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Just a year after the enactment of Peru's Equal Opportunities Act, progress is already being made

## In pursuit of equity

*On March 15, 2007, Peruvian women joyfully celebrated the enactment of the Equal Opportunities Act (No. 28983). The Act establishes a legal, institutional and public policy framework within the national, regional and local spheres to ensure that women and men are equally able to exercise their rights to equality, dignity, unrestricted development, well-being and autonomy, and to prevent discrimination in all aspects of public and private life.*

One year later, significant progress has been made: Law 29083 has been passed, amending Article 47 of the General National Budget System Act, requiring public entities to incorporate gender equity analysis into the public budget. There is also a Decentralized Participative Budget aimed at fighting violence.

The Ministry for Women and Social Development (MIMDES), which is responsible for coordinating and monitoring the application of this act, has succeeded in getting 12 of the 25 regional governments to grant priority status to the goals of the 2006-2010 National Equal Opportunities Plan.

Five regions have implemented policies that

take into account the specific needs of women as local actors and as beneficiaries. Ten ministries grouped together in a Multisectoral Commission are carrying out actions and monitoring policies in favour of women. The Multisectoral Forum coordinates proposals with 19 civil society institutions.

coordination councils. In addition, according to MIMDES data, coordinated work between MIMDES and the *Programa Juntos* (Together program), has allowed 8,879 women and 8,215 men in 221 districts of the country to get their identity cards.

have served 32,660 people- 89% of them women- who have been affected by acts of domestic and sexual violence.

The Board of Peruvian Women Parliamentarians has instituted the *Development and Peace Medal* to honour women who work for the well-being of their communities, while MIMDES will be bestowing this year the fifth version of its Order of Merit.

The Legislature is working hard in the areas of women, health and justice, etc., and through the Board of Peruvian Women Parliamentarians, parliamentarians are beginning to create legislation on public policies that promote the well-being of Peruvian families.



Photo: Agencia Andina

A non-traditional profession for women: Masonry.

### Gender quota at 50%

The Decentralization Committee of the Congress of the Republic has also approved Bill No. 1856/2007-CR, the goal of which is to increase the quota of women on candidate lists for Congress in each electoral district from 30% to 50%. In 2006, just three regional governments and one municipality had an obligatory gender quota on candidate lists for the regional and local

The Board of Peruvian Women Parliamentarians holds decentralized hearings to promote the political participation of women and to strengthen their leadership as agents for change in favour of their communities and democratic governance in the country.

### Fighting violence

Five government sectors work at decreasing violence through 68 Women's Emergency Centres that

*Congresswoman Hilda Guevara Gómez, President of the Board of Women Parliamentarians, Congress of Peru*

### In this issue:

<b>Climbing towards the Summit</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The Salvadoran Assembly</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Welcome to the Brazilian section</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>More trade workshops</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>About FIPA</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>New FIPA blog</b>	<b>4</b>

# Climbing towards the Summit

“Ensuring the future of our citizens by promoting human prosperity, energy security and sustainable development” is the theme selected by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for the 5<sup>th</sup> Summit of the Heads of States and Governments of the Americas. The preparatory process for the 2009 Fifth Summit got underway on February 26.

Trinidad and Tobago hopes the member governments of the Organization of American States (OAS) will attack the problems that render a large part of the population of the Americas vulnerable: poverty, crime, food prices and threats to energy security and the environment. This island country has also published a summary document on the proposed theme, which will be the subject of ongoing discussions in the coming months among the governments in the region and the Summit Process partners.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago hopes that this first summit held in the Caribbean will generate collective solutions to transnational problems affecting the hemisphere. It has also set as its challenges the achievement of tangible results and the implementation of agreements signed at national and regional summits.

Photos: Marcia Gouthier/Agência Sebrae de Notícias and Valter Campanato/Agência Brasil



## Legislative involvement

The Summit of the Americas Process, which took its modern form at the Miami Summit in 1994, has played a key role in strengthening hemispheric cooperation, enabling heads of states and governments of the Americas to meet periodically and define concerted action plans for countries in the region.

With the aim of promoting a harmonious and sustainable regional integration process, FIPA has presented recommendations made by the parliaments of the Americas at every summit held since 2001. Moreover, the Forum’s potential has been recognized by leaders in the region since the inception of the organization on the eve of the 2001 Quebec Summit, at which a commitment was made to “foster the cooperation and exchange of experiences and parliamentary best practices between national legislators in the hemisphere.”

To underscore the contributions of legislators to the inter-American agenda, FIPA’s Executive Committee adopted a declaration in June 2007 calling for a formal recognition of the contribution of the national parliaments in the Summit of the Americas Process.

The legislators have pursued this issue at recent meetings and in letters to National Coordinator of the Trinidad and Tobago Summit Luis

Alberto Rodriguez and the OAS Summits’ Secretariat. They have also proposed several ways in which parliaments, while respecting the separation of powers, could contribute to a regional integration process that is mindful of citizens’ needs: incorporation of hemispheric agreements into national legislative frameworks, approval of national budgets to meet summit commitments, public awareness-raising on regional issues, etc.

These proposals could be favourably received, judging by the reaction of Director of the Summits of the Americas Secretariat Carmen Marina Gutiérrez. Invited to meet with the Executive Committee in Washington in October 2007, she emphasized that she could see the benefits of legislators taking an “active role” in the Summits Process, notably by promoting the ratification of inter-American treaties.

To move ahead on these issues, in the coming months FIPA will invite members of parliament from the continent to speak on the theme and issues of the upcoming Summit on its blog, soon to be accessible on the FIPA site at: [www.e-fipa.org](http://www.e-fipa.org).



# The Salvadoran Assembly

Photo: Asamblea Legislativa de El Salvador

El Salvador is a democratic and representative republic with a system of government divided into three branches: the Executive, the Legislative and the Judiciary.

The Executive consists of the President and vice-president of the Republic, the ministers and deputy ministers of State and the officials who report to them.

The Judiciary is made up of the Supreme Court of Justice, which is composed of 14 magistrates, the Chambers of Second Instance and the secondary tribunals.

Legislative power is vested in the Legislative Assembly, a collegiate body comprised of deputies, whose fundamental duty is that of legislating.

There are 84 members of parliament, known as deputies, in the El Salvadoran Legislative Assembly. Members of the Assembly serve three-year terms and may be re-elected. Their terms begin on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May of the year in which they are elected.

In El Salvador the Legislative Assembly uses a proportional representation election system, while municipal councils are elected through a majority vote. In order to win a seat a deputy must have the necessary electoral quotient, which is established by counting the votes per constituency and dividing it by the number of deputies each constituency is allowed to have. There are currently



The Blue Room: Where the Legislative Assembly debates in El Salvador.

five parties represented in the Legislative Assembly.

## Law-making

The law-making process begins with the presentation of a bill of law, which the Constitution delegates exclusively to the **deputies**; the **President of the Republic** by means of his/her ministers; the **Supreme Court of Justice** in matters relating to the Judiciary, exercise of the notarial function and legal profession, and jurisdiction of the courts; the **Municipal Councils** in matters of municipal taxes; and the **Central American parliament** for specific matters.

Bills are heard by the Board of Directors of the Assembly and presented to the legislative plenary for

submission to the committee responsible for the subject addressed in the bill. The bylaws of the Assembly provide for 15 permanent committees composed proportionally of members from all political parties. The committee reviews the bill and issues a majority ruling by its members in favour for or against the bill, or rules to set it aside.

If the ruling is favourable, the bill is submitted to the legislative plenary for approval and sent to the President of the Republic to be signed into law; if the president has no objections, he/she will sign the bill into law in the official gazette. In such a case where the president chooses to exercise his/her veto power, the Legislative Assembly must reconsider the bill and,

should it manage to ratify that bill with a two-thirds vote of the deputies, will return the bill to the president, who must sign it into law and order it published.

## Legislative Assembly (2006-2009)

◆ 84 Deputies

◆ 14 Women

◆ 70 Men

◆ Main parties:

Nationalist Republican Alliance 40.5%

Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front 38.1%

National Conciliation Party 10.7%

Christian Democratic Party 8.3%

Democratic Change 2.4%



# New FIPA section

FIPA would like to take this opportunity to welcome its new Brazilian section. The first South American section of FIPA was created in November 2007 in Brazil, following the approval of a draft resolution approved by a joint session of the National Congress of Brazil.

As a Forum made up of legislatures, FIPA depends on the work of parliamentarians to carry out its actions. At the same time, given that legislators serve limited terms, the organization witnesses a rotation of legislators at regular intervals.

The FIPA Plenary Assembly has therefore recommended that parliaments of the Americas create national sections in order to connect



Photo: Reynaldo Stavale/Agência Câmara

The Brazilian Congress, designed by renowned architect Oscar Niemeyer.

legislators whose terms are ending with new legislators entering the Congress, Assembly or Parliament, facilitating the continuity of actions and initiatives.

If your Parliament or Congress is interested in creating a FIPA section, please contact the FIPA Secretariat.

## More trade workshops to come

As a result of the success achieved by the first trade workshop, which was held in Ottawa, Canada, in March of last year, FIPA proposes that further trade workshops be held in 2008 and 2009.

We invite congresses or parliaments interested in hosting a workshop to contact the FIPA Secretariat.

The workshops allow participating legislators, assisted by specialists in the area, to increase their knowledge of international

trade and to exchange experience and tools to strengthen the role of parliaments with respect to trade issues, thereby enriching and complementing the perceptions and points of view of those living in countries that vary in size and make-up, as well as levels of industrialization and development.

Sixteen legislators from eight countries in the Americas participated in last year's workshop.

### FIPA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

#### President

- Deputy Luiz Carlos Hauly, Brazil

#### North America

- Senator Ricardo García Cervantes, Mexico
- Mr. James Bezan, MP, Canada

#### Central America

- Guatemala, vacant
- Deputy María Estela de la Cruz, Dominican Republic

#### Caribbean

- Senator Brenda Hood, Grenada
- Mr. Stanford Callender, MP, Trinidad and Tobago

#### South America

- Deputy Iván Moreira Barros, Chile
- Senator Nancy Patricia Gutiérrez, Colombia

#### Former FIPA President

- Senator Céline Hervieux-Payette, Canada

#### President of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas

- Senator Cecilia López Montaña, Colombia

#### Plenary Meeting Host Country

- To be confirmed

## 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) committed to promoting parliamentary participation in the inter-American system.

### New FIPA blog

FIPA is preparing to launch its new blog.

The blog will be a communication tool for the sharing of ideas, experiences and opinions and for discussing issues of interest to legislators of the hemisphere.

Visit our Web site often at [www.e-fipa.org](http://www.e-fipa.org) to catch the launch of this new initiative!

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