

PERMANENT COUNCIL OF THE
ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES

COMMITTEE ON JURIDICAL AND POLITICAL AFFAIRS

OEA/Ser.G
CP/CAJP/SA.724/22
5 April 2022
Original: Spanish

Summary of the CAJP virtual meeting entitled “Tenth special meeting on autonomous official public defense as a guarantee of access to justice for women in vulnerable situations,” held on March 31, 2022^{1/}

The “Tenth special meeting on autonomous official public defense as a guarantee of access to justice for women in vulnerable situations” was presided over by Ambassador María del Carmen Roquebert León, Permanent Representative of Panama, and Mr. Carlos Fernandes, Alternative Representative of Brazil to the OAS, Chair and Vice Chair, respectively, of the Committee on Juridical and Political Affairs (CAJP). It was called to order at 2:36 p.m.

The statutory quorum was established with the presence of representatives of Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Lucia, United States, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

The audio recording of the meeting may be obtained at the following link:
http://scm.oas.org/audios/2022/DCMM/CAJP-3631_03-31-2022.mp3

Introduction

Resolution AG/RES. 2976 (LI-O/21) “Promotion and Protection of Human Rights,” adopted by the General Assembly in November 2021, requested the Permanent Council to instruct the Committee on Juridical and Political Affairs (CAJP) to include in its plan of action the following issue covered by this resolution, prior to the fifty-second regular session of the General Assembly with a view to promoting the sharing of experiences and best practices: “Autonomous official public defenders as a guarantee of access to justice for women in vulnerable situations.”

Furthermore, section i. of said resolution requested the Permanent Council to hold “in the first quarter of 2022, a tenth special meeting of the CAJP on best practices employed by each official public defense institution in the region for ensuring access to justice for women in vulnerable situations in defense of their human rights, to be attended by the member states and their respective official public defender institutions that provide legal aid, members of the AIDDEF, and experts from the academic community, civil society, and international organizations.”

The Agenda for this special meeting was approved by the CAJP at its regular meeting on February 10, 2022: [CP/CAJP 3631/22 rev. 9](#).

1. The CAJP meeting summaries are available on the following page (please select year and language):
[OAS :: Summaries of Meetings : Committee on Juridical and Political Affairs: Permanent Council \(oas.org\)](#)

1. Opening remarks

- Remarks by of the Chair of the Committee on Juridical and Political Affairs, Ambassador María del Carmen Roquebert, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Panama to the OAS - [Link](#)
- Remarks by Dr. Dante Negro, Director of the Department of International Law, OAS General Secretariat - [Link](#)

The Chair noted with interest the report given by the Director of the Department of International Law (DIL), singling out from it the following:

- the cooperation activities the DIL had been pursuing with the AIDEF,
- the joint AIDEF-ASADIP (American Association of Private International Law) project that DIL had been promoting; and
- DIL legal support for model laws on which the CIM is working, with a view to promoting legal frameworks for the autonomy and economic empowerment of women.

Adding that these were all very useful and important initiatives, she urged the Department of International Law to continue working on them.

2. Follow-up on the mandate from resolution AG/RES. 2976 (LI-O/21) “Promotion and Protection of Human Rights”: Best practices employed by each official public defender institution in the region for ensuring access to justice for women in vulnerable situations in defense of their human rights

Presentations:

- Inter-American Association of Public Defender Offices (AIDEF)
 - Dr. Stella Maris Martínez, Chief Public Defender of Argentina, in her capacity as AIDEF General Coordinator - [Link](#)
 - Dr. Carlos Mora Jano, National Public Defender of Chile and AIDEF Secretary General - [Link to Remarks](#) - [Link to Presentation](#)
- Presentations by Public Defenders of the Region
 - Costa Rica: Mr. Juan Carlos Pérez Murillo, Director of Public Defense of Costa Rica - [Link to Remarks](#) - [Link to Presentation](#)
 - Ecuador: Doctor Ángel Torres Machuca, Public Defender General of Ecuador - [Link](#)

- Guatemala:
 - Ms. Miriam Catarina Roquel Chávez, Assistant Prosecutor 1, Office of the Public Prosecutor for Human Rights (PDH) of Guatemala
 - Ms. Arely López Loarca, Guatemala Institute of Public Criminal Defense (IDPP)
- Mexico: Prof. Netzaí Sandoval Ballesteros, Head of the Federal Institute of Public Defenders of Mexico – [Link to Presentation](#)
- Brazil: Dr. Jair Soares Júnior, Brazilian Deputy Federal Public Defender-General - [Link](#)
- Argentina: Dr. Adolfo Sánchez Alegre, Vice President of the Civil Association of the Public Defense of the Argentine Republic (ADePRA)
- Paraguay: Dr. María Lorena Segovia Azucas, Defender General, Ministry of Public Defense of Paraguay

3. Discussion among member states

At this point, the Chair of the Committee had to leave the meeting and the Vice Chair of the Committee took over.

- Statements by member states. To date, the Secretariat has received the copies of statements from the following delegations:
 - [Chile](#)
 - [Dominican Republic](#)
 - [El Salvador](#)
 - [Peru](#)

The delegations of Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Haiti, and Mexico also took the floor.^{2/}

In concluding this agenda item, the Vice Chair announced that the Committee had taken note of the presentations made by the Department of International Law, the AIDEF officials, the public defenders, and other high-ranking officials who had joined the meeting from capitals; as well as the statements made by the OAS member state delegations as part of the exchange or dialogue that they held among themselves.

4. Closing Remarks by the Vice Chair

To conclude, I would like to thank you for the excellent presentations we received from the panelists as well as the excellent statements we heard from the member states.

2. Delegations are kindly asked to email the Secretary of this Committee copies of their statements delivered during the CAJP meetings, at aristizabal@oas.org.

I would also like to mention an aspect that I believe demands more attention from us - namely, the situation of women who run afoul of criminal law, especially when they are incarcerated. This is because, tragically, any judicial decision that affects them directly affects their families as well, given that we can say with some measure of confidence that for many - if not most - families, they are the driving force.

And this deeply disturbs me because, when the children of women who have run afoul of the law or get incarcerated are themselves minors, they are at that delicate point in their development at which what is happening around them can lead them to take courses that are destructive and thus increase the risk of multiplying the number of lives without a future.

This is why I encourage everyone here to be more empathetic and to take more concrete steps to support women who are in conflict with the law or who have been incarcerated, as well as their families, so that detention centers may become more sensitive to their vulnerabilities. This would in the end make such detention centers truly places for them to be rehabilitated, and so that their dependents would have more access to social services, education, and other means of building their future, even when their mothers are absent. Otherwise, we as a society are failing them.

5. Announcements

The Vice Chair reminded the delegations that the CAJP would be holding the “Meeting to reflect collectively on the principles of international law on which the inter-American system is founded, as the normative framework that governs the work of the OAS and relations between member states” on April 7. In that connection, he announced that the audio and video testing would be conducted on Monday, April 4, at 10:00 a.m. with panelists who are already registered for the event.

There being no further business to consider, the Vice Chair declared the meeting adjourned at 5:03 p.m.

