

Miami Meeting Report

As instructed on the Inter-American Committee on Sustainable Development in Resolution CIDI/CIDS/Res. 4 (11-0/99), National Focal Points from governments throughout the Americas met in Miami **on December 8 - 10, 1999**, to review and approve the framework and work plan for a new *Inter-American Forum on Environmental Law* (FIDA).

This new Forum was conceived at the 1996 Summit of the Americas for Sustainable Development in Santa Cruz Bolivia as a **hemispheric network of officials and experts in environmental law, enforcement and compliance**, working in coordination with the Organization of American States (OAS) to:

- exchange knowledge and experiences in environmental law;
- serve as a focal point for cooperative efforts to develop and strengthen environmental laws, policies and institutions, and to promote compliance; and
- facilitate training and capacity building in environmental law and its implementation and enforcement.

The commitment to create an environmental law network was supported through subsequent resolutions of political bodies of the Organization of American States, and the OAS Unit for Sustainable Development and Environment has worked together with the OAS Secretariat for Legal Affairs to develop a blueprint for the network through consultation with interested parties.

National Focal Points and representatives of 22 OAS member states were present in Miami to review and approve the proposed structure and work plan for FIDA.¹ The Focal Points met over the course of three days and examined the Bolivia Summit commitment, reviewed subsequent OAS resolutions and working documents, and studied the input received during the OAS/USDE consultation process. The Focal Points discussed priorities for environmental law and policy development in the region in light of their own national experiences, and considered the comparative advantage of meeting these priorities through a regional forum for cooperative action.

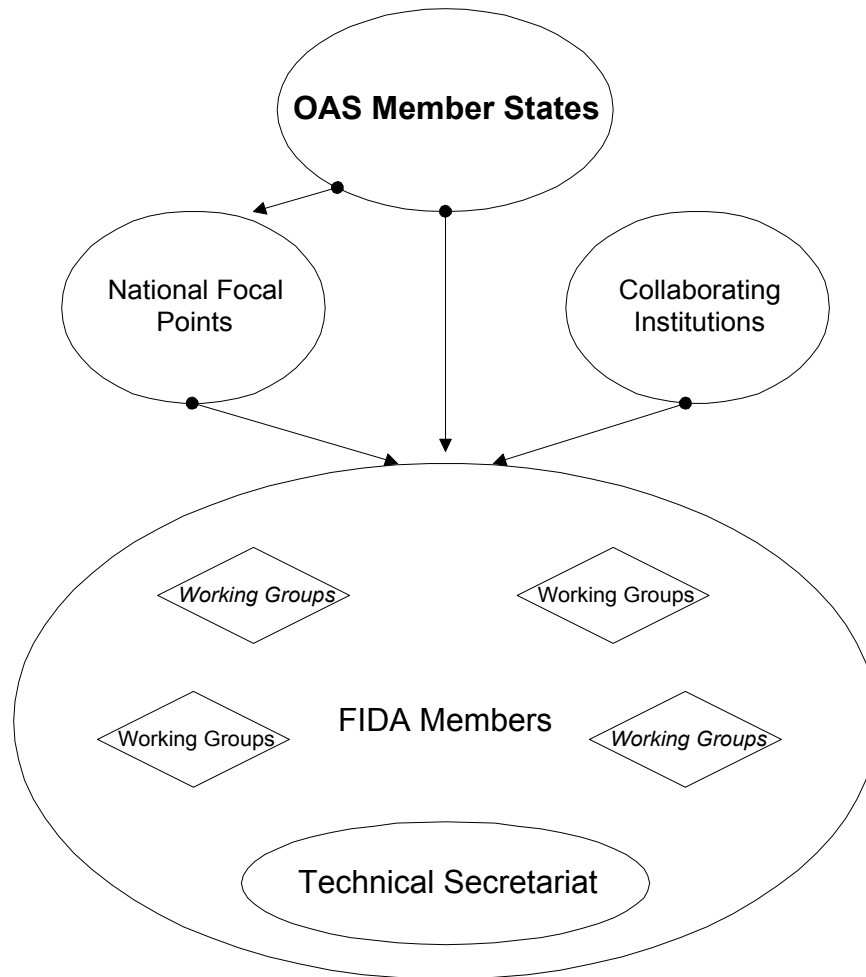
FIDA Structure

The FIDA National Focal Points approved a structure for the network that calls for participation by a wide range of experts and officials concerned with environmental law and policy, including lawyers and other professionals, from the government, private and non-profit sectors. The work of FIDA will be guided by OAS member states through their national focal points and executed through working groups of experts and officials focused on issues of priority at a regional and sub-regional level. FIDA will cooperate with and seek to complement efforts of existing networks and organizations active in environmental law and policy and will focus its work through two biennial themes that reflect the priorities of OAS member states. A small technical secretariat will operate out of the OAS/USDE in coordination with the Secretariat for Legal

¹ A complete list of participants is attached at pages ___.

Affairs to coordinate network communications and support the implementation of the biennial work plan.

The structure of FIDA can be represented as follows:



FIDA Biennial Themes

The National Focal Points selected two themes for FIDA's initial biennial work plan:

- Water Policy
- Trade, Investment and the Environment

The network's specific activities within these two thematic areas will follow a matrix approach, and working groups will be formed in four areas of work recognizing that success in each area of work will depend upon five strategic approaches.

The four areas of work are:

1. Environmental Liability
2. Economic and regulatory instruments for environmental management
3. Clean production (and eco-certification)
4. Strengthening judicial institutions and jurisprudence

The five strategic approaches are:

1. Education
2. Public Participation
3. Enforcement
4. Development of National Laws
5. Alternative Dispute Resolution

The FIDA work plan matrix can best be represented as follows:

Areas of Work →	A) Environmental liability	B) Economic and regulatory instruments for environmental management	C) Clean Production (& eco-certification)	D) Strengthening judicial institutions and jurisprudence
Strategic Approaches ↓				
Education				
Public Participation				
Enforcement				
Development of National Laws				
Alternative Dispute Resolution				

FIDA National Focal Points met in small groups in Miami to discuss specific national concerns and regional priorities for action in each of the four areas of work. The reports of these small groups are provided at pages __. In addition, National Focal Points were asked to identify priority actions in each area of work. Their input is described at pages __.

Naming the Inter-American Forum on Environmental Law

OAS/USDE proposed to name the new network the *Inter-American Forum on Environmental Law* (referred to by its Spanish acronym FIDA) because the creation of an informal forum for dialogue, information exchange and mutual support in the development and strengthening of environmental laws and their implementation and enforcement most closely responds to the

scope of the commitment made at the Bolivia Summit. **A delegate at the meeting of Focal Points inquired if there was agreement on naming the new network FIDA. No opposing views were expressed and to give more time for consideration on the issue,** Focal Points were asked to report to the USDE with any concerns or alternative titles for the new network by January 15, 2000. **But as on that date no alternative titles were proposed.**

Next Steps

With the approval of a structure and initial two-year action plan, the OAS/USDE has been tasked with raising the necessary funds and giving life to FIDA over the next two years. Participants discussed the importance of continuing to engage member states through the National Focal Points and through Permanent Missions to the OAS, and this will be accomplished through the FIDA secretariat. The success of the new network as a support for member states in the development and strengthening of environmental laws and institutions will depend on the continued commitment and guidance of member states through their Permanent Missions, National Focal Points and relevant national institutions.