

## **VI. PERMANENT OBSERVERS**

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Permanent observer status in the Organization of American States was established by the General Assembly at its first regular session, held in San José, Costa Rica, in 1971 [AG/RES. 50 (I-O/71)]. The permanent observers participate in the Organization's activities and contribute to its programs.

The Department of External Relations (DER) advises the various dependencies of the General Secretariat and the political bodies in all activities associated with OAS relations with permanent observers, including fundraising for priority programs and projects on the inter-American agenda.

To that end, the Department promotes the active participation and cooperation of the 60 permanent observers, by involving them in the life of the Organization through visits to senior government officials in capitals to negotiate support for specific activities, briefing sessions (noteworthy among them the meeting between the representatives of the permanent observer countries at the General Assembly and the foreign ministers of member states), exchanges of documents and information, and special events.

In 2006 the Organization received cash and in-kind contributions from permanent observers totaling about US\$18 million. Similarly, in 2006 the Spanish Cooperation Fund was established, through which Spain is channeling its contributions to the Organization. Spain also signed a cooperation agreement with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

During the period covered by this report, the OAS received high-level visits from the Americas Directors of the ministries of foreign affairs and the ministries of cooperation and development of permanent observer countries, as well as from other representatives of permanent observer governments. Among them were the visits by the Spanish Minister of Defense, José Antonio Alonso, accompanied by a delegation of distinguished Spanish senators; by the Assistant Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Italy, Donato Di Santo; and by senior officials in the European Commission.

For his part, the Secretary General visited Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden, and the European Union. At OAS headquarters, the Secretary General also welcomed Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, who addressed the Committee on Juridical and Political Affairs. Likewise, the Secretary General held meetings with senior officials from permanent observer countries in the framework of the United Nations General Assembly, including a meeting with the European Commissioner for External Relations, Benita Ferrero Waldner.