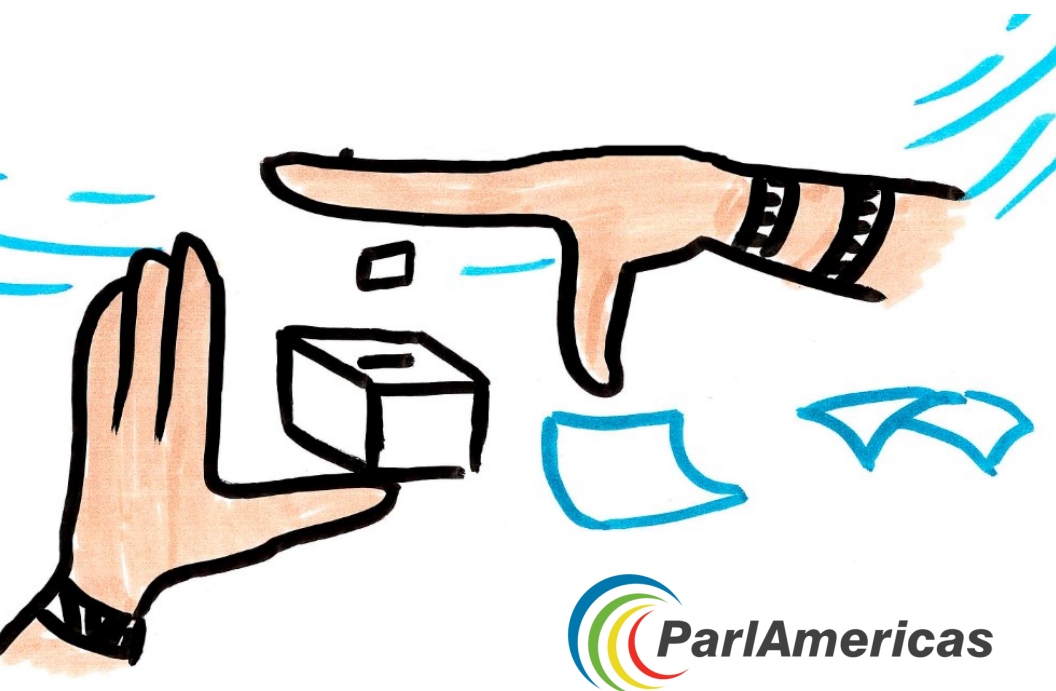


Election Observation

Aide Memoire for Parliamentarians



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Key Messages

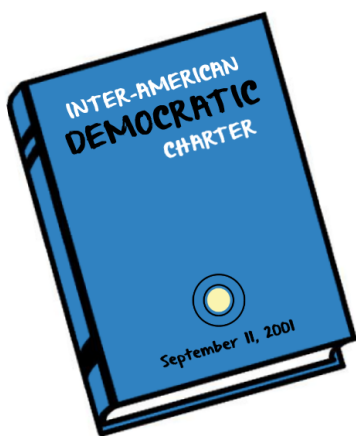
- Election observation missions are a mechanism that can enhance public trust in electoral processes.
- Election observation is guided by principles of objectivity, political impartiality and non-interference. Observers must ascribe to codes of conduct and refrain from expressing an opinion related to the electoral process.
- Election observation missions are a tangible expression of the commitment of the international community to the promotion of transparency and citizen participation.
- Observation by citizen groups has emerged as a common global practice that enhances electoral processes when conducted through a systematic methodology that prioritizes objectivity and non-partisanship.
- Recommendations of election observation missions can help inform electoral reforms pursued through legislative work.
- Electoral processes are not gender neutral; their observation and analysis increasingly incorporates a gender perspective and recommendations to establish more equitable conditions for women's electoral participation as voters and candidates.
- ParlAmericas engages on the topic of election observation through activities that integrate legislative perspectives to enhance gender equality in election processes.

Election observation is an instrument that supports democratic and rules-based conduct of elections

Elections are observed on the basis of national laws and standards drawn from regional commitments

Election observation is a systematic process of independent information-gathering and analysis. It uses benchmarks drawn from the national laws and regional commitments of the country in which the election is being observed.

This informs recommendations to address inconsistencies or gaps in legislation and improve how future elections could be administered. These recommendations can also be used by parliamentarians to support and pursue amendments of electoral legal frameworks to improve conditions for equal participation and leveled competition in elections.



The [Inter-American Democratic Charter](#) (Art 3) commits Member States of the Organization of American States (OAS) to inclusive, transparent and competitive elections and is an important source of shared standards for how elections are observed and assessed in the Americas.

Election observation missions are guided by shared principles and codes of conduct

Election observation is guided by fundamental principles of **objectivity**, **political impartiality** and **non-interference**, as articulated through the [Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation](#), which has been endorsed by more than 50 inter-governmental organizations since 2005.

On the basis of these principles and to maintain the integrity of the election observation process, it is widely agreed that:

- Election observation should only be conducted at the invitation of the country and/or election management body that is administering an election (Article 12).
- Election observation missions must be sufficient in scope and duration to produce an analysis that is technically sound and comprehensive in assessing pre-election, election-day, and post-election phases (Article 19). Long-term observation is encouraged alongside specialized issue-focused observation when relevant and complementary (Article 5).
- Methods and criteria for data collection and analysis should be transparent and systematic to guarantee objectivity and maximize accuracy (Article 4). Reports should also be issued in a timely manner (Article 7).



International election observation missions are encouraged to assess all stages of an election process – not just Election Day – and to engage with diverse stakeholders, including political parties, candidates, and civil society, that share responsibility for the integrity of elections.

A Code of Conduct for International Election Observers

accompanies the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and pledges observers to:

- Respect elections as an expression of national sovereignty that belongs to the people of a country and involves the exercise of fundamental human rights.
- Respect the laws of the host country and observe lawful instructions from government and electoral authorities.
- Maintain accuracy in observations and diligence in their documentation, and strict impartiality in analysis that distinguishes subjective factors and objective evidence.
- Refrain from making any public comments about their observations or conclusions and maintain professional conduct at all times.
- Cooperate with other election observation missions – including citizen monitoring groups that apply a non-partisan and objective methodology.

Non-partisan citizen monitoring of elections complements international election observation

Election monitoring by citizen groups has emerged as a common global practice and can improve public confidence and the transparency of election processes when conducted through a systematic methodology that ensures objectivity and non-partisanship. Citizen groups are particularly well positioned to monitor and support parliamentarians in the implementation of recommendations to improve election laws.



The [Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors \(GNDEM\)](#) convenes more than 250 citizen groups and is dedicated to building capacities and advancing methods for systematic, fact-based election monitoring. This community of practice is similarly guided by a Declaration of Global Principles and Code of Conduct for Nonpartisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Groups.

Gender mainstreaming of election observation can strengthen conditions for women's electoral participation

Election processes are not gender-neutral

Election observation with a gender perspective evaluates differences in the conditions by which women electors and candidates access and participate in electoral processes, and aims to issue recommendations to governments and electoral authorities to remedy inequalities in the full exercise of women's political rights.

ParlAmericas is leading efforts to integrate legislative and gender perspectives in election observation

ParlAmericas has an established track record in support of efforts to mainstreaming gender considerations in parliamentary work. This has guided its engagement with election observation through activities that draw from the past experience of parliamentarians as candidates, and highlight legislative reforms to reduce structural inequalities and strengthen conditions for women's electoral participation.

Promoting Women's Candidacies

considers how differences in the design of electoral systems and processes across the Americas and Caribbean influence the effectiveness of different possible legislative and political party measures aimed to reduce obstacles for women candidates in contesting nominations, financing campaigns, accessing equal media coverage, and being elected to parliament.



Election Observation Mission in Haiti — MioEH

October 2015 — February 2016

ParlAmericas conducted its first electoral observation mission in the framework of the 2015 presidential, parliamentary and local elections in Haiti. The [Election Observation Mission in Haiti \(MIOEH\)](#) had a strong analytical focus on the participation of women voters and candidates, which complemented election observation missions by the [European Union \(EU\)](#) and the [OAS Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation \(DECO\)](#). As part of this mission, ParlAmericas also deployed two delegations of parliamentarians from across the hemisphere to engage with their counterparts in the Parliament of Haiti and with civil society organizations.



**ParlAmericas**
MIOEH

**PRELIMINARY
STATEMENT**

**Progress in Improving Electoral Environment
Thanks to Collective Effort of Haitians**

*Port-au-Prince, Haiti, October 27, 2015
For Immediate Release*

ParlAmericas, an independent network of national legislatures of 35 countries in the Americas, has been undertaking its electoral observation mission and offers preliminary observations on the conduct of the October 2015 vote for the national assembly, local government leadership and the first round of the Presidential elections.

While noting signs of improvement in the process and the conduct of electoral stakeholders, the Mission encourages further steps to develop a more transparent, peaceful and inclusive electoral process.

The main preliminary observations of the ParlAmericas Mission are:

- MIOEH observers witnessed an election day that was generally peaceful in nature. The Council Electoral Process (CEP), political parties, security forces, civil society and the media should build on this achievement and work towards further measures to improve understanding of procedures to build more confidence in the process.
- The Mission also noted that in the majority of polling stations, violent representations of political parties (chasse-morts) did not disrupt the process. However, further steps can be taken to ensure compliance and more can be done to better prepare these individuals to carry out their duties more effectively.
- The Mission applauds the work of thousands of Haitian civil society members at all levels of the country especially in promoting voter education and inclusive participation. They have minimized their commitment to the democratic process.
- The Mission notes that increased numbers of Haitian women were active in the work of the CEP, civil society and as political parties, and that their election will result in at least 13 of women being elected to local government positions. But the Mission underlines that significant challenges remain for Haiti's electoral process to become more inclusive and safe, especially the elected positions at the national level.

The MIOEH aims to promote transparency, non-violence and respect for the Haitian laws, as well as respect and international commitments. It consists of six electoral professionals supported by a talented national staff and 12 long-term observers (LTOs) deployed throughout the country since September. Since that time, they have met with candidates, representatives of political parties, local governments, members of municipal and departmental electoral offices, national and local media and members of civil society including women's associations.

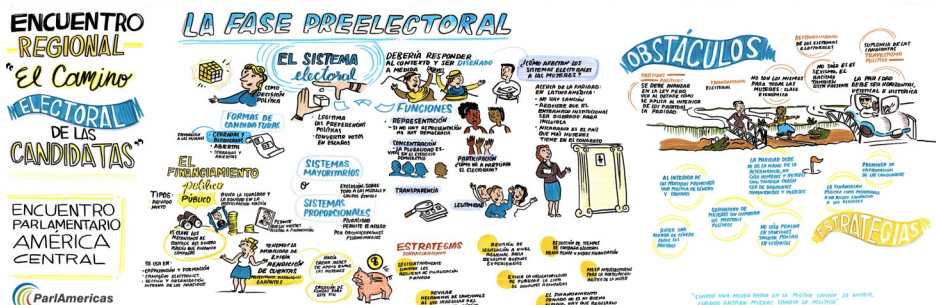
**ParlAmericas**
Mission d'observation électorale en Haïti - 2015
MIOEH

Extract from the [statement of preliminary observations](#) of the MIOEH about the Haiti presidential and parliamentary elections.

“A gender quota was applied, which will result in women in elected office for at least one-third of local level positions as part of this October 25 election. The Mission applauds the women who sought nomination and engaged as candidates in this electoral process. The decrease in the number of women who will be elected to Parliament, however, is troubling. This can only be overcome with political leadership to eliminate intimidation and political violence and to promote proactive measures that reduce economic and political marginalization.”

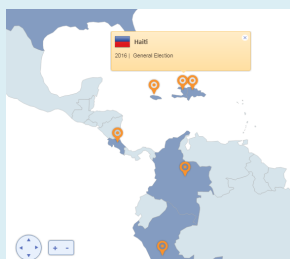
Central America Regional Meeting: The Electoral Journey of Women Candidates

September 2016



*A graphic recording was produced during the meeting to document recurring themes and lived experiences

ParlAmericas conducted a regional workshop that addressed challenges encountered by women candidates in Central America during election processes, with emphasis on temporary special measures that could be enshrined in legislation or voluntarily applied by political parties to promote women's candidacies and election. Through sharing of lived experiences, women parliamentarians, former parliamentarians, and emerging leaders from across Central America explored how different phases of the electoral cycle are affected by inequities in resource allocation and political violence, and how the recommendations of election observation missions could inform amendments of legislation that improve conditions for women's electoral participation. The workshop benefited from presentations by the [OAS-DECO](#) and [OAS Inter-American Commission for Women \(CIM\)](#).



The [Election Observation Mission Database](#) is an online tool that compiles reports and recommendations of election observation missions by the OAS-DECO since 2010.

Parliamentary Delegation to the United States General Election

November 2016

ParlAmericas organized a parliamentary delegation visit to Washington DC for briefings on international standards for election observation. The delegation visit coincided with the 2016 US General Election, and its observation by the [OAS-DECO](#), as well as the [Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights \(ODIHR\) of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe \(OSCE\)](#) and [OSCE Parliamentary Assembly](#), each of which briefed the delegation. On Election Day, the ParlAmericas delegation joined the [International Foundation for Electoral Systems \(IFES\)](#) on visits to polling stations. The delegation also incorporated perspectives from civil society and explored the role of non-partisan citizen observation through roundtable discussions with the [National Democratic Institute \(NDI\)](#) and the [National Council of La Raza \(NCLR\)](#).



"The United States citizenry both carried out and participated in an important electoral process, even in the context of a strong and controversial campaign. The mission witnessed an electoral process during which citizens were able to express their differences through institutional mechanisms in a free and respectful manner."

Former President Laura Chinchilla (Costa Rica), Head of Mission for the DECO-OAS Election Observation Mission



ParlAmericas is the institution that promotes **PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY** in the **INTER-AMERICAN SYSTEM**



ParlAmericas is composed of the **NATIONAL LEGISLATURES** of the member States of the OAS from North, Central and South America and the Caribbean



ParlAmericas facilitates the exchange of parliamentary **BEST PRACTICES** and promotes **COOPERATIVE POLITICAL DIALOGUE**



ParlAmericas mainstreams **GENDER EQUALITY** by advocating for women's political empowerment and the application of a gender lens in legislative work



ParlAmericas fosters **OPEN PARLIAMENTS** by advancing the principles of transparency, accountability, citizen participation, ethics and probity



ParlAmericas promotes policies and legislative measures to mitigate and adapt to the effects of **CLIMATE CHANGE**



ParlAmericas works towards strengthening democracy and governance by accompanying **ELECTORAL PROCESSES**



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