

**Commemoration of the 65th Anniversary of the creation and  
Installation of the IACHR, the 55th Anniversary of the adoption of  
the American Convention on Human Rights, and the 45th Anniversary  
of the Inter-American Court**

Special Session of the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States (OAS)

October 9, 2024 | Washington, DC

*Remarks by IACHR President, Commissioner **Roberta Clarke***

Good morning. The Commission as always, appreciates the opportunity to speak to our work on the occasion of this special session of the OAS Permanent Council to commemorate a new anniversary of two important institutions in our region: the Commission and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. It is an honor to share this platform with Judge Hernandez.

We have had several opportunities this year to speak to the main achievements of the Commission over its 65 years of existence. And I recall with appreciation Paraguay for the hosting of the commemorative event in June as well as Costa Rica which initiated the commemorative declaration.

With integrity, independence and having the peoples of the region at the center of its focus, over the course of its six and a half decades of existence, the Commission has established itself as a comprehensive regional legal system for the protection of the human rights. Perhaps it is unsurprising that the Commission is a creature of the OAS Charter. Ours is a region, the Americas and the Caribbean, scarred by extreme violence, oppression, and discrimination, the legacies of which include widespread inequalities and the associated multidimensional insecurities.

During its first decades, the Commission was dedicated to addressing serious human rights violations that occurred in the context of dictatorships and authoritarian regimes in the countries of the region. It began to request information from the States, which became part of the processing of individual cases and input for reports on the human rights situation in the countries. It also started holding sessions away from headquarters, which enabled it to respond to serious human rights situations in the hemisphere.

Visits to countries were one of the Commission's main tools in the face of the massive and systematic human rights violations of the 1970s and 1980s. Through its presence in the field, the Commission became an early warning voice for the international community. The visits of those decades —some of them very emblematic— had a profound impact on the human rights situation and on the lives of hundreds of victims.

Over time, the Commission's monitoring of the human rights situation has expanded to cover the 35 countries of the Americas. We do this through multiple instruments, including the activities of the rapporteurships, the production of thematic and country reports, as well as annual reports, the holding of public hearings, and the publication of press releases and statements in social media.

In recent years, the Commission has developed new strategies to respond to human rights crises. In addition to maintaining its presence in the field, along the victims, it has created International Groups of Independent Experts (GIEI) that have contributed to documenting and seeking justice in serious situations, such as the disappearance of the Ayotzinapa students in 2014 and the crises in Nicaragua (2018) and Bolivia (2019).

It has also redoubled its efforts to follow up on compliance with its recommendations, thereby seeking to increase their effectiveness. It has implemented special mechanisms for Nicaragua, Venezuela, Bolivia, Chile and Colombia, and developed innovative tools such as the Inter-American SIMORE and the Impact Observatory.

The Strategic Plan 2023-2027 has introduced new ways to address current human rights situations in the region. I especially highlight the efforts being made by the Commission to advance in the prevention of human rights crises. It has also strengthened our technical cooperation agenda with the States and boosted our presence in the Caribbean.

Today, the Commission faces old and new challenges in fulfilling its mission. Our region is the most unequal in the world. Problems of access to justice persist, as well as discrimination and violence against historically marginalized groups, such as women, indigenous peoples, migrants, LGBTI persons, children and adolescents, among others. The defense of human rights continues to be a very dangerous activity. Economic, social, cultural and environmental rights are far from being a reality for broad sectors of the population, generating social unrest. Climate

change brings new threats to human rights. We are very concerned about challenges to judicial independence given the centrality of this independence to rule of law and to accountability for human rights violations. And political polarization severely limits the emergence of the kinds of deep societal consensus needed to address structural problems.

But the Commission cannot be and should not be deterred from engaging with states and a diversity of civil society and human rights defenders. I take this opportunity to acknowledge once again the invaluable contribution of civil society to the work of the Commission, both in this complex present and over the past decades.

The Commission's voice has not always been comfortable for the States of the region, which it has firmly called upon to make reparations to the victims of human rights violations and to modify structural situations of discrimination. Nevertheless, this work of being the inter-American consciousness has allowed us to influence the lives of thousands of people and bring about positive change in communities throughout the continent.

That is why on this new anniversary, we renew our commitment to the members states and peoples of this region to continuously improve our efficiency and effectiveness. Simply, we are working for more rights for more people.

Thank you very much for your attention.