MEETING THE CHALLENGES
THE ROLE OF THE OAS IN THE AMERICAS
The last five years have been a time of change and challenge in the Americas. The region has faced a number of political crises that have produced tensions between countries or threatened democracy. The worldwide economic crisis has generated further difficulties, particularly for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

The Organization of American States (OAS) has met these challenges promptly and effectively. As the region’s leading multilateral political forum, it has provided vital support to democratic institutions and critical defense of the rule of law. It has played a key role in maintaining peace and security between neighboring countries and has intensified political dialogue on a wide range of important issues. It has also strengthened the inter-American human rights system and taken concrete actions to combat poverty and promote social and economic development. The OAS General Secretariat has optimized its management and stewardship, increasing the level of transparency and accountability to the member states. All these actions were taken in accordance with the principles established in the OAS Charter and the Inter-American Democratic Charter, as well as the mandates of the Organization’s central political bodies.

Today we have a vibrant, relevant OAS with a unified vision, a clear structure, and a strong voice and presence on issues that are substantive and important to the people of the hemisphere. At a time in which the OAS is asked to take on new responsibilities and challenges, we can affirm that this Organization is fully prepared to do so and to take responsibility for the results.

JOSÉ MIGUEL INSULZA
SECRETARY GENERAL
ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES
The OAS is the tool of choice for cooperation to maintain peace and the region’s leading forum for the protection of democracy.

In the period from 2005 to 2010, the OAS responded quickly and effectively each time it was called upon to provide assistance in situations that affected the legitimate exercise of power or jeopardized the democratic process in one of its member states. The OAS also responded to situations that presented bilateral or regional challenges to peace and security, and provided political or institutional support in critical circumstances. It promoted dialogue in the face of polarization and proved to be an effective mediator when tensions arose between countries.

All these actions were carried out in accordance with the OAS Charter, the Inter-American Democratic Charter, and the decisions of the Organization’s political bodies.

**MEDIATION IN THE INSTITUTIONAL CRISIS IN NICARAGUA**

The OAS mediated in the institutional crisis that arose between the branches of government in Nicaragua in 2004, after then-President Enrique Bolaños refused to accept the Supreme Court’s decision ratifying the constitutional reforms approved by the legislature as a result of a pact between the FSLN and PLC political parties. Invoking Articles 17 and 18 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, the government of President Bolaños requested that a special mission, headed by the Secretary General, help to establish a broad national dialogue. After that visit, a Special Envoy of the Secretary General traveled to the country and stayed from June to October 2005 to facilitate dialogue and mediate among all the actors involved in the crisis.

The OAS helped the parties reach an accord that guaranteed immediate stability, which made it possible for President Bolaños to complete his term in office and for the country to hold presidential and legislative elections as scheduled, with the participation of international political observers.

**A POSITIVE PRESENCE IN BOLIVIA**

The OAS played a critical role in maintaining peace and stability in Bolivia from 2006 to 2009, a particularly complex period of social and political transformation. The OAS maintained a constant presence in the country, observed five electoral processes, and mediated among the key actors in politics and society, thus helping to preserve democracy in the face of difficult challenges. Among other things, the OAS contributed to the negotiation process that led to the agreement among members of Congress that made possible the ratification of a new Political Constitution.

The OAS was the only international institution present at the signing of the new Constitution. Moreover, it was the only multilateral organization that provided assistance from the
outset to the Plurinational Electoral Body in the preparation of a biometric voter registry. The OAS deployed a team of technical experts throughout the country for this purpose. The mission’s professionalism and uninterrupted support guaranteed a degree of transparency and legitimacy long demanded by the citizens of Bolivia.

GOOD OFFICES IN ECUADOR

The OAS was actively committed to the process of resolving Ecuador’s 2005 political crisis, which stemmed from the decision by the executive branch to replace the magistrates of the Supreme Court of Justice and the subsequent decision by the Congress to remove President Lucio Gutiérrez from office. From July to November 2005, a special OAS mission supported the selection process for the new members of the Supreme Court of Justice, which led to the reestablishment of this branch of government after nearly a year of inactivity. This step also helped to create an environment conducive to holding the already scheduled elections, which ultimately resulted in the peaceful transfer of power to the President-elect. Thus began a new chapter in Ecuador after a decade of instability.

The OAS also participated as an external observer of the constitutional reform process that led to the drafting of a new Constitution from November 2007 to July 2008. The Organization also observed the elections related to this process and supported the implementation of the new constitutional framework, as requested by the national authorities.

MEDICATION IN THE BELIZE-GUATEMALA TERRITORIAL DISPUTE

Belize and Guatemala have been involved in a territorial difference for many years. The situation began to move toward a solution on September 7, 2005, when the two parties, under the auspices of the OAS, signed an agreement increasing confidence-building measures. Ongoing meetings convened by the General Secretariat, many of these at the ministerial level, have strengthened the dialogue process between Belize and Guatemala, which has facilitated peaceful solutions to incidents along the border.

The OAS maintains an office in the Belize-Guatemala Adjacency Zone and raised funds for the construction of a new settlement in Santa Rosa. Significant progress has been made toward a permanent solution to the differendum. Belize and Guatemala have agreed to take the legal issue to the International Court of Justice in The Hague, pending legislative approval of that step in both countries.

RESPONSE TO COLOMBIA’S INCURSION INTO ECUADORIAN TERRITORY

The OAS responded rapidly to the situation created by the unauthorized incursion by Colombian army and police forces into Ecuadorian territory on March 1, 2008. The Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs decided to establish a Good Offices Mission, led by the Secretary General, to seek to reestablish an atmosphere of trust between the two parties through dialogue and the promotion of specific initiatives. The Foreign Ministers of Ecuador and Colombia met in New York on September 25, 2009. They agreed to a joint proposal with 11 points of common interest, including a formal request that the OAS advance a dialogue on sensitive issues.

In October and November 2009, the two Foreign Ministers met in Colombia and Ecuador, with the participation of the OAS Secretary General, to move forward in the implementation of the joint proposal. As a result, both countries designated chargés d’affaires on November 13, 2009; high-level military officials also met to discuss issues of common interest; and the Binational Border Commission (COMBIFRON) resumed its operations.

SUPPORT FOR THE PEACE PROCESS IN COLOMBIA

The OAS Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP/OAS) was created in February 2004 through Permanent Council Resolution 859. The resolution authorized the establishment of the mission for the purpose of providing technical support to initiatives for the verification of the ceasefire, cessation of hostilities, and the demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration of combatants.

Since then, the MAPP/OAS has maintained an active presence in different parts of the country. In January 2009 it created five regional offices in order to strengthen its strategic presence and adapt to the new dynamic of the peace process. The mission contributed to the disarmament and demobilization of 32,000
members of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) and has played an essential role in raising the visibility of the victims of Colombia’s conflict.

THE LIFTING OF THE 1962 RESOLUTION ON CUBA

During the 39th regular session of the OAS General Assembly, held June 2-4, 2009, in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, the member states decided that Resolution VI—adopted on January 31, 1962, during the Eighth Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs—ceased to have effect in the Organization of American States. The resolution adopted in San Pedro Sula also established that “the participation of the Republic of Cuba in the OAS will be the result of a process of dialogue initiated at the request of the Government of Cuba, and in accordance with the practices, purposes, and principles of the OAS.”

The decision eliminated an anachronistic remnant of the Cold War, but it did not automatically open the doors of the OAS to participation by the Cuban government. If the government of that country wishes to return to the OAS, it must express its willingness to adhere to the Organization’s guiding principles, such as have been established in the Inter-American Democratic Charter and the American Convention on Human Rights.

RESPONSE TO THE POLITICAL CRISIS IN GUATEMALA

In May 2009, an unusual political situation arose in Guatemala when President Álvaro Colom, his wife, and a close associate were alleged to have been involved in the assassination of a well-known lawyer. Political sectors within the country tried to use this situation to call the President’s legitimacy into question, thus opening the door for a democratic rupture in the country. President Colom, through his Minister of Foreign Affairs, asked for OAS intervention. The Permanent Council approved that step, offering its support to the constitutional government of Guatemala and asking the Secretary General to offer the Organization’s cooperation to strengthen and preserve that country’s democratic institutional system. Following a mission to Guatemala led by the Secretary General, the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala launched an independent investigation, which found that the accusations were completely groundless.

In his appearance before the Permanent Council on February 16, 2010, President Colom had this to say about the episode: “The decisive and rightful role of the Permanent Council and the unconditional solidarity that the hemisphere offered Guatemala at that time, combined with the rightful initiatives of
the Secretary General, were determining in preventing a greater
crisis and stopping an unjustified but understandable political
attack on my government.” He went on to say that “the Secretary
General not only met the mandate of the Permanent Council, but
in his very particular way of speaking to all sectors, and in a very
few hours, abated many aggravations that were later appeased
and soothed.”

THE COUP D’ÉTAT IN HONDURAS

On June 28, 2009, a group of military men burst into the
residence of the President of Honduras, José Manuel Zelaya, and
after capturing him and taking him out of the country, left him
on the tarmac of the San José airport in neighboring Costa Rica.
The OAS, which for months had been exercising its diplomatic
good offices to mitigate internal conflict in the country, called
this action a coup d’état and immediately condemned it. After
demanding the restitution of President Zelaya, without success,
the OAS, in a unanimous decision by its member states,
suspended Honduras from the Organization. The OAS then
implemented a wide range of diplomatic initiatives designed
to restore democracy and the rule of law in that country. The
initiatives included ongoing consultations with the governments
of the region; support for the mediation efforts of Costa Rican
President Óscar Arias; two visits to Tegucigalpa by the OAS
Secretary General and Foreign Ministers of the region (in August
and October 2009); and direct and permanent consultations
with both parties and other relevant actors. The OAS also
promoted and facilitated the “Guaymuras Dialogue” between
representatives of President Zelaya and de facto President
Roberto Micheletti, which led to the signing of the Tegucigalpa/
San José Agreement on October 30. Under the terms of that
accord, both parties decided to delegate to the National Congress
the decision regarding President Zelaya’s reinstatement, and the
legislative body in the end did not reinstate him.

The Tegucigalpa/San José Agreement provided the framework for
verification of the presidential election that had been scheduled
since before the coup d’état, which culminated with the election
of President Porfirio Lobo. It also called for the establishment
of a Verification Commission to oversee the implementation of
its various points; these included, among other things, political
amnesty with regard to the facts established for the period
between June 27 and October 30, and the establishment of a
Truth Commission. The OAS, which was given the responsibility
of implementing the Verification Commission, continues to
work to bring about the complete normalization of democracy
in the country. Separately, the Inter-American Commission on
Human Rights conducted an on-site visit to Honduras to assess
the human rights situation following the coup.
The OAS is the premier multilateral forum in the Americas. Through its Permanent Council and General Assembly, the countries can address and resolve their differences and conflicts.

The unity among the countries of the hemisphere cannot be ascribed to a unanimity of ideology or political principles; rather, it has developed because the Organization of American States gives countries a forum in which to debate their ideological and political differences, and an institutional and legal framework that enables them to overcome disputes peacefully, through mutual solidarity and cooperation.

From 2005 to 2010, the role of the OAS as a vital political forum was enhanced with the institutionalization of various mechanisms for exchange and dialogue among the member states.

THE SUMMIT PROCESS: MAR DEL PLATA THROUGH PORT OF SPAIN

The OAS has been present at every Summit of the Americas and has played a growing role in facilitating the debates that lead to Summit agreements. This was the case following the Fourth Summit, held in November 2005 in Mar del Plata, Argentina. The OAS General Secretariat provided support for a broad range of activities in preparation for the Fifth Summit, which took place in April 2009 in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. The OAS has also assumed a leadership role in following up on compliance with the mandates that have come out of the Summits of the Americas in such areas as social protection, energy, investment and economic development, public security, and governance.

The OAS also heads the Joint Summit Working Group, made up of the international organizations that support the Summit process.

MINISTERIAL DIALOGUE

Since 2005, the OAS member states have intensified their cooperation at the ministerial level, through periodic meetings that take place under the OAS legal framework with extensive technical support from its General Secretariat. During this period, the OAS has convened meetings of the region’s ministers of labor, education, culture, public security, justice, science and technology, sustainable development, and social
development. In each case, these meetings have produced substantial progress in generating hemisphere-wide initiatives and coordinating collective efforts in each sector.

The OAS General Secretariat, which has been working to strengthen this dialogue process, has provided support ranging from planning the meetings to following up on resulting agreements and resolutions.

**NETWORKS FOR COOPERATION**

The OAS General Secretariat has designed and implemented a number of cooperation networks as mechanisms to promote political dialogue, identify priorities, and share experiences among the countries of the region. These virtual networks have focused in particular on advancing training, strengthening institutions, and developing more effective public policies.

The last few years have seen an exponential growth in these mechanisms, which are currently operating in the following areas: e-government, public procurement, natural disasters, energy, biodiversity, water resources, environmental legislation, cooperation, competitiveness, scientific journalism, teacher training, culture, the public labor sector, and social protection.

These networks have produced concrete results. For example, through the Inter-American Network of Labor Administration more than 500 labor ministry officials have been trained and workshops have been held throughout the region on such subjects as child labor, labor migration, and occupational safety.

The Inter-American Network for Disaster Mitigation, for its part, promotes practical cooperation to develop and implement strategies for disaster risk reduction. The e-government network known as RED GEALC (for its acronym in Spanish) helps governments in Latin America and the Caribbean use information and communication technologies to become more efficient, transparent, and accountable.
The institutions of democracy must be continually evaluated and strengthened to ensure that they can function efficiently and effectively.

The region has made considerable progress in developing a shared understanding of democracy. This common definition has been clearly articulated in the texts that make up the legal and institutional framework developed by the OAS over the last 20 years—in particular the Inter-American Democratic Charter, approved by the member states in 2001.

With a new era came the need to build institutions that could make democracy work and enable it to deliver real solutions to people’s real problems. The OAS General Secretariat has worked toward this end over the last five years, developing programs designed to strengthen the institutions of democracy.

AN EYE ON ELECTIONS

The OAS has expanded and strengthened its electoral observation activities to encompass all of Latin America and the Caribbean, and is now recognized as the authority par excellence for validating elections in the region. In every case in which the OAS participated in observations in recent years, its presence helped to reduce tensions and increase transparency.

From May 2005 through May 2010, the OAS observed some 50 elections or referendums in various countries of the hemisphere. Its observation missions provide an objective assessment of whether citizens in a particular country are able to exercise their suffrage rights in a way that is inclusive, free, and transparent. Their presence also provides solidarity and support to the democratic institutions that organize and manage the elections.

In 2006, the OAS General Secretariat began to consolidate, systematize, professionalize, and refine its procedures for electoral observations, in an effort that has given this process even greater credibility. It developed a Methodology for Electoral Observations and published a Manual for Electoral Observation Missions, which lays out basic rules in common for all OAS observation activities. A specialized manual, meanwhile, lays out guidelines for observers to follow when it comes to highly automated elections that use new technologies at various stages of the process. In 2009, the General Secretariat began a process to incorporate a gender perspective into the task of observing elections.

SUPPORT FOR ELECTORAL INSTITUTIONS

The Organization’s impact extends far beyond the casting of ballots. In their post-election reports, the observation missions recommend ways to improve the process, and the OAS General Secretariat often works with the country’s election authorities to implement the improvements. Recommendations might include, for example, developing detailed manuals for the staff of election institutions to follow; auditing the voter registry; or incorporating technology to speed up the vote-counting process, improve electoral
maps, or strengthen data security. In cooperation with a number of international organizations and recognized nongovernmental organizations, the OAS provides training and technical support to electoral institutions. It has worked to apply international quality-control standards (ISO 9001) in Panama, Costa Rica, and Peru, and in 2010 it will begin this type of effort in Bolivia. The OAS has also held workshops for members of electoral tribunals throughout the Americas. Finally, it created a regional program to address issues involving political funding.

**ELECTORAL AND CIVIL REGISTRIES**

A civil registry links individuals to the society to which they belong. It is the instrument that makes it possible for their civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights to be respected and that gives them an identity as persons and as citizens. To strengthen this basic institution of democracy, the OAS General Secretariat has developed the Program for Universal Civil Registry in the Americas (known by its Spanish acronym, PUICA). Through this program, the OAS is promoting civil registration in a number of countries in the Americas—including Guatemala, Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay, and El Salvador—and at the same time helping to improve voter registration systems.

In one case of particular note, the OAS made a substantial contribution to the return of democracy in Haiti through the establishment of an electoral registry with more than 3.55 million voters registered. This effort formed the basis for the creation of a national civil registry. By the time partial senatorial elections were held in April 2009, more than 600,000 additional people had been registered and given identity documents, and the civil registry included some 4.2 million citizens—approximately 92 percent of the adult population. Although the January 2010 earthquake unquestionably brought new setbacks and challenges, the civil registry effort in Haiti will continue to be expanded over the coming years to include all citizens, including minors.

**SUPPORT FOR THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH**

As the central forum for democratic debate, the legislative branch is at the heart of the democratic process. To strengthen this critical institution of democracy, the General Secretariat created the Program of Support to Strengthen Legislative Institutions (PAFIL). Its mission is to support legislatures in the member states (whether Parliament, Congress, or National Assembly) in their efforts to foster dialogue and cooperation with each other and to promote legislative modernization. Since its creation, this program has conducted a significant number of seminars, workshops, studies, and specialized courses. It has worked directly with the Congresses of Guatemala, Ecuador, and Peru, as well as with the Office of the President of the Legislature of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, in their institutional modernization programs.
Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms leads the list of essential elements of representative democracy identified in the Inter-American Democratic Charter.

The effective protection of human rights provides a solid foundation for democratic governance. Along with such factors as an independent judiciary and a free, pluralistic press, respect for human rights helps to consolidate the rule of law and gives citizens greater confidence in democracy. Consequently, strengthening the capacity of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights has been a priority concern of the OAS General Secretariat in the last five years.

The Commission now has sufficient resources allocated to guarantee that it can maintain its regular calendar of sessions, and staffing increases in recent years have made it better equipped to handle the many petitions it receives from around the region. Most importantly, the General Secretariat has explicitly recognized the autonomy and importance of the human rights system within the OAS, and has repeatedly urged the member countries to heed its findings and comply with its decisions. This support has strengthened the role of the inter-American human rights system.

**RESPONSE TO HUMAN RIGHTS CRISES**

In August 2009, some two months following the coup d'état in Honduras, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) conducted an on-site visit to that country and helped to raise international awareness about the serious human rights consequences brought about by the breach of democracy. During the five-day visit, the Commission met with representatives of the de facto government and received complaints, testimony, and information from more than 100 individuals. It documented a pattern of abuses, including the disproportionate use of public force, arbitrary detentions, the suppression of demonstrations, and the attempt to control information through the temporary shutdown of some media outlets. Immediately following the coup and in the months thereafter, the IACHR issued precautionary measures to protect dozens of individuals deemed to be at risk.

In another example of the Commission’s response to a human rights crisis, in November 2006 and June 2008 it visited Bolivia’s Chaco region to gather information on the situation faced by indigenous Guaraní families who live in a state of debt bondage and forced labor similar to slavery. The Commission’s focus on these captive communities, as they are called, has bolstered the government’s efforts to address the deep-rooted problems of injustice and discrimination that the country’s indigenous peoples and campesino communities continue to suffer.

**A BULWARK OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

Over the course of its five decades of existence—the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights marked its 50th
anniversary in 2009—the IACHR has become a bulwark for the protection of human rights in the region. From mid-2005 through the beginning of 2010, the IACHR conducted some 45 visits to 16 member states, at the invitation of the countries involved. Some were comprehensive on-site visits to verify the general human rights situation; others were visits by rapporteurs or small delegations to look into a specific problem or issue.

In the last five years, the Commission has published numerous reports focusing on particular countries or on serious human rights concerns shared by countries around the region. The Commission’s specialized rapporteurships have carried out an intense level of activity covering some of the region’s most pressing issues, from protection of the rights of Afro-descendants or indigenous peoples to concerns about key aspects of democracy such as access to justice or freedom of expression.

THE INDIVIDUAL CASE SYSTEM

The last five years have also seen a substantial increase in the Commission’s work on individual cases and petitions, with the IACHR receiving nearly 7,000 petitions in that period. In 2009, it received two and a half times the number of petitions it had received 10 years earlier, an indication of the growing level of confidence that victims of human rights violations have in the inter-American system.

To respond to the increase, the Commission introduced reforms to its Rules of Procedure and its internal work structure; the result was a sustained increase in the number of petitions evaluated each year.

In the last five years, the Commission has also held more than 500 hearings on cases. Many are transmitted live on the Web and the vast majority of hearings can be viewed online after the sessions. This has expanded the Commission’s outreach and raised awareness about human rights issues throughout the Americas.

SUPPORT FOR THE IACHR EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

Recognizing the vital role of the inter-American human rights system, since 2005 the OAS General Secretariat has stepped up its support of the IACHR and its Executive Secretariat. It has been able to increase the staff at a time of budget challenges and ensure that resources are available for regular sessions and key observation visits.

In recognition of the work carried out by the members of the Commission, the General Secretariat promoted the payment of a monthly stipend for special services as well as a considerable increase in their honorariums, a decision that was approved by the General Assembly and took effect in 2010.
The effective observance of human rights exists only in tandem with the full observance of the rule of law.

The effective observance of human rights is complemented by the full exercise of the rule of law. For democratic institutions to be strong and credible, the rule of law must be in effect. There must be a clear separation of state powers, and these must function with respect for the rights of citizens and in line with the principles of equality and transparency.

Concern about this issue has been manifest in the actions of the OAS General Secretariat, which has developed a series of measures and programs to strengthen the rule of law in the Americas and in particular the systems that administer justice.

**LEGAL COOPERATION AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE**

In support of the regular meetings of the region’s justice ministers, the OAS General Secretariat has put in place a secure e-mail network to facilitate cooperation among all the member states in criminal matters and extradition. The pilot phase of a similar network is now underway for national authorities to provide mutual assistance in such sensitive areas as family and children’s issues, including adoption, the return of children, and child support. Similar cooperation efforts are underway to combat cyber crime, a new and growing threat to all the states.

The OAS has also been working with member states at the domestic level to improve access to justice for some of the most remote and economically disadvantaged segments of the population. The Inter-American Program for Judicial Facilitators, now in place in three countries, has enabled people in rural areas to have access to prompt and effect solutions to everyday conflicts. A new effort aims to provide access to justice in urban settings with the greatest needs, through a pilot program begun in conjunction with public universities in two countries.

**INTER-AMERICAN TREATIES AND NEW CHALLENGES**

The OAS General Secretariat works to ensure effective implementation of the legal commitments the member states have made through inter-American treaties. For example, in the case of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption, the treaty’s Follow-Up Mechanism (called MESICIC for its acronym in Spanish) has been strengthened through its reports, recommendations, national action plans, and well-attended seminars geared toward outreach and implementation. The MESICIC has led to the adoption of national standards and international measures to better combat corruption and recoup assets acquired unlawfully. The General Secretariat also advances legal standards on other matters of great political and social importance, including the rights of indigenous peoples and the need to combat all forms of discrimination. In addition, it has worked with member states to develop standards on new issues such as legal protections needed for consumers who conduct international business online, or new types of guarantees required in trade today.
The notion of multidimensional security emphasizes that human beings should be free from want and free from fear. It focuses on the security of people, not of the state.

The concept of multidimensional security espoused by the OAS member states grew out of their commitment to democracy and the defeat of authoritarianism in the region. At the Special Conference on Security, held in Mexico City in October 2003, the states adopted the Declaration on Security in the Americas, outlining a “multidimensional” approach that takes into account both traditional and new threats, concerns, and challenges. As democratic states, they said, “we reaffirm that the basis and purpose of security is the protection of human beings.... Conditions for human security are improved through full respect for people’s dignity, human rights, and fundamental freedoms, as well as the promotion of social and economic development, social inclusion, and education and the fight against poverty, disease, and hunger.”

During the 2005-2010 period, the OAS General Secretariat took steps to reflect the new mandates in this area.

**CREATION OF THE SECRETARIAT FOR MULTIDIMENSIONAL SECURITY**

In 2005, the OAS General Secretariat established the Secretariat for Multidimensional Security with a structure designed to implement the new concept of security within the OAS. This Secretariat has organized its activities around some of the threats defined in the Declaration on Security in the Americas: terrorism, transnational organized crime, the global drug problem, asset laundering, illicit trafficking in weapons, and the connections among all of these. The Secretariat currently incorporates the Department of Public Security, the Executive Secretariat of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission, and the Executive Secretariat of the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism. The Secretariat’s projects and activities have enabled the OAS to take a leadership role in promoting humane treatment for members of youth gangs, through the exchange of information among the police of different countries. The OAS has also taken the lead in promoting police training programs and workshops for judiciary staff on reforms designed to address new types of crime.

Within the framework of the new concept of multidimensional security and the resulting administrative structure developed by the General Secretariat, in 2006 the statutes of the Inter-American Defense Board were reformed to make this an OAS entity. Along similar lines, the OAS General Secretariat serves as Technical Secretariat of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials (CIFTA); the Hemispheric Plan of Action against Transnational Organized Crime; and the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) and its Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM). It also administers the Program for Comprehensive Action against Antipersonnel Mines (AICMA).

The Secretariat for Multidimensional Security also serves as...
COORDINATION ON PUBLIC SECURITY

The First Meeting of Ministers responsible for Public Security in the Americas (a forum known by its Spanish acronym MISPA I) took place in October 2008, in Mexico City. The following year, the Dominican Republic hosted the Second Meeting of Ministers responsible for Public Security in the Americas (MISPA II), in Santo Domingo. In this context, a framework for permanent discussion and agreement was established, which allows the member states to identify the root causes of crime and violence in the region, develop points of consensus, and coordinate actions to confront the problem.

HEMISPHERIC COOPERATION AGAINST ILLEGAL DRUGS

In its role as the hemisphere’s forum to address the global problem of drug abuse and drug trafficking, the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), has accomplished the promotion and consolidation of the recommendations developed through the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM). CICAD implements projects and programs in the field of prevention, treatment and control of illicit drugs. Through their participation in the MEM, the member states present themselves to a peer evaluation to improve their efforts on the issue of consumption, illicit production and trafficking of drugs, recognizing the problem as a shared responsibility.

The MEM has promoted increasingly multilateral cooperation in this area, receiving worldwide recognition as well. In 2009, CICAD presented the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs with a report on the region’s progress toward meeting 10-year goals set by the United Nations in 1998. This document was the only regional focused assessment considered at that forum, demonstrating the leadership of the Americas in dealing with the drug problem.

A TACTICAL EffORT AGAINST TERRORISM

The incorporation of the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (CICTE) into the Secretariat for Multidimensional Security has contributed to an understanding of terrorism within the framework and perspective of multidimensional security. Under this concept, terrorism—whatever its forms or manifestations, its origins or motivations—has no justification whatsoever and constitutes a grave threat to human rights and democratic institutions and values. Against this backdrop, the OAS has taken a technical approach to addressing terrorism-related issues; this includes conducting extensive training throughout the region in such areas as maritime and port security, the detection of fraudulent documents, and the creation of response teams to handle incidents involving cyber crime.

In addition, prosecutors, judges, lawmakers, law enforcement personnel, and others in the region have participated in courses on counter-terrorism legislation and how to combat the financing of terrorism. Through such activities, the OAS has promoted significant cooperation around the hemisphere to prevent, combat, and eliminate this threat within a framework of respect for international law and state sovereignty.

TOWARD A REGION FREE OF LANDMINES

Every year, antipersonnel landmines cause deaths or physical injuries, and the majority of victims are civilians. To help eliminate this scourge, the OAS created the Program for Comprehensive Action against Antipersonnel Landmines (AICMA). This program assists member states in developing national programs to help recover citizens’ previous way of life and restore their confidence; reduce the threat and danger posed by explosive artifacts and landmines; and recover the use of land for productive activities. This is the only program of this kind operating in the region today. Culminating years of demining operations in Central America, it has now completed about 99 percent of the activity in Nicaragua, under the national plan for removing landmines. In Colombia, it has cleared landmines from 18 areas, as well as from 29 of the 34 minefields on military installations. It has also cleared 8 minefields along the border between Ecuador and Peru.

AICMA activities focus not only on the removal of landmines; it has also conducted education campaigns in schools and communities about the risks of landmines and other explosives, raising awareness among more than half a million people in Colombia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and Peru. It has also worked with landmine survivors in those countries to provide physical rehabilitation and psychological services and to reintegrate hundreds of survivors into productive jobs.
Progress in the area of democracy and governance cannot be sustained unless citizens have the social and economic conditions to be able to realize their hopes for the future.

In the last five years, the OAS has intensified its action in the social arena, promoting greater equality of opportunity with the participation of all sectors of society. It has promoted cooperation to foster integral development and combat extreme poverty in the region, and has helped member states design and implement national strategies for development.

In this task, the General Secretariat has focused its attention on developing human capacity, strengthening institutions, and implementing sound public policies, particularly in the areas of education, employment, social development, culture, trade, science and technology, competitiveness, tourism, energy, and sustainable development and the environment.

A DYNAMIC SOCIAL PROTECTION NETWORK

Responding to a mandate from the Fifth Summit of the Americas, in September 2009 the OAS launched the Inter-American Social Protection Network. This effort brings together governments and representatives of civil society, academia, and the private sector to promote the exchange of information and experiences on effective policies to address the problem of poverty. This initiative, which is particularly relevant given the current global economic crisis, will build on innovative anti-poverty strategies developed in recent years in Latin America and the Caribbean. These include conditional cash transfer programs, which seek to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty by providing incentives for such steps as helping children succeed in school or getting regular health check-ups for the family. Since 2007, the OAS has coordinated a cooperation program in which seven Caribbean countries have worked with Chile’s Programa Puente (Bridge Program) to develop new strategies for social protection. This type of exchange will become more common as the Inter-American Social Protection Network mobilizes resources and provides training and technical assistance to agencies and institutions throughout the region, seeking synergies with other development organizations committed to social protection.

ENERGY SECURITY

Throughout the last five years, the OAS has intensified its activities to promote energy security, reduce the impact of volatile fluctuations in fuel prices, and promote low-carbon technologies. Through the Sustainable Energy Partnership for the Americas, the OAS supports the development and use of diverse, reliable, and affordable sources of energy, facilitating access to experts in...
the region and fostering greater interaction between the public and private sectors.

The OAS also provides technical and financial assistance to member states that seek alternative energy sources. For example, through the Caribbean Solar Finance Program, it facilitates access to solar-powered hot water systems in Grenada. In Guatemala, meanwhile, it is implementing a project to bring solar-generated electricity to two isolated villages and set up two telecenters to give the communities Internet access.

The OAS is also providing support for the implementation of the U.S.-Brazil agreement on sustainable biofuels, which involves a number of countries in the region.

**MANAGEMENT OF WATER RESOURCES**

More than 70 major river basins cross national boundaries in the Americas. The OAS implements programs designed to promote the integrated management of these valuable freshwater resources, with funding support from such partners as the United Nations Environment Programme, the World Bank, and the Global Environment Facility.

Projects include supporting efforts by Argentina and Bolivia to reverse environmental degradation in the Bermejo River Basin; assisting Costa Rica and Nicaragua in both conservation and development in the San Juan River Basin and coastal areas; and helping four South American countries develop plans for the sustainable use of the Guaraní Aquifer System, to name just a few. The OAS helps institutions develop the capacity they need in this field and supports the development of effective laws and regulations.

**SCHOLARSHIPS ACROSS THE AMERICAS**

The General Secretariat undertook a thorough review and restructuring of its Scholarships and Training Program, which today functions efficiently and transparently, providing opportunities for academic scholarships, training for professional development, and low-cost educational loans for students around the Americas. Today the program is more cost-effective than in the past and as a result can offer more opportunities for students.

One of the most important reforms in the past few years has been the creation of partnerships with a wide range of universities; this now makes it possible for OAS scholarships to be used by students throughout the region at academic institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean.

**A COMMITMENT TO YOUTH**

The Summit of the Americas process has given impetus to the importance of fostering entrepreneurship, leadership, and innovation among young people as a path to create employment, combat poverty, and promote integral development. The OAS General Secretariat has responded to this challenge through the Young Americas Business Trust (YABT). With direct support from the OAS and other donors from the public and private sectors, YABT works with the most vulnerable sectors of the population, including young migrants, indigenous people, women, and residents of rural communities. It promotes youth participation and economic and local development through the creation of new businesses, and has made it possible for thousands of young people to receive training in entrepreneurship.

Finally, the Young Americas Business Trust has consolidated a cooperation network made up of hundreds of organizations that work with young entrepreneurs in the region.

**HELP FOR THOSE IN NEED**

In the last five years, the OAS Trust for the Americas has opened doors for greater participation of the private sector in meeting OAS goals. This has included an important partnership with Microsoft, which has led to the creation of more than 80 centers for persons with disabilities and at-risk youth in more than 20 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In addition, hundreds of nongovernmental organizations in 15 countries have received technical assistance and training in the promotion of human rights and democracy. Through its POETA Program—the acronym stands for Partnership in Opportunities for Employment through Technology in the Americas—in the last five years the Trust has trained some 150,000 persons with disabilities. It also has a program to promote freedom of expression, which has provided training to more than 1,000 journalists in investigative reporting and transparency, and supported the adoption of access-to-information laws in Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua.
In the last five years, the OAS has developed an organizational strategy that has brought disciplined, transparent management and provided greater accountability to member states and voluntary donors.

While the last five years have seen only nominal increases in member states’ obligatory contributions, voluntary donations to fund OAS activities have increased substantially during this period. This increase is due to a renewed confidence in the General Secretariat’s capacity to manage resources, as a result of profound changes implemented in terms of management, transparency, and accountability.

These changes, which have produced a new structure closely tied to the budget and institutional mission, enable a high degree of technical efficiency in the management of resources. As a result of that same oversight and transparency, as well as a closer link to the Organization’s mission, projects carried out by the General Secretariat can now be shaped more directly by the political priorities established by the member states, often at the highest level.

**A RENEWAL OF CONFIDENCE**

The renewed confidence in how the OAS is being managed is evidenced most clearly in the member states’ fulfillment of their financial obligations. For the first time in many years, all contributors are paying their dues, and with only one exception, they have also covered their arrears. For the management of voluntary contributions, or specific funds, the OAS has set up centralized funds with some of the principal donors, thus ensuring transparency, uniformity in project management, and consistency between the institution’s objectives and how these are implemented.

The rebuilding of donor confidence has led to an increase in specific funds; these now account for a sum equivalent to that of the dues the member states are obligated to pay, or the regular fund.

**RESPONSIBILITY AT A TIME OF AUSTERITY**

The activities of the General Secretariat have had to be carried out under particularly rigorous conditions, due to the budgetary limitations that have affected the OAS. In fact, the General Secretariat’s Regular Fund Program-Budget has not substantially changed in more than ten years, even though the demand for services that it funds has grown significantly during the same period. As a result, the General Secretariat has had to increase austerity measures in its operations so as to not affect the
continuity of the Organization’s activities.

It has been able to maintain its operations intact by applying significant measures to increase staff efficiency, modernize accounting standards and procedures, generate additional income from rent, reduce energy consumption and the use of office supplies, achieve greater efficiency in information and communications systems, streamline the purchasing system, and implement cost savings in holding conferences and meetings.

**PROJECT PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT**

The development of budget proposals is now based on identifying, classifying, and paying for the operational objectives of the entire General Secretariat and other OAS bodies, identifying the concrete results each sub-program expects to achieve with the resources assigned to it. This system facilitates accountability and is open for examination upon the request of member states, external donors, and any responsible person or institution that asks to see it. In terms of managing projects and programs, new monitoring and evaluation tools added over the last few years have enabled closer follow-up of projects being implemented.

**TRANSPARENCY OF INCOME AND EXPENSES**

Today all sources of income are linked to a central management system that allows for the uniform management of all resources and for the reporting of periodic, standardized information across different cost categories such as contracts, travel, buildings, and other expenses.

These new reports reflect not only the reality of the numbers but also the political context that generated them, providing a better understanding of the goals for which the funds are being used.
ACCOUNTABILITY LINKED TO MANDATES

The most ambitious organizational goal being pursued in the last few years has been the development of a mandate-based accountability system, which promises to link results and resources (budgeted and executed) to the mandates assigned by the Organization’s political bodies and thus to enable a more effective response to the priorities established by the member states. Thanks to this capability, it will be possible to ascertain not only where an expense is allocated, but also to what extent it responds to the mandates of the member states.

To this end, the OAS has begun a process of profound organizational change that will make it possible to align, in a single strategy, work goals identified by staff members, the objectives of their programs, the resources allotted to carry them out, the political decisions on which they are based, and the respective mandates from the OAS political bodies.

A NEW INSTITUTIONAL IMAGE

In 2008, the 60th anniversary of the OAS Charter, the General Secretariat took the opportunity to re-examine and begin to revamp the Organization’s institutional image. For the first time in 60 years, a system of institutional identity was developed as a critical outreach tool for the OAS. Part of that strategy involved using new communication technologies and techniques.

The OAS also refurbished its Web site to offer a significant amount of daily information related to the Organization’s activities, and began using social communication tools such as YouTube and Twitter to send out news flashes and communicate directly with key audiences.