.

Office for the Promotion of Democracy (OPD)

This Office's mission is to support the democratic development of member states that request its advisory services or assistance to preserve or strengthen democratic policies and procedures. It also stimulates dialogue about democratic values and principles in the Hemisphere, manages the Organization's electoral observation missions, and engages in other activities.

Program for the Promotion of Democratic Leadership and Citizenry

During this reporting period, the OPD's Program for the Promotion of Democratic Leadership and Citizenry trained more than 300 young leaders in courses on democratic institutions, values, and practices. The Fourth Regional Course on Democracy and Political Management for Young Leaders from MERCOSUR (Mar del Plata, Argentina, August 2004) and the First Regional Course for Young Women Leaders in the Southern Cone on Democratic Governance (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, November 2004) were also held. Technical and financial assistance was provided to design and execute the Regional Course for MERCOSUR and its associate members on Political Management, "Forming the Leaders of the Twenty-first Century" (Punta del Este, Uruguay, May 2004); and the First Latin American Course on Institutional Development and Strengthening of Political Parties (Brasilia, Brazil, November 2004). With IDB financial support, the Program of National Courses to Train Political Democratic Leaders (CALIDEM) conducted seven courses on democratic institutions, values, and practices. The courses were given in Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and Paraguay.

In 2004, the OPD teamed up with the Office of Education, Science, and Technology (OEST) to assist the Permanent Council in preparing for its special meeting on "Promotion of Democratic Culture through Education," held in April 2004. With support from the United States' Center for Civic Education, the Office organized the Inter-American Seminar on Education for Democracy in September, and the Seminar on Teaching Democratic Values and Practices in the Formal Education System, held in Montevideo, Uruguay, which reached more than 30,000 Uruguayan students.

Education in Democratic Values and Practices

The project on the "Distance Education Course for Teachers: The Inter-American Democratic Charter as an Instrument for Teaching Democratic Practices and Values" completed the preliminary phase for developing content and design and testing the course online. In the second half of 2004, an advisory group did an evaluation of the educational proposal and its recommendations were incorporated into the project. In January 2005, a group of experts was formed to produce the course content, transform that content into virtual format, and put it online. In March 2004, the Government of Peru formally expressed its interest in hosting the pilot project, to train over 1,500 teachers.

Strengthening the Legislative Branch of Government

Under the Program to Support the Strengthening of Legislative Institutions (PAFIL), the Office continued to provide technical assistance for subregional research and activities of the Forum of Speakers of the Legislative Bodies of Central America (FOPREL) and its Central American Institute of Legislative

Studies (ICEL). Advisory services were provided for planning the work agendas of its interparliamentary committees in Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Guatemala on combating corruption, terrorism, and drug trafficking and on free trade and legislative modernization. The Political Management Refresher Seminar was held for deputies in the Guatemalan Congress; a Working Table of the Special Interparliamentary Committee of FOPREL was held in Costa Rica's Legislative Assembly on the Central American Free Trade Agreement. Work was completed on the job of putting together a study on variables, indicators, and indices of the Legislative Information System (SIL). An official visit to Washington, D.C. was arranged for the FOPREL legislative speakers.

The "Project on Democratic Institution-Building and Good Governance for the Guatemalan Congress" was conducted. A work program was prepared that was used to steer the preparation of studies and the refresher seminars given for advisors and lawmakers on strengthening "policy monitoring and budget auditing" and on "representation/civil society outreach," and public hearings and amendments to the Interior Regime Law and the Institutional Plan of Action. In coordination with USAID and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, a plan was devised to raise support.

The Office also supported the Joint Parliamentary Commission of MERCOSUR (CPCM) and the office of the Speaker of the Congress of Paraguay, to organize the "Second Meeting of Speakers of MERCOSUR Congresses." At the invitation of the Vice President of Argentina, which is also Leader of the Senate, the Office also provided advisory services for organization of the Third Meeting of Congressional Speakers of South America and Mexico. The final declaration that came out of that meeting underscored the importance of creating a permanent mechanism for holding regular meetings of this kind among the Congresses of the MERCOSUR countries and those of the Andean Region and Mexico, with a view to establishing an inter-American forum of Summits of Legislative Speakers of the Americas. The ODP also helped with the visit that officials of Argentina's Chamber of Deputies made to its Brazilian counterpart.

An important event held during this reporting period was the "Inter-American Forum on Legislative Modernization," organized in Mexico's Congress under the auspices of the State University of New York. In attendance were over 80 lawmakers, parliamentary advisors, and representatives of nongovernmental organizations and cooperation agencies.

In the area of combating corruption and promoting transparency in legislative affairs, the ODP provided technical advisory services throughout the year to the Latin American Parliamentarians against Corruption (PLACC).

In compliance with mandates contained in the Inter-American Convention against Terrorism and the Declaration of San Salvador, the ODP continued to carry out the "Project on Legislative Counter-Terrorism Action in Central America." Bogotá, Colombia, was the site of the Fourth Forum of Speakers of the Andean Legislative Bodies."

Inter-American Forum on Political Parties (IAFPP)

The Democratic Values and Political Management Program, which is part of the IAFPP, received financial support from the Governments of Norway and Sweden, to carry on activities in Guatemala related to political parties, promotion of women and indigenous sectors in political structures, democratic training, and the generation of new knowledge.

At the request of the Government of Honduras and of a number of political parties in that country, the OAS introduced its Regional Program on Democratic Values and Political Management in 2004. Also, the Central American Program organized a regional workshop titled "What kind of democracy do we

want?: Challenges to women's political participation." The Central American Program augmented the regional workshop with a series of national workshops in Central America and the Dominican Republic. In the Andean region, the OAS, at the request of the Bolivian Government, organized a series of workshops in five cities with a view to the referendum on the use of hydrocarbons.

To match the research being done in the academic world to the needs of hands-on politics, the IAFPP has expanded its collection of research studies in the areas of political financing and party systems. At the same time, throughout the year the IAFPP kept an up-to-date database of political parties in the 34 countries of the region, which can be accessed via the Internet.

In conjunction with Georgetown University's Center for Latin American Studies, the ODP organized an international seminar on the Situation and Perspectives on Presidentialism and Parliamentarism in Latin America. The event combined an academic workshop with a political dialogue session in which leaders from various political parties, prominent academicians, specialists, and representatives of the international community took part.

The Fourth Meeting of the IAFPP was in Brasilia, Brazil, from November 9 to 11. The discussions centered around four basic areas: political parties at the crossroads of economic and social development; the challenge of representation and inclusion; the ethics and practice of campaign and political party finance; and country case studies of recently enacted reform in Argentina, Brazil, Central America, Mexico, and Suriname.

Strengthening electoral processes and systems

The strengthening, modernization, and automation of electoral bodies, voter rolls, voting, vote count, tabulation and transmission of results, modernization of civil registries, and monitoring of legislative reform processes have been the areas of primary focus.

During this reporting period, 10 electoral observation missions were conducted: El Salvador (presidential elections, March 2004); Panama (presidential elections, May 2004); the Dominican Republic (presidential elections, May 2004); Venezuela (gathering of signatures, presidential recall referendum, August 2004); Bolivia (referendum, July 2004, and municipal elections, December 2004); Ecuador (municipal elections, October 2004); Nicaragua, (municipal elections, November 2004); Bolivia (municipal elections, December 2004); and Honduras (primaries, February 2005).

The OPD conducted a number of initiatives to promote and develop electoral democracy in the following countries:

- Ecuador: Election technology technical assistance program;
- El Salvador: Technical advisory services and certification of the use of preliminary vote count;
- Guatemala: Program to support legislative election reforms (includes the possible issuance of a national identity document);
- Honduras: Project to support management of civil registries and purging of the national census so that it conforms to the legislative reforms that separated the civil registry from the electoral service;
- Paraguay: Program to modernize civil registries (MORECIV);
- Peru: Technical assistance to election authorities by creating an automated system for registering political organizations, and the virtual library system.

At the request of Belize and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the national projects continued (with the basic data-automation phase) to build a secure and efficient registration and identification system that makes the public more confident about the documents used for identification, including voter rolls and vital statistics documents. In December 2004, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed to conduct a similar project in Dominica in 2005.

This project also has two subregional components: a comparative study on laws and registry management, in the hands of Professor Albert K. Fiadjoe of the Law Faculty of the University of the West Indies (Cave Hill, Barbados), and a discussion on the same topic in which the OAS will serve as a facilitator of horizontal cooperation between the OAS and the member states. The eventual objective is to convene a ministerial conference on strengthening and modernizing Caribbean registries. Talks also got under way with the Government of Jamaica and its registries (the General Register Office and the Jamaica Electoral Office).

Under the OAS special program in Haiti, electoral technical assistance activities got under way in that country. Their purpose is to provide solid support to the highest Haitian electoral authority to organize and run the elections slated for 2005.

In the area of horizontal cooperation initiatives and pursuant to agreements signed with Brazil, Canada, Panama, and Paraguay, specific technical cooperation projects were agreed upon with election authorities in Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Panama, and Paraguay, especially “automation of voting.”

There were major cooperative initiatives in the area of electoral organization, technology, and civic education, involving various electoral authorities in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and Paraguay.

The Inter-American Electoral Technology Program (PITE) was also conducted, which publicized the advances that various member states have developed in the area of applications of election technology. Pilot projects in e-voting were conducted. The Second Inter-American Meeting of Electoral Technology was held in Panama, and the web page hosting the Inter-American Electoral Technology Network (RITE) was improved and modernized.

The OAS continued to carry out special programs in Nicaragua through the Rural Judicial Facilitators Program; the Project on Democracy and Governance in the Central Rural Area, Atlantic side; and the Program for Housing Reconstruction through Partnership. The last of these projects ended in March 2004.

Program of Support for Decentralization Processes

The OPD continued to serve as technical secretariat of the High-Level Inter-American Network on Decentralization, Local Government, and Citizen Participation (RIAD), which steers the activities it carries out under the mandates of the Declaration of La Paz (2001) and the Plan of Action of Mexico City (2003). The activities concentrated on the following priority areas: cooperation on strategic guidelines and priority areas of the Plan of Action of Mexico City, exchanges of information on decentralization and local institution-building, and enhancement of RIAD.

The Program of Support for Decentralization Processes was implemented in coordination with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Network—Mexico and Brazil, respectively—and the four subregional vice chairs (Guatemala, Jamaica, Mexico, and Peru). That Executive Committee (composed of the chair and vice chairs) met in Brasilia in May 2004 to establish the Network’s operating guidelines.

The Program has provided assistance to the following activities:

In the English-speaking Caribbean, the Program has cooperated with the Government of Jamaica, Regional Vice Chair representing CARICOM and the Commonwealth Local Government Forum, on a regional symposium in April 2004. The participants approved the Program of Action of Montego Bay, which establishes a Caribbean Forum of Ministers Responsible for Decentralization, Local Government, Community and Citizen Participation. That Forum will be orchestrating a subregional position on these issues.

In Central America, the Program has been instrumental in efforts to promote dialogue and the establishment of linkages among the different sectors involved in decentralization processes. In April, a session of the Forum for Cooperation on Local Government in Latin America and the Caribbean was held, focusing on Central America and on advancing local development processes in that region. In October, the Program collaborated with Guatemala, Vice Chair for Central America, to organize a dialogue between central governments and the presidencies of municipal associations. Lastly, the project “Support to Strengthen the Processes of Political Decentralization in Central America” was carried out.

Progress has been made on the creation of a financial and technical support group, pursuant to the decisions made in the Plan of Action of Mexico City. The idea is to ensure that financial and technical resources will be available to help further RIAD’s objectives. Agencies like the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), and others have been forthcoming with their assistance. With resources and technical assistance provided by ICMA under its cooperation agreement with USAID, the OPD has started organizing a fair on decentralization and municipal best practices that will be timed to coincide with the third ministerial meeting of the RIAD. An advisory committee has been formed and is composed of international and regional agencies conducting decentralization programs. The committee will advise on the technical aspects of the Fair. This RIAD activity is calculated to demonstrate the progress that the region has made toward decentralization and the subnational level’s contribution to development and democratic governance.

Finally, it is worth noting that the Network’s Internet page has been reorganized to help advance the Network’s mission.

Coordinating Office and Offices of the General Secretariat in the Member States

The Coordinating Office of the Offices of the General Secretariat in the Member States is responsible for general coordination of each of the 28 Offices of the General Secretariat located in various countries of the Hemisphere. This coordination includes, *inter alia*, supporting the cooperation and technical training activities that the OAS conducts in the member states; heightening and supporting the Organization’s institutional presence in the member states; publicizing OAS scholarships and fellowships and providing public information on OAS activities, conferences, and meetings in the member states; supporting the activities that the departments, offices, and other dependencies of the General Secretariat conduct in the course of discharging their various assigned functions and responsibilities; preparing substantive and administrative reports and documents within its area of competence; promoting, supporting, and coordinating opportunities to increase cooperation with offices of other international organizations in the member states; promoting cooperation and coordination among the organizations and other entities of the inter-American system; advising the Director of the DDPA and keeping that person abreast of all activities in this Office’s area of responsibility; and performing any other task that the Director of the DDPA, the Secretary General, and the Assistant Secretary General might assign to it.

During this reporting period, the General Secretariat embarked upon a number of efforts to raise resources to better enable the Offices of the General Secretariat in the Member States to perform their functions. Recently, the Acting Secretary General undertook an initiative to contact the directors of those offices to

enlist them in the job of improving coordination and cooperation with the organizations and other entities of the inter-American system.

To this end, in November 2004 the Acting Secretary General held meetings with the President of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB); the Director of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO); the Director General of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), and the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), in order to get this initiative started and to map a new plan for relations among the various inter-American organizations and institutions.

For the third consecutive year, and in keeping with General Assembly resolution AG/RES. 1974 (XXXIII-O/03), the Secretariat presented a document on the work done by the programs and a report listing all funds or subsidies received from the host government.