

First Meeting of the Inter-American Committee on Education

FINAL REPORT

Mexico City, Mexico, August 13, 2003

The First Meeting of the Inter-American Committee on Education (CIE) was held in Mexico City, Mexico, on August 13, 2003, in pursuance of the mandates of General Assembly resolution AG/RES 1859 (XXXII-O/02), which approved the creation of the Inter-American Committee on Education, entrusted the Permanent Executive Committee of CIDI (CEPCIDI) with establishing this Committee and approving its Rules of Procedure as soon as the proposal prepared by the G-11 Coordinating Group and the Draft Regulations of the Committee had been considered and approved by the Ministers of Education of the Member States.

I. BACKGROUND

The Ministers of Education of the Americas, through the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI) of the Organization of American States, have been working toward the creation of a committee to provide support for the CIDI Meetings of Ministers of Education. The Meetings of Ministers of Education and the Inter-American Committee on Education (CIE) together form the Inter-American System of Education, which has been entrusted with defining the hemisphere's course of action in the field of education within the Organization of American States.

The key events leading up to the First Meeting of the CIE are as follows:

- The Second Meeting of Ministers of Education within the framework of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI), held in Punta del Este in 2001. Authorities representing 19 countries evaluated the G-11's accomplishments and challenges. The plenary identified and established the G-11 as a hemispheric coordination mechanism; approved resolution CIDI/RME/RES. 7 (II-O/01) on "Follow-up Mechanisms", which recommended continuation of the work by G-11 with the participation of all countries; and called for the preparation of a draft plan for creating the Inter-American Committee on Education. This resolution also requested the General Secretariat to support the coordination mechanism. Resolution CIDI/RES. 122 (VII-O/02), "Report of the Second Meeting of Ministers of Education of CIDI", recommended that the General Assembly approve the creation of the Inter-American Committee on Education and entrusted the G-11 Coordinating Group with preparing draft rules of procedure.
- In 2002, Mexico, in its capacity as G-11 coordinator, and with support from the Technical Secretariat, convened working meetings and virtual dialogues with a view to preparing the draft rules of procedure for creation of the CIE. All of the member states participated. The Draft Rules of Procedure of the CIE agreed to by the Ministers of Education were submitted to CEPCIDI at its LXXXVI Regular Meeting, held on November 14, 2002, in Washington, D.C. CEPCIDI approved resolution CEPCIDI/RES.81 (LXXXVI-O/02) "Approval of the Rules of Procedure of the Inter-

American Committee on Education". This resolution set up the Committee and provisionally adopted its Rules of Procedure, ad referendum of the next Regular Meeting of CIDI.

- The Department of Public Education of Mexico convened an expanded G-11 to discuss the future of the G-11 in the framework of the CIE, begin plans for the Third Meeting of Ministers of Education, and move forward with respect to the commitments undertaken. The meeting was held in Washington, D.C. on December 9-10, 2002, with the participation of Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, the United States, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Mexico, Peru, and the Dominican Republic.
- A proposal was submitted at the Preparatory Meeting for the Third Meeting of Ministers of Education in the Framework of CIDI, held on April 9-11, 2003, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, to amend the CIE's Rules of Procedure. The amendment would create an Executive Committee, composed of one representative from each subregion of the hemisphere.

The Third Meeting of Ministers of Education in the Framework of CIDI, held on August 11-13, 2003, in Mexico City, Mexico, formally established and defined the functions of the Inter-American Committee on Education (CIE), and approved the amendments to the Committee's Rules of Procedure. At that meeting, the ministers approved resolutions CIDI/RME/RES. 8 (III-O/03), Amendment of the Rules of Procedure of the Inter-American Committee on Education; CIDI/RME/RES. 9 (III-O/03), Use of excess resources of the Reserve Subfund of the Regular Fund allocated to the sectoral area of education of CIDI for the implementation of Summit of the Americas mandates; and CIDI/RME/RES. 10 (III-O/03), Functions of the Inter-American Committee on Education.

II. PARTICIPANTS

The List of Participants is published as an annex to this report.

FIRST PLENARY SESSION

Mr. Daniel González Spéncer, General Manager for International Relations of the Department of Public Education of Mexico, chaired the meeting of the CIE. He requested nominations of for the election of CIE Executive Committee authorities, and the following authorities were elected for the next two years:

Chair of the CIE: Mexico

Vice Chairs of the CIE: 1º. Trinidad and Tobago

2º. El Salvador

North American Subregion Canada (principal)

USA (alternate)

Central American Subregion Honduras (principal)

Nicaragua (alternate)

Caribbean Subregion Saint Lucia (principal)

Bahamas (alternate)

MERCOSUR Subregion Brazil (principal)

Paraguay (alternate)

Andean Subregion Ecuador (Member one year, alternate the next)

Peru (alternate one year, member the next)

The agenda of the meeting is presented as an annex to this report.

The role of the Inter-American Committee on Education (CIE) in following up on ministerial commitments. Mr. González Spéncer reviewed the functions assigned to the CIE in its Rules of Procedure:

- Receive instructions from the Ministers of Education and establish the technical and political platform to ensure that the commitments undertaken at the Meeting of Ministers result in concrete actions.
- Provide a forum in which to advance the inter-American dialogue on education.
- Assume responsibility for following up on mandates and liaison with the Summits process.
- Act as a catalyst for ideas and proposals for Summit mandates.
- Take decisions and prepare future ministerial education forum meetings.
- Prepare a plan of work and activities to complete the tasks assigned by the ministers.
- Determine the date of the next CIE meeting.
- Determine priorities with financing and the distribution of \$2 million.
- Strengthen the role of the CIE with the active participation of countries.

Review of the situation of existing Summit projects and their possible support for hemispheric projects

- **Educational Portal of the Americas.** Mr. Carlos Paldao, Director of the Technology Department of the IACD, described human resource training activities conducted through the Educational Portal of the Americas in response to mandates from the Summits of the Americas and Ministers of Education. He reported that since September 2001 the web site had received more than 62 million visits and had provided training to more than 22,000 persons. Scholarships had been awarded to 1,176 participants in 2001 and 3,700 participants in 2002. He also spoke about the establishment of the Institute of Advanced Studies in Miami as part of a strategic alliance between the IACD and universities in the hemisphere. The mission of the INEAM is to support innovative approaches to providing quality continuing education for professionals within the inter-American framework, using not only conventional modalities as well as the new information and telecommunication technologies. He cited a number of distance learning

courses, including "Quality in Education", the materials for which were translated from the Spanish into Portuguese for use in Brazil and will be translated into English for use in the Caribbean. He announced the establishment of an Advisory Committee composed of highly renowned professionals from the countries to advise on and evaluate the Portal and identify and recommend qualified institutions to be entrusted with the advanced studies to be conducted in coordination with the Agency. The IACD, in partnership with Canada, supports rural connectivity initiatives. It was announced that resources were being sought to establish a foundation in order to self-finance its activities.

- **The Institute of Connectivity of the Americas (ICA).** Mrs. Ann Cleminson, Specialist in Information Technology Development, explained that the ICA is a Canadian contribution toward the fulfillment of objectives endorsed by the leaders of the hemisphere at the Summit of the Americas in 2001, and had received US\$23 million with which to carry out its activities. The Institute is based on the successful experience of a government strategy for the connection of Canadians as well as Canada's international programs for the development of information and communication technologies (ICT), and received support from the International Development Research Center, based in Ottawa. The Institute participates in projects and activities with governments, foundations, multilateral and regional agencies, such as the Organization of American States, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Pan American Health Organization, the World Bank, and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the private sector and civil society. The Institute supports such initiatives as the following:
 - Educational information and knowledge learning network with the World Bank, IACD, OAS, and other national institutions.
 - Exchange of technology between Canada and Mexico to facilitate electronic learning strategies that can be effectively applied throughout the hemisphere.
 - Such programs as SchoolNet, Community Access Program, Computers for Schools, and Smart Communities, enabling countries to rapidly develop and implement similar programs. Colombia endorsed this initiative, and young people are currently being trained to repair monitors. It was announced that a Regional Workshop would be open in October 2003 to disseminate this experience.
 - Virtual collaboration activities with countries and institutions.
 - Distance learning events and online courses with CITEL/OAS.
 - The "Digital Latin American Cities Award", to encourage, recognize, and promote development initiatives for Latin American cities. A prize will be awarded each year to three municipalities having made significant progress toward becoming a "Digital city". The Institute of Connectivity of the Americas (ICA) and AHCET (Hispanic-American Association of Research Centers and Telecommunication Enterprises) agreed to award this Prize as part of the Fourth Forum of Digital Cities.

- The Information Society Observatory of the Americas, recording information on ICT in the region using soft and hard indicators. Documents in the region containing statistical and practical information.
- **The Inter-American University Organization (OUI).** Mr. Freddy Malpica, President of the OUI, which was founded in 1979, described his organization as an international association dedicated to cooperation among universities in the development of higher education in the Americas. The organization has a network of 396 institutions of higher learning (public and private universities, institutes of higher learning, research centers, national or regional university associations, and councils of deans) forming a single network joining 26 countries. The network is organized in eight regions: Central America, Brazil, Canada, Caribbean, Southern Cone, United States, Mexico, and the Andean countries. The OUI promotes cooperation among universities in academic networks, offering two programs to its members in the university community and civil society:
 - The Institute for University Management and Leadership (IGLU), since its creation in 1983, has contributed to the modernization of universities, improving the quality of their management and the relevance of their activities to their local surroundings (training, research, and social service programs), and strengthening their contribution to sustainable development.
 - The College of the Americas (COLAM) is a program of the Inter-American University Organization officially created in 1997. Its objectives are to promote cooperation among universities through training or research networks; develop or improve university programs; promote research; promote exchanges between countries in the region, interdisciplinary coordination, and the application of new information and communication technologies to education, among others.

Mr. Malpica concluded his presentation by offering support to the CIE in carrying out hemispheric projects, which, moreover, can provide a link between the universities of Canada and Latin America for the purposes of conducting specific studies. He also offered the support of the Inter-American Conference on Higher Education for the purposes of training primary education teachers in the hemisphere.

- Hemispheric Project for the Evaluation of Educational Quality. Mrs. Vitória Cleaver, Chief of the Office of International Advisory Services of the Ministry of Education of Brazil, presented this project, which was based on direct consultations conducted by Brazil with the 34 countries participating in the Summit. Based on those consultations, there are national evaluation systems in most of the countries covering the various educational levels and modalities. In some countries there are academic aptitude tests to gain admission to higher education, and programs and projects implemented by their governments are subjected to impact evaluations. As a result of these consultations, and a workshop held in Brasilia, Brazil, in April 2000, the following main areas for hemispheric cooperation in educational evaluation were identified: strengthening of national evaluation systems; technical assistance; and participation in

international comparative studies. The objective of the project coordinated by Brazil is to provide for a Hemispheric Forum on Educational Evaluation to improve the quality of education. The political role of the Forum is to promote cooperation among countries, conduct multinational studies and research, and develop information systems for the dissemination of specialized literature on evaluation in the hemisphere. Responsibility for coordinating the Forum is assigned for two-year terms on a rotating basis. Brazil has that responsibility until 2004.

- Regional Education Indicators Project (PRIE). Mr. Javier González, a PRIE technical specialist, reported that, pursuant to a mandate of the Santiago Summit, the Government of Chile undertook to lead implementation of this project, with support from UNESCO/OREALC. The general purpose of the project, consistent with the objectives established at the Second Summit of the Americas, is to produce and analyze a set of comparable basic indicators in the region to provide support for educational policy decision-making at the national level. The main conclusions and advances derived from the PRIE, in terms of the construction of education indicators, can be consulted in the publication "The Experience of the Regional Education Indicators Project 2000-2003". After three years of execution, the results achieved through the PRIE are as follows: (i) availability of a set of comparable education indicators, developed with the active participation of countries, to help improve decisionmaking in the area of education policy; (ii) strengthening of a culture conducive to the generation and use of quality information in reaching decisions about education; (iii) development of a permanent and continuous process of improvement for statistical systems in the countries of the region; (iv) contribution to the strengthening of a permanent regional education information system. Proposed recommendations for 2003-2005 were, inter alia, as follows: the PRIE should continue: monitoring Summit goals as from 1998; organizing the project in three regions; developing indicators and statistical systems; and seeking sources of information. Technical cooperation should be characterized by: continuity, follow-up, and new activities involving more institutions; the development of methodological documents on the use of indicators and analytical reports; and the organization of seminars and workshops for technical and policy specialists. Mexico continued to provide general coordination for the PRIE, as decided by the plenary of the Third Meeting of Ministers of Education.
- Hemispheric Centers for Educational Excellence, Mrs. Lenore García, Director of International Activities in the Department of Education of the United States, described this project as an initiative of the U.S. government through the Agency for International Development (USAID), tracing its roots back to the Third Summit of the Americas, in Quebec City, when President George W. Bush announced the creation of Centers of Excellence to serve the Caribbean, Andean, and Central American countries. The objective of the program is to improve the quality of teachers and school administrators and the quality of reading instruction in classrooms throughout the hemisphere, with special emphasis on the poorest countries and teachers

working in economically disadvantaged communities. The program focuses on improving reading instruction in the first three grades of school and improving the knowledge and teaching skills of insufficiently qualified teachers. The aim is to train 15,000 teachers through centers already established in Honduras, Jamaica, and Peru. USAID received US\$20 million for implementation of the project, coordinated with governments and benefiting from support from expert advisers and the U.S. Department of Education, and has moved forward with programming. Private-sector firms are also participating. Thus far, 13 countries have established links with the centers, the ILCE of Mexico, and a consortium in Central America, among other establishments. After hearing the presentation by the OUI, and comments on the need to structure university teaching networks, she indicated that she would recommend that these networks be associated with the Centers of Excellence.

Presentation of hemispheric projects and determination of the work plan and responsibilities until the next meeting of the Committee.

Following the presentations and dialogue on the three hemispheric projects on equity with quality, secondary education, and teacher training, the Chair observed that a consensus had been reached to approve the following decisions:

- To hold a meeting of CIE authorities in Washington, D.C. during the week of December 1-5, 2003, to define the CIE's work plan and allocate the resources authorized by resolution CIDI/RME/RES. 9 (III-O/03).
- To work on the proposals for hemispheric projects for presentation to FEMCIDI, complying with the timeframe and formal requirements stipulated by the OAS for access to these funds. By September 15, the coordinators of these projects must send the detailed information requested by IACD to convert the profiles into hemispheric projects. After determining the FEMCIDI financing to be received by the hemispheric projects, the CIE will determine the supplemental financing to be provided from the US\$2 million available for education initiatives in accordance with resolution CIDI/RME/RES. 9 (III-O/03).
- Resolution CIDI/RME/RES. 9 (III-O/03) provided that Regular Fund resources allocated to Summit of the Americas initiatives in the field of education are to be used to continue the implementation of current projects for the Regional Education Indicators Program and the Hemispheric Evaluation Forum and the execution of projects in the areas of Equity and Quality, Teacher Training, and Secondary Education. It was also noted that no deadline has been established for commitment or expenditure of the resources allocated. To maximize cooperation, close ties must be established with other fora and agencies with the same priorities as the hemispheric projects, including the Ibero-American Summits/OEI, UNESCO/OREALC, CCC, OUI, and others.

- The delegation of El Salvador will transmit the proposed subregional teacher training profile to the delegation of Trinidad and Tobago to ensure that this subregional initiative complements the hemispheric project coordinated by this Caribbean country.

Adjournment of the meeting

All of the agenda items having been considered, Mr. Daniel González Spencer, General Manager for International Relations in the Department of Education of Mexico, thanked the delegates for their participation and adjourned meeting.