

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS

The Department of Communications and External Relations was created by Executive Order 04-01 corr. and was further reorganized by Executive Order 05-03. The Department consists of a merger of pre-existing offices of the General Secretariat; the Department represents and supports the General Secretariat in all matters related to communications, external relations, protocol, public relations, and cultural activities.

The Department's mission is to advise the various departments, offices, and units of the General Secretariat and the governing bodies on all activities related to external relations, while promoting and maintaining contacts with the permanent observers, the nongovernmental organizations, academic institutions, the headquarters country of the Organization, the private sector, and non-profits, among others.

Office of External Relations and Resource Mobilization

In the case of activities related to the permanent observers, the Department encourages these countries' active participation and collaboration through informative meetings, an exchange of documents and information, visits by government dignitaries to the Organization, and special events. In 2004, Luxembourg and the People's Republic of China were granted permanent-observer status, bringing the total number of permanent observers to the OAS to 60.

The Organization receives significant contributions, in cash and in kind, from the permanent observers. A significant portion of those contributions were negotiated by the Office of External Relations, acting either directly or as intermediary. Figuring prominently among the events that occurred during the period covered in this report was the visit that the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, Li Zhaoxing, made to the Organization's headquarters, where he met privately with the Secretary General and his staff to discuss opportunities for cooperation.

The OAS has received a steady stream of visitors from high schools, universities, and other institutions. In 2004 some 5,220 visitors were welcomed and a total of 207 tours and informative sessions were conducted, a significant increase over previous years. A special program was launched with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, consisting of on-site visits and discussions for selected groups on the work that these three institutions are doing. In this connection, the three jointly published a brochure whose purpose is to publicize this new initiative and promote the work of the three organizations.

The speakers program featured lectures organized with George Washington University's Latin American Studies Center, on the subjects of the Summit of the Heads of State and Government in Monterrey, Mexico, and the role of the Organization of American States in the twenty-first century. This program, whose purpose is to enrich hemispheric dialogue on issues that are priorities for the member states, attracted more than 600 people from the local community, among them diplomats, academics, experts from research and study centers, and representatives of government, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector.

In conjunction with the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy at Rice University in Houston, Texas, an annual seminar for youth leaders was held, titled "The Americas Project." The central theme was "*Civil Society in the Americas: The Missing Link between the Private and Public Sectors.*" This

seminar brought together 17 young leaders from the Hemisphere to discuss and exchange opinions and views on this priority issue.

Finally, the Office continued to maintain and expand its Internet page on permanent observers, the Children's Corner web page, the listing for the Speaker's Bureau and the centralized database, which now has more than 5,000 local contacts incorporated.

Office of Public Information

The purpose of this Office is to conduct information and reporting programs through the press, radio, television, photography, and the Internet in order to publicize the mission, programs, and accomplishments of the Organization in the member states. The Office provides press and strategic communications services, as well as multimedia and radio services. It also includes *Américas Magazine*.

The press and strategic communications area handles daily and long-term contacts with the communications media, in order to get news about the OAS to as large an audience as possible. It works closely with the offices of the General Secretariat, the political bodies, and other OAS entities to promote coverage of OAS activities and headline its most important messages.

The main tools at its disposal are:

Press releases: In 2004, the OAS issued 240 press releases, mainly in English and Spanish. They were distributed to a broad database that includes the Washington-based media and the media elsewhere in the Hemisphere. These press releases and bulletins keep the media abreast of the OAS' daily meetings and activities.

Press conferences: When events so warrant (at the start or the close of a high-level meeting, for example), the Office coordinates press conferences at OAS headquarters.

Web page: The "OAS News" web page offers a picture of the Organization's most recent activities and initiatives. In addition to news in brief and highlights, it also features photographs and links to OAS-related articles that appear in newspapers around the region. It is one of the most visited sites on the Organization's portal.

Media relations: One of the Office's priorities has been to keep up contacts with journalists covering the region, among them the correspondents who cover the region for newspapers in the United States. These contacts are one way to increase coverage of OAS programs and projects in the countries.

Basic information: Every year, prior to the start of the regular session of the OAS General Assembly, a number of documents are prepared providing information on a variety of the OAS' priority issues. In simple and concise language, these documents provide journalists with the basic information they need to do their reporting on such topics as the Inter-American Democratic Charter, OAS efforts to combat corruption, election observation. These materials, updated at least twice a year, are also available at the Organization's web page.

Brochures: In May 2004, a new brochure was published explaining what the OAS is. Titled "A Shared Vision for the Americas," this brochure is available in the four official languages and has been distributed at conferences and meetings and sent to the missions and offices of the OAS General Secretariat in the member states.

The press and strategic communications areas have also played an important role in spotlighting the OAS' important activities away from Washington, including the ministerial meetings; the Special Summit of the Americas, in Monterrey; and the electoral observation missions sent to a number of member states. Having a news specialist on scene to speak with journalists, arrange interviews, and issue press releases has increased the press coverage of these events.

Internally, the News Bulletin is distributed daily to the permanent missions and to the General Secretariat. It summarizes the principal issues influencing debate and dialogue within the OAS.

Through its multimedia services, the Office continued to expand coverage of activities by using electronic media and digital technology. The multimedia area organizes and maintains the OAS Internet portal; creates web pages; prepares data banks; provides video services featuring live and taped broadcasts, digital video, and videoconferences; and produces documentaries on topics of interest to the Organization. It also provides photography services and publishes the *Americas Forum*, an online e-zine distributed each month to over 45,000 subscribers.

In 2004, the OAS portal received an average of 450,000 (individual) visits per month. On June 7, 2004, during the regular session of the General Assembly, the site had a record number of hits: 1,314,014 in a 24-hour period. The number of hits has increased from 8 million in 2002 to 13.5 million per month in 2004, partly due to the increase in the amount of news available. The most requested materials are the delayed video, followed by forms to apply for employment opportunities and for internships.

The photography services are fully digital. There was photographic coverage of more than 250 events and activities. The photos are immediately streamed over the web through a data bank that includes photographers and photographic editors from the major newspapers in the countries of the Hemisphere.

In 2004, 129 video transmissions were done via Internet, including all the meetings of the Permanent Council, the General Assembly, and the inauguration of the Secretary General; visits by presidents, high-ranking officials, and other dignitaries to the OAS; ceremonies at which conventions were signed and/or instruments of ratification deposited; and various ministerial and high-level meetings. The session of the General Assembly in Quito and the Secretary General's inauguration were carried live over the OAS portal with broadband video. Whenever interpretation services are available, the broadcasts are in the four official languages.

Live and delayed broadcasts were arranged for television channels in the member states, especially via CNN, AP-TV, Univisión, and television channels in Brazil, Ecuador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru, and Suriname.

Working in cooperation with the Office for the Promotion of Democracy (OPD), 30-second "spots" were produced in the four official languages, on the Inter-American Democratic Charter, to be distributed to television channels in the member states for broadcast. In cooperation with the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM), programs are being prepared focusing on women's leadership in the Americas. In addition, documentaries were done on the permanent missions' cultural activities, which the Art Museum of the Americas is now distributing in DVD format. The Office produced three new CD-ROMs containing documents, videos, and photos of the General Assembly. It also produced a number of DVDs.

Multimedia services are offered to the other offices of the General Secretariat and to the specialized organizations of the OAS. Broadcast services have been provided to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and to the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD). The Office also does video-tape reproductions, transfer to DVD, and digital imaging for the web. An

interactive video was produced for the OPD; 20 interactive videoconferences were staged with OAS officials and representatives of the member states participating. The Office also filled requests for tapes of the TV series “America Live,” which are commercially available.

The daily Spanish-language radio programming for Latin America and the English-language programming for the Caribbean continued to be broadcast via satellite. The correspondents service continues to be one of the most effective means of publicizing OAS activities via radio. These news briefs are short reports easily incorporated into radio newscasts in the region and are available over the Internet at the OAS Radio web page.

Programs that use the talk-show format have also found a large following, particularly in the Caribbean. The weekly programs “Focus on the Americas” in English and “Escenario” in Spanish were also produced and carried by a number of broadcasters in the region.

A number of events were broadcast live, such as the visit of President Álvaro Uribe of Colombia in March 2004; President Oscar Berger of Guatemala in April 2004; President Rinaldo Ronal Venetian of Suriname; President Alejandro Toledo of Peru; President Elias Antonio Saca of El Salvador in September 2004, and Gerard Latortue, Prime Minister of the Interim Government of Haiti. There was also coverage of such matters as the report to the Permanent Council by the Electoral Observation Mission sent to observe the presidential recall referendum, and the meetings of the CIM, CICAD, the IACHR, and the Summit of the Americas.

Live broadcasts of interviews with chiefs of state, high-ranking OAS officials, and other dignitaries were also part of the OAS radio programming, in cooperation with broadcasters in Latin America and the Caribbean, such as LOVE-FM in Belize, ABS in Antigua and Barbuda, DBS in Dominica, WINN-FM in Saint Kitts and Nevis, YSKL in El Salvador, Radio Union, Radio Caracas Radio, and Radio Nacional in Venezuela, RPP and Radio Nacional in Peru, Radio in Argentina, Radio Libre in Paraguay, Radio Quito and the ALER Chain in Ecuador, and others. One project continues to be the possible digitalization of radio.

Américas Magazine

Six issues of *Américas Magazine*, in Spanish and English, were published in 2004. Some 50,000 copies of each issue were printed: of these, approximately 28,000 were sent out to subscribers around the world; another 16,000 were sold at newsstands in the United States and Canada. There was also a sizable controlled circulation that sent the magazines to governments and institutions in the member states, both directly and through the General Secretariat’s national offices. Proceeds from subscriptions and sales covered approximately 50 percent of the publication’s total cost.

A number of campaigns were conducted to increase and promote sales of the magazine using a variety of marketing strategies. As part of the winter 2004 sales campaign, over 450,000 letters were sent to potential subscribers, offering a 2004 *Américas* agenda as a bonus for subscribing. The 2004 agenda is dedicated to the theme of democracy and was produced with the cooperation of the Office for the Promotion of Democracy. *Américas Magazine* is also sold over the Internet at the MagazineCity.net and doctormag.com portals. All proceeds from sales of the magazine were used to pay production and printing costs.

Art Museum of the Americas

The Art Museum of the Americas was created back in 1976 by a resolution of the Permanent Council. Its purpose is to stimulate an interest in and awareness of the artistic expression produced in the OAS member states, to increase inter-American cultural exchange, and to promote artistic endeavors in the

Hemisphere. The Museum is a unique institution that promotes and documents the art of the Hemisphere through exhibits, collections, educational programs, and reference services. The following are some of the activities carried out during the period covered by this report that are most representative of the Museum's singular mission.

Exhibits: Temporary exhibits open up one's eyes to of the rich diversity of artistic expression in the Americas and stimulate cultural exchanges. During this period a total of five exhibits were organized: ABCDF: Portraits of a City (April-June 2004), with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mexico and the Mexican Cultural Institute; Sculptures in Four Dimensions (July-September 2004), a juried exhibition celebrating 20 years of the Washington Sculptors Group (WSG), with the support of the WSG and the Distribution of Colombia's Committee on Arts and Humanities; Federico Uribe and Carlos Lersundy of Colombia (June-September 2004); Artists of the Americas (September 2004-January 2005), an exhibit of works from the permanent collection, representing the 34 member states of the Organization and put on with the support of the art programs of the IDB and World Bank; The Art of the Print (February 2005), with works from the permanent collection to celebrate the Annual International Conference of the Southern Graphics Council in Washington, D.C. A number of exhibits were covered in the local press during this period, including: Express Entertainment Weekly, La Gaceta Iberoamericana, Washington City Paper, the Washington Post, the Washington Times, the WETA program "Around Town", the web page of the Southern Graphics Council, and the InPrint Newsletter.

Permanent Collection: The Museum has been collecting, preserving, and documenting the work of leading artists in the Hemisphere since 1949. During the period covered in this report, 21 new pieces were added to the permanent collection. Donations from outside sources include a study (pencil on paper) by José Clemente Orozco of Mexico, a gift from Mark Landis; a painting by Lola Fernández of Costa Rica, donated by Mirtha de Perea; a mixed technique piece by Álvaro Barrios of Colombia, donated by the Friends of the Museum; and a painting by Antonio Seguí of Argentina. The Museum also received gifts from a number of artists who participated in the program of temporary exhibits, including photographs by Daniel Hernández-Salazar of Guatemala, Trinidad Carillo of Peru, and Jorge Alban of Costa Rica. Internally, 214 works of art from the permanent collection are on loan to the buildings at headquarters as part of the "art-in-office" program; another 72 works from the collection were included in the Museum's exhibits. Nine paintings from the permanent collection were loaned to the IDB for an exhibit of Latin American artists of Japanese ancestry.

Conservation and preservation: Preventive conservation work was done, including cleaning, changing the glass to UV Plexiglas, consolidation of pictorial layers, and inpainting of colors in the case of 21 works in the permanent collection that were put out on loan as part of the "art-in-office" program or for exhibits. In-depth treatments were done on three works in the collection, involving removing backing, application of new canvas backing, color integration, and paper de-acidification. To support the temporary exhibits staged during this period, stretchers and frames were built for paintings and graphic arts. For the ABCDF exhibit, special mounts were built to display large-scale photographs and video-art. The sculptures in the garden collection were given a general cleaning and re-waxing.

Archives of art and audiovisual materials: The archives of the Art Museum of the Americas are a one-of-a-kind source for the study of Latin American and Caribbean art. The Museum continues to collect materials to add to the archives, and offers reference services to students, researchers, and collectors. In the case of the audiovisual program, 70 videos were sold on the art of the member states and reproductions of 25 works in the permanent collection appeared in various publications, including the schoolbooks *Art Connections 2005*, Student Edition; *¿Como se Dice?*; *VISTAS*; *World Masterpieces*; and *Puntos En Breve*. Some 220 new slides were produced to document the temporary exhibits and for use in publications, the press, and at the Museum's web page.

Education: Catalogues, pamphlets, and other instructional materials were prepared for the exhibits, to deepen the learning experience. Through the Museum's web page, information continues to be provided on the temporary exhibits, the permanent collection, and art in the member states. Other activities included a series of four workshops (July-August) on framing works of art. With the Association of the Friends of the Art Museum of the Americas, a series of four workshops were held for children, exploring topics related to the exhibit on Artists of the Americas. The Museum continues to offer guided tours of the exhibits for universities, high schools, cultural associations, and other groups.

Special activities: In 2004, the sum of \$23,695 was raised from renting the Museum to outside groups and from the sale of videos, slides, catalogues, reproduction fees, and other sources. The Museum continues to collaborate with the "Neighbors to the President" Consortium in staging activities and projects that promote their collections and programs. The Museum also cooperated with the OAS Staff Association in staging the "VI Annual Art Exhibit" and with the e-zine *Pinceladas*.

Office of Protocol

The Office of Protocol plans and coordinates the official ceremonies of the Organization's political bodies, the Permanent Council, the Secretary General and Assistant Secretary General, and the departments of the General Secretariat. It also serves as liaison between the Department of State and the permanent missions on matters related to registration and visas of staff of the missions and the privileges and immunities of the diplomats accredited to the Organization. It also organizes and coordinates the use of the Main Building for protocolary or social-cultural functions and publishes the Directory of Permanent Missions on the Internet and keeps it current.

Protocol and ceremony

Protocolary meetings were held for the visits by the Presidents of Colombia, El Salvador, Honduras, Suriname, Peru, and Guatemala, and United States Senator Richard Lugar. Ceremonies were organized and protocolary meetings held to mark Pan American Day and the birth date of Simón Bolívar and to commemorate the Discovery of America-Encounter of Two Worlds. The office also coordinated the ceremonies at which 10 permanent representatives and the permanent observers from France, Italy, and Spain presented their credentials, as well as courtesy visits made by various permanent observers. Farewell receptions were organized for the ambassadors of El Salvador, Brazil, Paraguay, Colombia, Mexico, Panama, Costa Rica, Haiti, Peru, the Dominican Republic, and France and for outgoing Secretary General Gárriga.

The Protocol Office also organized the ceremony at which Secretary General Miguel Ángel Rodríguez was inaugurated. In attendance were 12 heads of state, 21 ministers of foreign affairs, 2 former presidents, and approximately 600 guest dignitaries. As part of the event, the Office organized a luncheon for the presidents and a breakfast for the foreign ministers.

Protocol-related assistance was provided for all the openings and exhibits of the Art Museum of the Americas. This office also organized all the ceremonies at which protocols and other agreements between the Organization and the member countries were signed or their instruments of ratification deposited. During the regular session of the General Assembly held in Quito, Ecuador, a breakfast and luncheon were arranged, hosted by the Secretary General, as was a large reception, also hosted by the Secretary General for some 600 invited guests. Organization of the reception involved negotiating with suppliers, arranging for and hiring services, and printing and sending out invitations.

Management of the Main Building

The Protocol Office manages the use of the Main Building. It handles the written contract that has to be concluded between the Organization and the user, coordinates all OAS logistical support for the event, and then bills the user. During the year, 200 receptions, luncheons, dinners, and lectures were held and the proceeds from renting out space in the building during the year totaled about \$95,000. Because the Simón Bolívar Room is being remodeled, the Hall of the Americas has had to be used for meetings of the Permanent Council, which meant that proceeds from renting out the Main Building were less than in years past. Under the coordination of the Protocol Office, 15 “Country Weeks” were staged during which member states and permanent observers hosted cultural or academic events. The Office helped organize three art exhibits and four recitals not associated with the Country Weeks Program. The Office collaborated closely on organization and staging of the Food Festival of the Americas, organized by the Organization of Women of the Americas, an association made up of the wives of the diplomats of the permanent missions to the OAS. Indeed, the Protocol Office collaborates with that organization year-round. The Office also organized and coordinated the following official events: 7 breakfasts, 20 luncheons, 1 dinner, and 16 receptions.

Support to the permanent missions and the General Secretariat, and liaison with the Department of State

The Protocol Office serves as liaison between the permanent missions and the Department of State on matters related to accreditation and registration of personnel. As part of the service it provides, the Office reviews and processes some 4,000 requests from the permanent missions and their staff for accreditation, issuance and renewal of visas, changes to visas, extensions of stays, work permits and their renewal, importation and purchase of duty-free goods, securing and renewal of tax exemption cards and driver’s licenses, and registration of vehicles, registration renewal, proof of insurance, and sale or exportation of vehicles. Visas are arranged for high-ranking OAS officials and letters for driver’s licenses for OAS staff and non-diplomatic personnel of the permanent missions.

The “Directory of Missions, Heads of State/Government, and Senior Government Officials, OAS Organs and Affiliated Entities” was updated and published at the OAS Internet portal and on the Intranet, and was published in early 2005. The Office kept a monthly schedule of activities in the Building. Letters of congratulations were prepared and sent to the permanent representatives and observers on the occasion of their respective independence days.

Coordination and Cooperation with Other Organizations

According to Article 112.h of the Charter, one of the functions of the General Secretariat is to “[e]stablish relations of cooperation, in accordance with decisions reached by the General Assembly or the Councils, with the Specialized Organizations as well as other national and international organizations.”

In accordance with mandates handed down by the regular sessions of the General Assembly held in Santiago, Chile, in 2003, and in Quito, Ecuador, in 2004, and with resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at previous sessions, the General Secretariat continued its program of coordination with other organizations and regional bodies. Coordination and cooperation were at their most intense with the secretariats of the United Nations (UN), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), and the Caribbean Community Secretariat (CARICOM). With specific reference to the UN and CARICOM, one of the most important arenas for cooperation continues to be the efforts to resolve Haiti’s political difficulties.

CARICOM

As in the two previous years, the secretariats of the OAS and CARICOM focused their joint efforts on seeking a solution to the political problems prevailing in Haiti, a member state of both organizations. Following the events of February 29, 2004, officials from the two bodies kept in regular contact to determine the best way for their organizations to assist Haiti during this exceptionally difficult period. In March, the Assistant Secretary General and the Secretary-General of CARICOM met with the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations to discuss specific areas of cooperation for the three organizations under UN resolution 1529 and the establishment of a United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). Subsequently, in May, the Assistant Secretary General and other officials of the OAS General Secretariat met with the Coordinator of CARICOM's Working Group on Haiti and exchanged views regarding that region's support and assistance for Haiti in the wake of the events of February 29.

The Secretary General of the OAS attended and participated in the Conference of Heads of Government of CARICOM, held in Grenada from July 4 to 8. That meeting provided an opportunity for dialogue with the heads of government regarding hemispheric problems and events, including the situation in Haiti. The talks with the CARICOM heads of government were in line with the terms of resolution AG/RES. 2058 (XXXIV-O/04), which instructed the Permanent Council and the General Secretariat to encourage dialogue among all Haiti's political players. In mid-January 2005, the Acting Secretary General received the CARICOM Assistant Secretary-General for foreign and community affairs and used that occasion to examine the level of each organization's commitment toward Haiti, including electoral assistance and alternatives for promoting dialogue among that country's political sectors.

The OAS General Secretariat and CARICOM also pursued joint activities in the area of technical assistance and cooperation. These activities involved several departments and units from the corresponding organizations. Cooperation was particularly intense in the following areas: (i) mitigation of natural disasters, with joint activities by the OAS Unit for Sustainable Development and Environment (USDE) and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CEDERA); (ii) tourism development, between what was then the Inter-Sectoral Unit for Tourism (UTUR) and is now the Office of Trade, Growth, and Competitiveness, and the Caribbean Tourism Organization; (iii) the environment, with activities and projects carried out jointly through the Unit for Sustainable Development and Environment; and (iv) integral development, through the IACD.

United Nations

Efforts to find a solution to the political difficulties in Haiti were the priority on the cooperation agenda between the United Nations and the OAS over the past year, within the framework of the recently created MINUSTAH. The Acting Secretary General, Luigi R. Einaudi, met on different occasions with senior UN officials to discuss the best way to deploy this cooperation. After months of discussions, in early November the UN and the OAS General Secretariat agreed on and signed a Memorandum of Understanding regarding cooperation on electoral assistance for Haiti. In addition, since the creation of MINUSTAH, it and the OAS Special Mission for Strengthening Democracy in Haiti have provided each other with mutual support and extensive cooperation in this area. The Special Mission is a part of the basic group of countries and organizations chaired by the Head of MINUSTAH.

One of the most significant incidents in OAS/UN cooperation regarding Haiti was the participation of the Head of MINUSTAH, Ambassador Juan Gabriel Valdés, in a meeting of the Permanent Council on January 11, 2005, at which the Secretary General's quarterly report on the situation in that country was discussed. Ambassador Valdés gave an overview of progress in MINUSTAH's efforts to stabilize the

security situation in Haiti and emphasized the importance and level of cooperation between the OAS and the UN in bringing about free and fair elections in Haiti in 2005. He also said that the process of strengthening democracy in Haiti required elections that involved all the political parties. The presence of the Head of MINUSTAH was welcomed by the Council, and one representative suggested that Ambassador Valdés be invited to attend whenever the Council addressed the Haiti situation.

The attendance of the Head of MINUSTAH at the Permanent Council was matched by that of the Acting Secretary General at the meeting of the UN Security Council on Haiti on January 12, which was chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Argentina and attended by several foreign members from Council member states and other member states of the OAS.

The OAS and the United Nations have also worked together on finding a solution to political difficulties in Venezuela and on enforcing the Peace Accords in Guatemala.

The OAS General Secretariat also maintained cooperation among some of its specific departments and their United Nations counterparts. As a result, projects have been carried out with the United Nations in several institutionally related areas, such as assistance with various environmental projects supported by the Unit for Sustainable Development and Environment, and projects to remove landmines and promote good governance and democracy, supported by the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy (UPD). In October, the Assistant Secretary General's Chief of Staff attended a follow-up meeting of regional organizations that had been organized by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, in 2003.

Other organizations

The Organization of American States (OAS) has continued to work on programs and projects with other regional organizations with which it has formal cooperation agreements. These include the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the Association of Caribbean States, and the Secretariat of the Central American Integration System (SICA). With the Association of Caribbean States, the support has been reciprocal and both organizations have sent representatives to the other's annual meetings. Pursuant to a resolution of the General Assembly, the OAS has partnered with the Association of Caribbean States in joint initiatives addressing specific areas of cooperation. PAHO, the IDB, IICA, and the Pan American Development Foundation actively participate in the Inter-American Committee for Natural Disaster Reduction and cooperate with the OAS General Secretariat in responding to natural disasters and in mitigating risks. This has led to a noticeable increase in the effectiveness of cooperation activities and of the inter-American system as a whole.