

## The Organization of American States

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The Organization of American States (OAS) brings together the countries of the Western Hemisphere to strengthen cooperation and advance common interests. It is the region's premier forum for multilateral dialogue and concerted action. At the core of the OAS mission is an unequivocal commitment to democracy, as expressed in the Inter-American Democratic Charter. Building on this foundation, the OAS works to promote peace and security, foster good governance, strengthen human rights, and address the complex problems caused by poverty, inequality, corruption, and drugs.

### Secretariat for Political Affairs

#### Department of Democratic Sustainability and Special Missions

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The Department of Democratic Sustainability and Special Missions in the Secretariat for Political Affairs provides technical expertise in matters pertaining to conflict resolution, threats to democracy, good governance, and democratic dialogue. Its three main action areas are the Fund for Peace: Peaceful Settlement of Territorial Disputes; the SAPEM or multiple-scenario political analysis program; and the Special Missions unit, which includes the work of the Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP-OAS).

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 ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES

Organization of American States (OAS)

Secretariat for Political Affairs

Department of Democratic Sustainability and Special Missions

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# FUND for PEACE: Peaceful Settlement of Territorial Disputes

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*“The Organization’s knowledge and experience in the region can and should be used to craft global strategies for guaranteeing peace and security.”*

*José Miguel Insulza, OAS Secretary General*

### **Fund for Peace: Peaceful Settlement of Territorial Disputes**

Strengthening peace and security, preventing conflicts, and resolving disputes are among the essential purposes of the Organization of American States, as established in its founding Charter. Moreover, border and territorial disputes present a serious risk to hemispheric security and have been for too long a contentious and unnecessary barrier to economic and social development in the Western Hemisphere. They regularly frustrate international cooperation on trade, environment protection, security, and law enforcement, are a drain on budgets and resources, and occasionally lead to armed conflict.

In June 2000, recognizing the need to strengthen the Organization's capacity in peace-building and conflict resolution, the OAS Foreign Ministers, meeting at the General Assembly in Windsor, Canada, adopted Resolution 1756 (XXX-O/00) and formally established *The Fund for Peace: Peaceful Settlement of Territorial Disputes*.



The Peace Fund, as it is most commonly known, consists of a mechanism designed to provide financial resources to OAS Member States that so request in order to enable the Organization to react swiftly to an unforeseen crisis resulting from a territorial dispute, as well as to strengthen the General Secretariat's knowledge and experience in the field of territorial dispute settlements. The Fund consists of a General Fund and subfunds, and is open to contributions from OAS Member States, Permanent Observers, other states, as well as other entities, including companies and individuals.

The Peace Fund, however, is more than a simple financing tool. By jointly appealing to the OAS for assistance in peacefully resolving a territorial dispute, the Parties can avail themselves of a range of conflict resolution mechanisms contemplated under the OAS Charter, including direct negotiation, good offices, mediation, investigation and conciliation, judicial settlement, arbitration and any other mechanism which the Parties jointly agree.

The Parties can also access the technical expertise of the OAS in territorial dispute resolution, including expertise in diplomacy; international law, including the Law of the Sea; geographic, cartographic and geospatial expertise, through the membership of the Pan-American Institute of History and Geography; and a range of outside technical experts with whom the OAS General Secretariat maintains relationships.

### **Honduras and Nicaragua**

In March 2001, Honduras and Nicaragua signed a Technical Verification Agreement establishing various confidence-building measures to ease tensions between these two countries, which were the result of a maritime dispute in the Caribbean Sea. At the same time, the Fund for Peace supported the Diagnostic Assessment, Protection, and Development of the Río Negro Basin project in the border area. This Assessment served as the basis for a Bilateral Plan of Action for integral management of the basin's water resources.

### **El Salvador and Honduras**

Between July 2003 and August 2004, at the request of the governments of El Salvador and Honduras, the OAS General Secretariat and the Pan American Institute of Geography and History helped to resolve a series of technical problems that had prevented full demarcation of the international border between the two countries pursuant to the judgment of the International Court of Justice of 1992 and the General Peace Treaty signed by the two countries in 1980.

### **Belize and Guatemala**

The OAS provides technical and political assistance with regard to the differendum between Belize and Guatemala by facilitating the negotiations taking place under the "Agreement on a Framework for Negotiations and Confidence-Building Measures" signed by the Governments of Belize and Guatemala in September 2005.



*OAS Secretary General, José Miguel Insulza, meets with the President of Guatemala, Alvaro Colom (left), and with the Foreign Minister of Belize, Wilfred Elrington (right)*

Likewise, the OAS General Secretariat's Office in the Adjacency Zone between Belize and Guatemala conducts verifications and activities in support of a number of government institutions, including the armed forces of both countries. Several projects are also under way to foster development and integration of the communities in the Adjacency Zone, along with community resettlement projects.