

MECHANISM FOR FOLLOW-UP ON THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTER-AMERICAN
CONVENTION AGAINST CORRUPTION

SG/MESICIC/doc.95/04 rev. 3
17 February 2004
Original: Spanish

Fifth Meeting of the Committee of Experts

February 2 to 6, 2004

Washington, D.C.

REPORT ON ACTIVITIES TO DATE BY THE COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS OF THE FOLLOW-UP
MECHANISM FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION AGAINST
CORRUPTION

REPORT ON ACTIVITIES TO DATE BY THE COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS OF THE FOLLOW-UP MECHANISM FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION AGAINST CORRUPTION*

I. BACKGROUND

The Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism for the Implementation of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption, as the organ responsible for that mechanism under the terms of the *Document of Buenos Aires*, has held, since beginning operations in January 2002, five meetings at the headquarters of the Organization of American States in Washington, D.C.,** United States of America. On those occasions it has adopted decisions of different kinds and scopes, in pursuit of the tasks with which it has been charged.

In compliance with Article 3(i) of its *Rules of Procedure and Other Provisions*, this document contains the report of the Committee of Experts to the Conference of States Parties.

II. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Committee of Experts brings together persons from oversight bodies, offices of ethics and development of public office, anticorruption offices, special boards and other organizations. This diversity has made it possible to strengthen the Committee as a solid and serious instrument and it has enriched the review and experiences in each country. Throughout two years of continuous work, essentially on the basis of the information on country progress and the review of special reports from the States Parties, it has been possible to detect those challenges, achievements and obstacles that contribute to preventing and fighting against corruption in our nations.

In light of the foregoing, we understand the far reach of the Declaration of Nuevo Leon, and we consider it a solid reflection of the current political willingness in the Hemisphere to fight corruption.

In this respect, the Committee has been able to confirm, in accordance with each one of these reports and exchanges of experiences, that corruption has a central place on the national agendas. Issues involving corruption are part of the deep undercurrents that have undermined good governance and/or have generated social conflicts that are often times severe. Because of this, experts have displayed great interest in the Declaration of Nuevo Leon.

This Declaration is evidence of the political will that is spearheading and, at the same time, contributing to, the efforts of institutions in all our countries in the task of preventing corruption, improving legislation, building up standards of conduct for public officials, and punishing acts of corruption.

One of the innovative and permanent efforts of each country has been and is the creative and broad incorporation of civil society into anticorruption activities, which provide a citizen-based approach to state anticorruption policies.

* This report was adopted by the Committee of Experts in the plenary session held on, February 6, 2004, within the framework of its Fifth Meeting (February 2 – 6, 2004).

** Those meetings took place on the following dates: the first, on January 14 to 18, 2002; the second, on May 20 to 24, 2002; the third, on February 10 to 13, 2003; the fourth, on July 14 to 18, 2003; and the fifth, on February 2 to 6, 2004.

The report that we are presenting provides a concise summary of the Committee's activities. At the same time, it provides evidence that the Americas want to control and eradicate corruption. We have to increase economic, financial and human resources and disseminate our work further and better; to do this, we hope the Technical Secretariat will have the means to fully conduct its work. This will help each nation to move ahead and address the call of citizens and public opinion to fight against corruption.

III. ACTIVITIES TO DATE

A. ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONING OF THE COMMITTEE

1. Adoption of the Rules of Procedure and Other Provisions:

Bearing in mind the content of the *Document of Buenos Aires*, the Committee adopted, at its first meeting, its *Rules of Procedure and Other Provisions* (Annex I), which regulates key issues relating to its organization and functioning, such as: identifying the functions for which it is responsible; the allocation of powers to its various officers and organs (chair, vice-chair, and secretariat); the way in which it is to adopt its decisions; the procedures to be followed for selecting the Convention provisions to be studied in an analysis round and for carrying out that analysis; how the follow-up of the adopted measures is to be carried out; civil society participation; encouraging and facilitating cooperation among states parties; and the enforcement and modification of the *Rules of Procedure*.

In the first and third meetings of the Committee the work programs for 2002, 2003 and 2004 were adopted, respectively. (Annexes II, III and IV).

2. Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee:

At the start of its first meeting, the Committee elected the lead experts of Nicaragua and the United States of America, Haydée Acosta and Richard Werksman, to serve as its interim chair and vice-chair, respectively.

After adopting the *Rules of Procedure and Other Provisions* and in compliance therewith, the Committee elected the lead expert of the Republic of Uruguay, Carlos Balsa D'Agosto, to the position of chair for a one-year period.

At its second meeting, the Committee elected the lead expert from the Dominican Republic, Faustino Collado, to serve as its vice-chair for a one-year period.

At its third meeting, the Committee reelected the lead expert from the Republic of Uruguay, Carlos Balsa D'Agosto, as its chair for the second annual period.

At its fifth meeting, the Committee elected the lead expert from Bolivia, Guadalupe Cajias, and the lead expert from Jamaica, Michael Hylton, to serve as its chair and vice-chair for a one-year period.

3. Dissemination over the Internet of public information about the Committee, in compliance with the *Document of Buenos Aires* and the *Rules of Procedure*:

Following the guidelines of the *Document of Buenos Aires* and in compliance with the terms of its *Rules of Procedure and Other Provisions*, shortly after adopting its first decisions the Committee began the corresponding dissemination activities, which it will continue to pursue on a permanent basis. The webpage of the follow-up mechanism can be seen on the Internet at the following address: <<http://www.oas.org/juridico/english/followup.htm>>.

That page provides the following information: background, such as the Summits of the Americas and OAS resolutions that have addressed issues related to combating corruption; the text of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption; the structure of the follow-up mechanism; the *Rules of Procedure and Other Provisions* of the Committee of Experts; and documents dealing with the first round of analysis, such as the analysis methodology, the structure of the country reports, the questionnaire, the sequence in which information from states parties is to be analyzed, the make-up of the analysis subgroups, the national laws applicable to the provisions selected for analysis, and the matters of collective interest addressed by the Committee.

The webpage also contains the replies to the questionnaire furnished by those countries that have authorized the publication of their responses (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, United States and Uruguay); the updates made to those replies; the reports on the states parties that have been analyzed and that have authorized the publication thereof; the national reports on progress made with the implementation of the Convention; and documents relating to participation by civil society in the Committee's activities. Annex V includes copies of the main pages to be found on the Mechanism's website.

For increased ease of access to information, new items relating to the Committee are highlighted as such on the page.

B. START OF THE FIRST ROUND OF REVIEW

In accordance with the *Document of Buenos Aires* and the *Rules of Procedure and Other Provisions*, the Committee embarked on the activities necessary to pursue the First Round of review, specifically:

1. Selection of the Convention provisions to be analyzed during the first round:

The Committee selected, at its First Meeting, the following provisions of the Convention:

- Article III, paragraphs 1, 2, 4, 9, and 11, which deal with preventive measures regarding standards of conduct for the correct, honorable, and proper fulfillment of public functions; mechanisms for enforcing compliance with those standards of conduct; systems for registering the income, assets, and liabilities of persons who perform public functions; oversight bodies with a view to implementing modern mechanisms for preventing, detecting, punishing, and eradicating corrupt acts; and mechanisms to encourage participation by civil society and nongovernmental organizations in efforts to prevent corruption.
- Article XIV, which deals with mutual assistance and technical cooperation among states parties on matters addressed by the Convention.

- Article XVIII, which deals with the appointment of Central Authorities by states parties, for the purpose of making and receiving the requests for mutual assistance and technical cooperation referred to in the Convention.

2. Adoption of an impartial method for setting the dates for reviewing the information on each state party:

At its second meeting, the Committee determined the order or sequence for analyzing the information corresponding to all the states parties involved in the First Round, in accordance with the following procedure:

- First, the states parties that volunteered were included, in that order, namely: Argentina, Paraguay, Colombia, Nicaragua, Uruguay, Panama, Ecuador, and Chile.
- Then, the remaining states parties belonging to the Follow-up Mechanism were included, in the chronological order of their ratification of the Convention.

As a result of this, the corresponding list was drawn up, containing the order in which the states parties are to be analyzed; this list is attached hereto (Annex VI), and it can also be consulted on the Follow-up Mechanism's webpage.

3. Adoption of an review methodology, questionnaire, and structure for the country reports:

At its Second Meeting, the Committee adopted the "Methodology for the review of the implementation of the provisions of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption selected within the framework of the First Round" (Annex VII); the "Questionnaire on provisions selected by the committee of experts for review within the framework of the First Round" (Annex VIII); and the "Format for the country reports that will be prepared in the framework of the first round" (Annex IX); these documents can also be found on the Follow-up Mechanism's webpage.

4. Definition of the review subgroups:

At its second meeting, in compliance with the *Document of Buenos Aires* and Article 3(f) of the *Rules of Procedure and Other Provisions*, the Committee defined the membership of the preliminary analysis subgroups, each one comprising two lead experts from different countries, to be responsible for analyzing the implementation of the selected provisions in the states parties belonging to the Mechanism as of the date of that meeting, for which purpose it proceed randomly, bearing in mind previously defined rules applicable to all States Parties.

With this procedure, the preliminary analysis subgroups were selected for Brazil, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Suriname at the third meeting and the corresponding ones for Belize and Guyana, at the fifth meeting, respectively.

The list of the preliminary review subgroups is attached hereto (Annex X) and can also be consulted on the Mechanism's webpage.

5. Replies to the questionnaire by all the states parties belonging to the Follow-up Mechanism and publication in the terms agreed on by the Committee:

The 22 states parties that, as of the date of the Committee's second meeting, were members of the Follow-up Mechanism duly conveyed to the OAS General Secretariat their responses to the "Questionnaire on provisions selected by the Committee of Experts for analysis within the framework of the First Round" on August 31, 2002

For the five states that adhered to the Convention and joined the Mechanism between the second and third meetings (Brazil, Grenada, Guyana, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Suriname), the third meeting decided to set May 30, 2003, as the deadline for them to reply to the questionnaire.

In addition, the questionnaire replies of those states parties that, to date, have so requested have also been published on the Mechanism's webpage.

6. Drafting, analysis and adoption of the first eight country reports:

In accordance with procedure, the Committee, at the third meeting, following a meeting between the lead experts from the corresponding analysis subgroups in attendance and the representatives of the reviewed states parties, pursuant to Article 24 of the *Rules of Procedure and Other Provisions* and in full compliance with the requirements set forth in Article 25 of the *Rules of Procedure*, the Committee of Experts adopted the country report for Argentina (Annex XI) and agreed that the reports on Paraguay, Colombia, and Nicaragua would be dealt with at its next meeting; this duly took place at the fourth meeting, during which the reports on those three countries (Annexes XII, XIII, and XIV, respectively) were adopted.

At its fifth meeting, after complying with the aforesaid regulatory steps, the Committee of Experts adopted the country reports for Uruguay, Panama, Ecuador, and Chile (Annexes XV, XVI, XVII, and XVIII, respectively).

7. Evaluations and Publication of Reports

A. RELEVANT ASPECTS

At the date of the present report, eight countries have been evaluated: Argentina, Paraguay, Colombia, Nicaragua, Uruguay, Panama, Ecuador, and Chile.

As a general conclusion, the Committee of Experts observes and recognizes the efforts of the States Parties members of the Convention to implement, in their respective countries, the legal statutes aimed at preventing and combating corruption according to the terms of the Inter-American Convention itself.

The objectives of the Convention are already part of the public policies applied by our governments. There is awareness that this phenomenon of corruption should be incessantly combated.

The progress made through developing a culture of combating corruption, is one of the most noteworthy achievements of the Inter-American Convention.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

The countries that were reviewed display a different degree of progress in the different topics that were the target of the review. Among the various recommendations the more common were:

- **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**
 - Develop legal provisions in order to prevent and punish violations in this area during public service.
 - Increase the prohibition through these legal provisions once the public servant has departed from public service, for a determined period of time.
- **USE OF PUBLIC RESOURCES**
 - Strengthen accountability procedures.
 - Legal provisions and systems to ensure the conservation and efficient use of public resources.
- **WHISTLE-BLOWING BY PUBLIC SERVANTS**
 - Facilitate the presentation of these reports.
 - Protect whistle-blowers.
 - Repeal those measures that hamper the presentation of complaints and reports.
- **DECLARATION OF ASSETS**
 - Increase coverage given to those obliged to present this type of declaration.
 - Adequate follow-up of the evaluation of the assets of a public servants to detect illicit conduct.
 - Regulate with greater precision the time-limits for submitting them and their contents.
- **OVERSIGHT BODIES**
 - Strengthen their technical and operative autonomy.
 - Coordinate actions among the various Institutions that are oversight bodies.
- **PARTICIPATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY**
 - Develop or improve mechanisms for access to government information and guarantee the exercise of this right.
 - Promote citizen participation in the taking and adoption of government decisions.
- **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND COOPERATION**
 - Promote cooperation between States Parties and other international institutions to learn about the most effective methods to prevent, detect, and punish acts of corruption, and that training be provided for the authorities having jurisdiction in this area.

- **CENTRAL AUTHORITIES FOR INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE AND COOPERATION**

- Officially formalize, if required, the corresponding central authority

C. PUBLICATION OF COUNTRY REPORTS

Since, in accordance with Article 25(g) of the *Rules of Procedure and Other Provisions*, Argentina, Paraguay, Colombia, Nicaragua, Panama, and Ecuador***, authorized the publication of the country reports dealing with them that had been adopted by the Committee, the Secretariat proceeded to do so by means of the Follow-up Mechanism's webpage.

D. PROGRESS REPORTS GIVEN DURING THE PLENARY MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

Article 30 of the *Rules of Procedure and Other Provisions* states that at the beginning of each Committee meeting, each one of the States Parties is to report on the measures adopted since the previous meeting in pursuit of implementing the Convention.

In compliance with this, the states parties have given the corresponding reports at the second, third, fourth and fifth meetings of the Committee, as duly recorded in the minutes; those reports have also been published on the Mechanism's webpage.

E. BEGINNING CONSIDERATION OF TOPICS OF COLLECTIVE INTEREST WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE CONVENTION

Article 3(h) of the *Rules of Procedure and Other Provisions* establishes, as one of the functions of the Committee of Experts, the duty to "promote and facilitate co-operation among the States Parties, within the framework of the Convention and in accordance with the *Report of Buenos Aires* and Article 36 of these *Rules*."

In this respect, the Committee proposed, in its first meeting, as the first item of collective interest for its consideration, the question of the preventive measure described in Article III(5) of the Convention for "systems of government hiring and procurement of goods and services that assure the openness, equity and efficiency of such systems."

Bearing in mind the terms of the *Rules of Procedure and Other Provisions*, and in order to facilitate the start of the Committee's consideration of this item of collective interest, the Secretariat prepared a document entitled "*Item of collective interest: Toward a normative framework for preventing corruption in public procurement*" (Annex XIX), which was distributed among the Committee's members at its second meeting.

At the second meeting, the Committee also agreed to include, among the topics of collective interest it was to consider, the question of oversight bodies and the question of the existing technical

*** This listed countries included are those that, as of February 6, 2004, have authorized in writing the publishing of their country reports. However, in accordance with the Committee's decision, this paragraph will be modified if, before the formal presentation of this report to the Conference of States Parties, another country or countries authorize the publishing of its country report, respectively.

cooperation programs and projects, dealing with the areas referred to in the Convention, with the support of cooperation agencies or international organizations.

At the Committee's fifth meeting, in dealing with the second phase established for dealing with the item of collective interest about "systems of government hiring and procurement of goods and services that assure the openness, equity and efficiency of such systems," presentations on that issue were given by those state party experts who volunteered to do so (Argentina and Nicaragua). Also, a document was presented by the delegation of Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on this subject.

This most recent meeting also began treatment of the topic of collective interest related to "existing technical cooperation programs and projects, dealing with the areas referred to in the Convention, with the support of cooperation agencies or international organizations." In doing so it heard presentations on the matter given by representatives of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the World Bank, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

F. CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION IN THE COMMITTEE'S ACTIVITIES

Following the guidelines set in provision 8 of the *Document of Buenos Aires*, Chapter V (Article 33 to 35) of the *Rules of Procedure and Other Provisions* governs the participation of civil society organizations in the activities of the Committee of Experts. Given their content and scope, and the results already secured through the application of these rules, the mechanism can be safely said to provide civil society organizations with broad possibilities for contributing to its activities.

First of all, Article 33(a) of the *Rules of Procedure and Other Provisions* allows civil society organizations to "*present, through the Secretariat, specific proposals to be considered in the drafting process referred to in Article 18 of these Rules.*" In compliance with this provision, the Committee received, and deemed very positive, the proposals conveyed to it by Transparency International in communications of April 8 and May 10, 2002, entitled "Key elements to be considered in the analysis methodology of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption" and "Comments on the first version of the draft questionnaire and methodology," respectively.

Secondly, Article 33(b) of the *Rules of Procedure and Other Provisions* allows civil society organizations to "*present, through the Secretariat, documents with specific and direct information related to the questions that are referred to in the questionnaire with respect to the implementation, by a State Party under review, of the provisions selected for review within the framework of a round. These documents shall be presented, with a copy in an electronic format, within the same time period given to the State Party in responding to the questionnaire.*"

In observance of this provision, first of all documents sent by the Follow-up Commission on Compliance with the Inter-American Convention against Corruption of the Argentine Republic and by Transparencia por Colombia. These documents were duly distributed to the members of the corresponding preliminary analysis subgroups, to the states parties being analyzed, and to all the other members of the Committee. Since Argentina and Colombia authorized the publication of their responses to the questionnaire and of the related information, the aforesaid documents from civil society organizations have also been published on the Mechanism's webpage, at the following address: <<http://www.oas.org/juridico/spanish/corresp.htm>>. The officers of the Committee also agreed to circulate, among the Committee's members, a document from the Nicaraguan organization Ética y Transparencia received on January 22, 2003.

Subsequently, at its third meeting, the Committee adopted an agreement in which it was decided that the states parties could update their questionnaire replies within a period of one month following the date of the meeting immediately prior to the one at which the respective draft country reports were to be analyzed, and that a similar deadline would also apply for the presentation of documents by civil society organizations in accordance with the terms of Article 33(b) of the *Rules of Procedure and Other Provisions*. In compliance with this decision, documents were received from the national chapters of Transparency International in Uruguay (Uruguay Transparente), Panama, Ecuador (Latin American Corporation for Development, CLD), and Chile (Transparent Chile Corporation, CCT). These documents can also be found on the webpage referred to in the preceding paragraph.

The Committee also decided to hold informal meetings with the aforesaid civil society organizations, in order for them to present their documents, which took place on February 10, 2003 and February 2, 2004.

Thirdly, Article 33(c) of the *Rules of Procedure and Other Provisions* allows civil society organizations to “*present proposal documents related to the collective interest issues that the Committee has included in their annual working plan, in accordance with the provision in Article 36(b) of these Rules. These documents shall be presented, through the Secretariat, with a copy in electronic format, no later than a month before the date of the meeting in which the Committee shall consider these issues.*”

With respect to this third mechanism whereby civil society organizations can participate in the Committee’s activities, Article 35 of the *Rules of Procedure* provides that “*The Committee may invite or accept the request from civil society organizations, within the framework of its meetings, to give a verbal presentation of the documents they presented in accordance with the provision in Article 33(c) of these Rules.*” It should be noted that the Committee has expressed its wish for civil society organizations to submit their contributions on the selected topics of collective interest.

In the Fifth Meeting of the Committee of Experts, Article 35 of the Rules of Procedure were amended. The new text is as follows:

***“Article 35. Participation of civil society organizations in Committee meetings. The Committee may invite or accept the request from civil society organizations, within the framework of its meetings, to give a verbal presentation of the documents they presented in accordance with the provision in article 33 (c) of these Rules.*”**

The Committee will invite civil society organizations to give verbal presentations, in informal meetings, of the documents they presented in accordance with the provisions in Article 33 (a) and (b) of these Rules.”

Finally, mention should be made of the valuable contribution made by representatives of civil society organizations – specifically, Transparency International Canada and Transparency International for Latin America and the Caribbean – by participating as speakers at the seminar that is mentioned below.

G. COOPERATION WITH OTHER MECHANISMS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

On January 14, 2002, prior to the beginning of the Committee's first meeting and with the support of the Secretariat, a seminar was held in order to learn about the experiences, organization and operations of other international monitoring mechanisms and gather useful decision-making elements and information that the Committee could adopt in its own work, among others, through the Rules of Procedure and Other Provisions. In said seminar, the following mechanism models were considered: the OECD, the Council of Europe GRECO, the GAFI-FATF on the subject of money laundering, and the MEM from CICAD with respect to the drug problem.

Likewise, within the framework of its fifth meeting, a special session was organized in relation with technical cooperation programs or projects of other international organizations in areas related to the Convention, to which representatives from the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

H. MANDATE OF THE DECLARATION OF NUEVO LEON

The Special Summit of the Americas was held in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico, on January 12 and 13, 2004, and considered, in the Declaration of Nuevo Leon, issues related to the Mechanism for Follow-up on the Implementation of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption. The Permanent Representative of Mexico to the Organization of American States, in his capacity as host of the Special Summit, presented to the Committee, the obligations undertaken by the Member States of the OAS to strengthen the Mechanism for Follow-up on the Implementation of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption, as well as of the importance that the actions recommended by the Committee have in the fight against corruption.

In this respect and as a substantive contribution to the strengthening process of the Mechanism, the Committee of Experts presents to the States for their consideration the following:

The Committee appreciates the fact that the Heads of State and Government of the Americas for the attention they have focused on the Mechanism of Follow-up in the Declaration of Nuevo León. We agree that the strengthening of the Mechanism shall be a major step forward for the fight to increase transparency and reduce corruption in the Hemisphere.

We believe that this strengthening involves various aspects of the Mechanism's work and processes.

1. One aspect is to ensure the continuous availability of the financial and human resources that are needed so that the Committee can continue its work efficiently and optimally. Therefore, we request the Conference of the States Parties to the Mechanism to consider the most suitable way for the Committee to receive this support.

Regarding this, we recommend the following:

- a) Ensure a permanent and exclusive Secretariat for the Mechanism. Determine the necessary support in the areas of human and material resources required for the adequate work of the Committee.

- b) Review internal funding sources (regular OAS budget) or external funding sources such as the Inter-American Development Bank or others.
 - c) Have a specialized team of translators and interpreters that support the work of the Committee in a timely manner in the official languages of the OAS.
 - d) Have technological support, during the Committee meetings, for the use of the Experts and for the technical activities of the Committee.
2. Another aspect of strengthening involves the effective implementation, by the States Parties to the Mechanisms, of the recommendations made by the Committee of each country that is reviewed. The Conference can consider various ways of ensuring this implementation. For example:
- a) Ensure that Committee reports are distributed rapidly to staff who are responsible for the implementation of recommendations, and
 - b) Appoint an appropriate high level official who would be responsible for following up on the implementation of the recommendations.
 - c) Establish the adequate mechanisms in order to follow-up on the recommendations during the Committee's meetings.
3. For the strengthening of the Mechanism, the continued participation and presence, to the extent possible, of the experts of all States parties are essential. Therefore, consideration should be given to providing support for their participation in the subgroups and at meetings of the Committee, as well as promote training, if necessary, to the experts of the States Parties.
4. Strengthening of the Mechanism also suggests that the Committee should conclude the first round of review in a shorter period, which is currently estimated to be in the year 2006. The number of Committee meetings per year would probably have to be increased from two to three or the number of reports at each meeting increased to more than four. The Committee is considering if this speeding up would be feasible without requiring excessive efforts by the Secretariat or the States Parties, and maintain the quality of the country reports. Therefore, the Committee is requesting instructions from the Conference on this subject.
5. Increasing publicity about the Committee's work is yet another way to strengthen the Mechanism. Consequently, the Committee requests the Conference to ensure that each State Party will agree to:
- a) Permit the Secretariat to put on the OAS webpage both the answer to the questionnaire and its updates and the Committee's final country report.
 - b) Publicize the report among civil society and the media as deemed suitable.

Committee members pledge to directly provide their governments with other proposals considered appropriate to consolidate the Mechanism.