



Foro Interparlamentario de las Américas  
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Parliamentarians of the Americas adopt recommendations at annual FIPA meeting

## A new agenda for the Americas

*Some 80 parliamentarians from 22 countries in the Americas as well as observers from China and Russia participated in the Sixth Plenary Meeting of FIPA hosted by the Parliament of Canada in Ottawa, September 13-15.*

The meeting brought together parliamentarians and specialists to address issues related to the economic and financial crisis, food security, international migration and human rights, gender equality and the Influenza A (H1N1) pandemic.

"Our practice of freely exchanging ideas on the issues that matter to the Americas is in keeping with both the spirit of FIPA and the practices of other assemblies in the inter-American system, particularly the Summit of the Americas and the OAS General Assembly" said Canadian MP James Bezan, Chair of the Plenary Meeting, at the opening ceremony.

The scope of the relationship between FIPA and the OAS was underscored by OAS Secretary General José Miguel Insulza in his keynote address: "We are proud of the association that we have had with FIPA, and we think that it should play a

much larger role." Insulza also took the opportunity to review the situation in Honduras: "The current crisis underscores the imperfections in the tools we have available to properly respond when democracy is

on economic and financial reform: "It will take some time and careful analysis and deliberation to sort through all the details and strengthen the institutions necessary to do a better job of supervision, oversight, and leaning

positive public policies on migrants", according to Brazilian Congressman Luiz Carlos Hauy, who was re-elected as president of FIPA for another two years.

The Plenary Assembly ratified the election of Panama, Paraguay, Saint Lucia and the United States to fill in sub-regional positions on the Executive Committee, and of Linda Machuca Moscoso, member of the Ecuadorian National Assembly, as Chair of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas.

Delegates also accepted the invitations of Mexico and Paraguay to host the Plenary Meetings in 2010 and 2011, respectively.

Photo: FIPA



The opening ceremony took place at the Senate Chamber on Parliament Hill.

under threat." He also noted that the Inter-American Democratic Charter "lacks the necessary mechanisms for all powers of the State, not only the Executive branch, to be able to request the Permanent Council to invoke its application".

Former Deputy Governor of the Bank of Canada Sheryl Kennedy addressed the audience with a presentation

against excesses and human greed. But the imperative to do this as a cornerstone for the agenda for growth and prosperity in the Americas is significant in my view."

The work sessions ended with the adoption of several recommendations "not only aimed at sustainable development but also aimed at overcoming social inequality, the constant quest for gender equality and

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# Right to food enshrined by new law in Nicaragua

Law No. 693 (Law on Food and Nutrition Security and Sovereignty) (SSAN) was approved by consensus by the National Assembly of the Republic of Nicaragua on 18 June 2009 and published in the Official Gazette on 16 July 2009.

Between 1997, when promotion of that law began, and the present, studies were conducted on its various processes, in particular the

Likewise, consultations were held with the various parliamentary groups and organized sectors of civil society, such as the Proactive Lobbying Group, the Interest Group for Food and Nutrition Security and Sovereignty (GISSAN), the Agriculture and Livestock Board, the Superior Council of Private Enterprise (COSEP), and government institutions such as the

stewardship by the State of public policy on food and nutrition security and sovereignty.

To implement the Law, and the right to food as a fundamental human right that includes the right to not suffer from and to be protected against hunger, and the right to adequate food and nutrition and food sovereignty and security, the National System for Food and

proceeding with implementation of the Law on Food and Nutrition Security and Sovereignty, and in coping with the global and national context of unsustainable price increases for food aggravated by high oil prices, climate change, and the economic and financial crisis that has a devastating impact in emerging countries such as ours, which is in a state of

Photos: © FAO/Bahag, FAO 2004 and FAO/Sara Granados Ortiz



These days it is increasingly recognized that access to food is a birthright.

diagnostic study entitled "Food and Nutritional Insecurity: a Challenge for Nicaraguan Legislation".

National and international legislation was also examined, including measures and recommendations to which the governments committed at the Rome Summit and in particular the recommendations that the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has made to our country.

Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Forestry (MAGFOR), the Ministry of Education (MINED) and the Ministry of Health (MINSAL), among others.

The purpose of the law is to ensure the right of all Nicaraguans to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their necessities of life; that food be accessible physically, economically, socially and culturally on a timely and permanent basis; and to ensure its availability, stability and adequacy through the development and

Nutrition Security and Sovereignty (SINASSAN) is created and its regulations established. This system is composed of a set of public and private institutions and civil society organizations with expertise in food sovereignty and security at the national, departmental, regional and municipal levels.

Implementation of the law will strengthen the development of food and nutrition security and its institutionalization in our country.

The current context poses a historic challenge in

extreme poverty and food and nutrition insecurity. This has a greater impact in rural areas and on women and multiethnic communities, and forces us as a nation to come up with urgent structural responses to this serious situation to make progress towards its resolution. Political will is required for this process.

*René Nuñez Tellez, Speaker of the National Assembly of Nicaragua*

# The Parliament of Canada

Photo: Cora Capurro

Canada's Parliament consists of the Queen as Head of State (represented by the Governor General), the appointed Senate (the Upper Chamber) and the elected House of Commons (the Lower Chamber). According to the Constitution, a Parliament cannot exceed five years, after which a general election must be held. Each Parliament can include one or more sessions, and a session ends when it is prorogued by the Governor General at the Prime Minister's request. A Parliament ends when the Prime Minister asks the Governor General to dissolve it and call a general election.



Parliament Hill, home of the Parliament of Canada, attracts approximately 3 million visitors each year.

The Governor General convenes Parliament after each general election, reads the Speech from the Throne outlining the government's objectives for each session, and approves legislation passed by the Senate and the House of Commons.

The Senate has 105 members appointed by the Governor General on the Prime Minister's advice. Senators represent regions, provinces or territories, and can serve until age 75. The House of Commons has 308 members that are elected in a single-member plurality or "first-past-the-post" electoral system, and re-election is possible. Each Chamber is presided over by a Speaker, who is selected at the beginning of each Parliament. The Senate Speaker is appointed on the Prime Minister's advice, while

members of the House of Commons elect one of their members to be their Speaker.

Parliamentarians examine issues of the day, decide on policies and laws within the federal jurisdiction, and hold the government accountable for its actions. These activities can occur in the Chamber, in more than 50 parliamentary committees, or in the region, province or riding, as the case may be.

In fulfilling their legislative responsibilities, Senators and members of the House of Commons study, debate and may amend legislative proposals, or bills. Although bills are usually proposed by the government and are introduced in the House of Commons, the Senate may initiate legislation provided that the proposal does not involve the collection or

expenditure of public funds. Bills may also be introduced by individual Senators and members of the House of Commons.

All bills normally go through similar steps in both Chambers: Introduction, first and second reading, committee and report stage, third reading, message and Royal Assent .

Both the Senate and the House of Commons must approve bills in identical form before they can become law. Bills become law when they receive Royal Assent, on a date specified in the bill or on a date set by Order-in-Council.

This article is an edited version of *The Parliament of Canada – Democracy in Action*

## House of Commons (as of 21 May 2009)

- ◆ 308 Members of Parliament
- ◆ 68 Women
- ◆ 237 Men
- ◆ 3 vacancies
- ◆ Main political parties :

Conservative Party	46.42 %
Liberal Party	25 %
Bloc Quebecois	15.58 %
New Democratic Party	11.68 %
Independents	0.32 %

## Senate

(as of 21 May 2009)

- ◆ 105 Senators
- ◆ 33 Women
- ◆ 63 Men
- ◆ 9 vacancies
- ◆ Main political parties :

Liberal Party	50.47 %
Conservative Party	35.23 %
Independents	2.87 %
Progressive Conservative	1.9 %
Non-aligned	0.95 %



# A pandemic watch

"The vaccine itself is not the answer", said Dr. Luis Gerardo Castellanos to a parliamentary audience eager to learn more about the Pandemic (H1N1) 2009. It must be seen as "one component of an integrated response to fight this pandemic", he noted.

Dr. Castellanos, an epidemiologist with the Pan-American Health Organization, shared the findings and recommendations of the leading health organization on the Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 during the last day of the Sixth Plenary Meeting of FIPA in Ottawa.

"Non pharmaceutical measures such as hands hygiene and social distancing, among others, will continue to be of great value for the following influenza season", he added. Following his



Photo: FIPA

Dr. Castellanos presented PAHO's recommendations on the (H1N1) Pandemic.

presentation, the Plenary Assembly approved a recommendation on the Pandemic (H1N1), encouraging FIPA Member Parliaments "to strengthen, through legislation and increased budget, the health sector so as to face pandemics like the current H1N1 virus ..."

*(For the full text of the recommendations and presentation in PowerPoint format, please visit [www.e-fipa.org](http://www.e-fipa.org))*

## Women's Group elects a new president

Linda Machuca Moscoso, member of the Ecuadorian National Assembly, will replace Colombian Senator Cecilia Lopez Montaña as the new president of the Group of Women Parliamentarians of the Americas for 2009-2011.

Machuca Moscoso, who represents the Ecuadorian immigrants living in Canada and the United States in her country's legislature, was

elected through secret vote during the last day of the Sixth Plenary Meeting of FIPA.

Introducing herself as a "social communicator", she promised to lead a group "inclusive of both men and women".

As part of her new responsibilities, she will coordinate a Women's Group event in Ecuador next year.

## 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.

### Calendar

- **21st Executive Committee Meeting**, Panama, January 2010
- **Trade Workshop**, Mexico, March 11-13, 2010
- **Seventh Plenary Meeting of FIPA**, Mexico 2010
- **Eight Plenary Meeting of FIPA**, Paraguay 2011

### FIPA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

#### President

- Deputy Luiz Carlos Hauly, Brazil

#### North America

- Mr. James Bezan, MP, Canada
- United States of America (name to be confirmed)

#### Central America

- Deputy Maria Estela de la Cruz, Dominican Republic
- Panama (name to be confirmed)

#### Caribbean

- Mr. Stanford Callender, MP, Trinidad and Tobago
- St. Lucia (name to be confirmed)

#### South America

- Senator Nancy Patricia Gutiérrez, Colombia
- Paraguay (name to be confirmed)

#### Former FIPA President

- Senator Céline Hervieux-Payette, Canada

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

- Member of the National Assembly Linda Machuca Moscoso, Ecuador

#### Seventh Plenary Meeting Host Country

- Mexico (name to be confirmed)

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