EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT FOR INTEGRAL DEVELOPMENT

The Executive Secretariat for Integral Development (SEDI) consists of the Executive Office of the Director, who also serves as Executive Secretary for Integral Development and Director General of the Inter-American Agency for Cooperation and Development (IACD). The Executive Secretary therefore supervises the Office of Education, Science, and Technology; the Office of Sustainable Development and Environment; the Office of Scholarships, Training, and Information Technology; the Office of Trade, Growth, and Competitiveness; the Office of Development Policies and Programs; and the Secretariat of the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL).

Through active coordination with its constituent offices, in 2004 the SEDI continued to support the policy-making bodies within the framework of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI). Through those offices and the Inter-American Agency for Cooperation and Development (IACD), the SEDI carried on its efforts to implement projects calculated to meet the member states' vital needs. Furthermore, it continued its activities to mobilize and attract external resources to support the efforts the countries are making in the cause of their own development and that of the region.

During this reporting period, the Executive Secretariat provided its support for the successful holding of ministerial or high-level meetings, as well as meetings of the inter-American committees within the Inter-American Council for Integral Development and its subsidiary organs. SEDI's offices provided support of various kinds to the countries, to carry out development activities. The Educational Portal of the Americas was successfully consolidated and was used to offer a variety of distance-learning opportunities for the most impoverished and unattended rural areas of the Hemisphere. Also in the area of education, the Scholarship and Training Programs were greatly expanded and saw a sizable increase in the number of scholarships awarded. The Program of Innovations and Partnerships for Development was implemented, its purpose being to encourage horizontal cooperation among the governments of the region and to enlist greater private sector participation. To that end, a number of agreements with the private sector were implemented. Finally, in this reporting year, the Special Multilateral Fund of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (FEMCIDI) was strengthened.

The Trust for the Americas, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, operates under the umbrella of the IACD. 2004 was a particularly successful year for the Trust, as it raised close to 3 million dollars for social development projects everywhere in the Hemisphere. These funds are contributions and donations from the public and private sectors. More detailed information on the Trust for the Americas appears in the part of this report dedicated to foundations.

Executive Office of the Director

New Cooperation Mechanisms (Innovations and Partnerships for Development)

In 2004 the "best practices" program shifted to the more flexible and representative concept of "*Innovations and Partnerships for Development.*" With this new institutional image, the program features two main thrusts: horizontal cooperation and private sector participation. The programs carried out focus mainly on the topics of e-government and government procurement on the one hand, and municipal development on the other. However, other topics such as occupational health and safety, corporate social responsibility, and refurbishment of computers are also included. More and more, other offices of the General Secretariat, such as the Office of Education, Science, and Technology; the Office of Trade, Growth and Competitiveness; and the Office for the Promotion of Democracy are providing their support to the program's activities. When the program was originally established, the bulk of the support came

from the United States Mission to the OAS. Now, however, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Institute for Connectivity in the Americas (ICA), and the Andean Development Corporation (CAF) are also providing their support. Based on the results achieved in previous years, the following results stand out in 2004.

E-Government and Government Procurement

The results in the area of e-government/government procurement at the central level can be subdivided into three main elements: technical cooperation activities, training, and partnerships. The results for e-government at the local/municipal level are described in the pertinent section below.

- Technical cooperation activities
  − In conjunction with ICA, creation and consolidation of the Network of E-Government Leaders in Latin America and the Caribbean (Red GEALC), with representatives of 17 countries.
  − Two workshops, organized in conjunction with ICA, on best practices in e-government: Peru (April), attended by 20 participants, and Brazil (May), attended by 24.
  − Again in conjunction with ICA, creation of a Horizontal Cooperation Fund (FOCOH), which supports exchanges of experts in e-government between countries.
  − Support to horizontal cooperation activities among Colombia, Chile, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic.
  − OAS support and technical assistance missions to: Honduras, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, Panama, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic.
  − The RIFGE Network (Inter-American Network on E-Government Training), created jointly with the Inter-American Development Bank, ICA, and the Inter-American Organization for Higher Education (IOHE).
  − As part of the Best Practices Forum of the Americas: publication of the document summarizing the E-Government Best Practices Forum and organization of the Forum on Government Procurement (experiences of Chile, Mexico, the United States, and Costa Rica), which will end in early 2005.

- Training
  − Three editions of the course in Spanish and one in English. Total number of students: 535 from all subregions of the OAS.
  − Agreement concluded with UNISUL (Brazil) and the IOHE for adaptation, translation, and announcement of the course in Portuguese in the first half of 2005.

- Partnerships
  − Strategic collaboration with ICA was significantly bolstered in 2004 as it supported most of the activities in e-government.
  − An agreement was concluded with SONDA (Chile) offering e-government portals valued at $3.6 million.
  − Under the agreement with Microsoft, the following materialized: the Portal of El Salvador's Ministry of Government; tele-center management tools in Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela; donation of an application for development of a management platform for the White Helmets Program (Argentina).
  − FLACSO collaborated with the OAS on publication of the book *América Latina Puntogob.*

Municipal Development

In 2004, the municipal development area focused on the Efficient Transparent Municipalities Program (MuNet), whose goal is to strengthen municipal services in two main areas: cadastre/registration and e-government. CIDA poured its full support into the program from the beginning, and that support was then used to leverage similar support from the CAF. In the end, the support for MuNet was a *de facto* three-way collaboration: CIDA, CAF, and OAS.

- Cadastre/registration
    - Guatemala City was the site of the second MuNet workshop on "Development and Application of Municipal Cadastre and Registration Systems," held between May 31 and June 3, 2004. This workshop targeted the municipalities of Central America, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic. Participating were cadastre experts from Bogotá (Colombia), the Malvinas Cadastre Office (Argentina), the City Government of Gijón (Spain), and the Cadastre and Registration Institute of Sonora, Mexico. They shared their experiences and expertise in cadastre and land registration with the more than 140 participants, who represented 50 municipal governments.
    - In an example of horizontal cooperation and with MuNet's support, Guadalajara advised the Municipal Government of Quito on how to design a cadastre system. Follow-up activities are planned for 2005.
    - With ICA's support, a virtual discussion group was formed with some 150 cadastre/registration experts from the region.
    - Under an agreement with Stewart Information International, the final proposal for implementation of a combined cadastre/registration and tax collection system in Antigua and Barbuda was prepared, and approved for implementation in 2005. The hope is that this will be the foundation for developing a solution that can be applied in all countries of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS).

- E-government
    - The e-government course mentioned earlier was attended by more than 100 students from municipalities in Latin America.
    - Under the MuNet program, a tool was designed to study and monitor the implementation of e-government, which will be put into practice in 2005.
    - Under the agreement with Microsoft, the following were introduced: Municipal portals at San Borja and Puente Piedra in Peru, and municipal portals for Artigas and Paysandú in Uruguay.
    - As an example of horizontal cooperation, the municipality of Guayaquil is helping the Government of Ushuaia (Argentina) to design and implement its e-government strategy.

- Best Practices Forum
    - With CIDA's support, the virtual "Best Practices" Forum on the role of municipal associations was held from June to September 2004, featuring experiences in Chile, Brazil, and the United States. The document summarizing the experiences and the Forum discussions will be published in 2005.

Occupational Health and Safety

Working in conjunction with the Unit for Social Development and Education, a cooperation agreement signed in 2003 with the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work began to be implemented in 2004. Under that agreement, the OAS is part of that Agency's sophisticated data system. The most salient aspect of this agreement's implementation has been the development, thanks to a contribution from Colombia's Axesnet, of a virtual platform to host data on occupational health and safety transmitted through focal points in the region. This portal is already online and the network of focal points is under construction.

Corporate Social Responsibility

On the subject of corporate social responsibility, the program that the IACD and the EMPRESA Forum developed jointly and that the IDB's Multilateral Investment Fund and the IACD approved, commenced operations in 2004. In the early stages, the focus was on strengthening the network of EMPRESA member groups and identifying successful experiences that will be used as the basis for the training given in the project's four pilot countries (Chile, Peru, Brazil, and El Salvador).

Refurbishment of Computers/"Computers for Schools"

The "Computers for Schools (CFS)" Program seeks to encourage the refurbishment of used computers and is primarily based on the Canadian "Computers for Schools" model. In 2004, the OAS, ICA, and the Ministry of Industry of Canada (IC) partnered to coordinate two regional events. The first was for South America and was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from March 1 to 4, 2004. It was attended by representatives of 11 countries in the region. The second event was for the Central American region and was held in Managua from September 21 to 24, 2004. The six Central American countries, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic were represented. These events were accompanied by an online Virtual Mentoring Network (VMN) facilitating contact over long distances. At the present time, Guatemala, Chile, and the Dominican Republic are actively engaged in planning a computer refurbishment program. The three partner organizations hosted a workshop for the Caribbean region, held in Jamaica in February 2005.

Web page: Innovations and Partnerships

As part of the agreement with Colombia's Axesnet, a web page was designed and put online, titled "Innovations and Partnerships," which enables wider circulation of the results of horizontal cooperation and private sector participation. It also enables the OAS to report on the portfolio of successes in e-government, municipal development, and occupational health and safety. In Spanish, the page is available at www.oeainnovacionesyalianzas.org, and in English at www.oasinnovationsandpartnerships.org. It currently has over 1,000 registered users.

Office of Education, Science, and Technology

The main mission of the Office of Education, Science, and Technology (OEST) is to support efforts to increase the capabilities of the member states' human capital in the areas of education, culture, labor, technology, and science, within a more cohesive social environment in which cultural diversity is respected.

The OEST is internally organized into three program areas: education and culture; science and technology; and social development. Its main functions within each are to: (i) promote inter-American dialogue and provide technical and operational support to the specialized policy-making forums,

especially the ministerial meetings and the meetings of the inter-American committees and/or working groups; (ii) promote partnership for development, particularly horizontal cooperation based on a transfer of knowledge and successful experiences in the application of policies and programs; and (iii) coordinate activities carried out in conjunction with other international organizations, cooperation agencies, governmental and nongovernmental institutions, and civil society and aimed at promoting poverty eradication and social, educational, technological, and scientific development.

The OEST is the result of a merger of the then-existing Unit for Social Development and Education and the Office of Science and Technology. In 2004, the OEST's activities were steered by the mandates received from the Summits, the resolutions of the General Assembly and other policy-making organs of the OAS, and the decisions emanating from the ministerial meetings and meetings of committees and/or working groups in the program areas.

Education

As Technical Secretariat of the meetings of ministers of education within the framework of CIDI and of the Inter-American Committee on Education (CIE), the OEST continued to provide its advisory services and its technical, operational, and policy-related support on design, development, systematization, evaluation, and dissemination of public policies and strategies. In this capacity, it coordinated the design and development of studies and research and their application to education. It conducted activities that provided a means by which experiences could be shared, as well as other training activities. The Office identified educational challenges and best practices for horizontal cooperation. It encouraged the use of new technologies and cooperative ventures among countries, international cooperation and development agencies, and governmental and nongovernmental institutions, to form a hemispheric partnership in the cause of education. In all these activities, the Secretariat worked in close collaboration with the Office for the Promotion of Democracy (OPD); the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM); the Office of Scholarships, Training, and Information Technology; the Office of Science and Technology; the Educational Portal of the Americas, and others.

The OEST served as Technical Secretariat of the Second and Third Meetings of Authorities and of the Executive Committee of the CIE, held at OAS headquarters on April 15 and 16 and on October 17, 2004. It also assisted the Informal Meeting that the CIE held in Mexico on June 28, 2004. At these meetings, the OEST was assigned the following undertakings: (a) working jointly with the United States and Mexico, prepare a questionnaire identifying the general practices and lessons learned on reporting the results of educational systems, a task entrusted to it by the Special Summit in Monterrey; (b) administer the funds from the Special Education Subfund for the Summit Projects, the Regional Program on Educational Indicators (PRIE), and the Forum for Evaluating the Quality of Education; (c) monitor execution of hemispheric and related projects; (d) join efforts on issues of democratic culture, science and technology, and gender; and (e) prepare a document on the CIE's participation in the Nonpermanent Specialized Committee (CENPE) on Education.

The Office also assisted the Second Regular Meeting of the CIE, convoked by Mexico and held at OAS headquarters on October 18 and 19, 2004. That meeting examined the progress that the hemispheric and related projects had made and the challenges they faced. The Meeting also discussed issues related to the preparations for the Fourth Meeting of Ministers of Education, slated for Trinidad and Tobago in August 2005. The CIE decided to hold a Meeting of Ministers of Education of the Caribbean in March 2005, where the education authorities of Trinidad and Tobago will present a draft agenda and draft calendar for the Fourth Meeting of Ministers and for the meetings with civil society and international agencies.

The following were among the tasks that the CIE entrusted to the OEST: (a) monitor the organization and execution of the activities associated with the Fourth Meeting of Ministers of Education and the Inter-

American Program for Education in Democratic Values for Peace and Human Rights, in coordination with the Office for the Promotion of Democracy; (b) support the ad hoc working groups on: (i) health, labor, and education in coordination with the Hemispheric Project on Secondary Education; (ii) health-promoting schools, in association with the Hemispheric Project on Equity and Quality; (iii) teaching of sciences from an early age, in coordination with the Hemispheric Project on Teacher Training; (c) prepare a report on a debt-for-education swap; and (d) propose measures to bolster national policies and measures by means of the questionnaire on current practices in educational reporting.

In December 2004, a technical document was prepared on alternatives for the CIE's involvement in the process of selecting projects to be considered for FEMCIDI financing. That document was presented to the Authorities and Executive Committee of the CIE. Further work will be done on this subject in 2005.

The three hemispheric projects–equity and quality, teacher training, and secondary education and labor competencies–moved forward on their planned activities and the coordinator states reiterated their political willingness to implement those projects and requested that the deadline for execution of the 2004 budget be extended. Activities were coordinated with the Inter-American Agency for Cooperation and Development. The Office was instrumental in executing the activities under the hemispheric projects and related projects coordinated by El Salvador, Mexico, and Peru. It also played an active role in the workshops conducted under the teacher-training project organized by Trinidad and Tobago in August and November and, in conjunction with the Inter-American Organization for Higher Education (IOHE), conducted the workshop on strategies for teacher training and professional retraining, Washington, D.C. (September). It also participated in the workshops on secondary education and labor competencies in Costa Rica (May), Mexico (May and August), and Trinidad and Tobago (August).

As regards the related projects in teacher training, El Salvador redesigned teacher training and evaluation and began operating in the virtual forum among the countries of the Central American subregion on development, performance, and evaluation. Mexico is organizing a global meeting on this topic, slated for April 2005.

In the case of the Summit Projects, the PRIE, coordinated by Mexico, held meetings for adjustments, planning, and 2004-2007 programming and continued to examine the five main categories of indicators: demographic, social, and economic context; access, participation, and progress; education resources; quality of education; and social impact of education. The United States Department of Education supported efforts to obtain additional funding from USAID.

The forum to evaluate the Summit Project coordinated by Brazil held reprogramming meetings. In May 2005, the second hemispheric session will be held in Brazil.

The Permanent Portfolio of Consolidated Programs continued to be updated. This is a strategy to strengthen horizontal cooperation among countries through seminars devoted to transferring educational experiences. In May, Nuevo León, Mexico was the site of the Seminar Workshop on "Ready to Learn: Quality Early Education to Prevent School Dropout," which nine Caribbean countries attended and where they observed the experiences of the Child Development Centers (CEDI). Based on the joint OEA/CONARED publication, the World Bank extended an invitation for the resumption of the joint Bank/OEST partnership to update and preserve data on childhood development for Latin America, which is published at the World Bank's website.

Following the guidelines of the Third Summit of the Americas and the Inter-American Democratic Charter, as well as the mandate contained in resolution AG/RES. 1869 (XXXII-O/02), "Promotion of Democratic Culture," the OEST conducted a study on introducing the values and principles of democracy in educational curricula in the member states. In January 2004, the final report was distributed and was

titled "Strengthening Democracy in the Americas through Civic Education." The report was presented at a special meeting of the Permanent Council (April) and at the Second Meeting of the Inter-American Committee on Education (October). Furthermore, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education of Chile, a workshop was organized and held in Santiago (August) to examine the study's findings and conclusions.

The mandate from the Special Summit held in Nuevo León, Mexico, requested that a questionnaire be developed on current practices in educational reporting. The OEST developed this questionnaire with help from the United States Department of Education and contributions from Mexico and Canada. The findings of the questionnaire, which was answered by 32 ministries of education, were presented to the CIE at its October meeting and then published, together with the database. The CIE also instructed the Office to provide its support to a United States-coordinated working group on current practices in educational reporting that would, *inter alia,* plan a workshop on educational reporting, to be held in April 2005 in Brazil.

The OEST benefited from the program of cooperation between the OAS and Harvard University's Rockefeller Center, as six Harvard students provided their assistance in the summer of 2004. Prominent among their activities was the research done to assist with the hemispheric projects and the questionnaire on educational reporting practices.

Culture

The Second Inter-American Meeting of Ministers of Culture and Highest Appropriate Authorities, convoked within the framework of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI), was held in Mexico City, on August 23 and 24, 2004. It centered on the question "What role does culture play in social development and economic integration in our Hemisphere?" The debate was divided into three sub-themes: (1) Culture as an engine for economic growth, employment, and development; (2) Challenges faced by cultural industries; and (3) Culture as a tool for social cohesion and the fight against poverty. To facilitate the discussions, the OEST, as Technical Secretariat, commissioned studies by specialists on each of the three themes.

At the end of the meeting, the ministers approved the Declaration of Mexico and Plan of Action, which underscored, *inter alia,* the contributions that culture makes to the economic and social development of the countries of the region and urged the states to continue to develop indicators and to conduct studies analyzing culture's impact, to consider mechanisms to help create jobs in the cultural sector, and to formulate educational and cultural policies and programs in which creative expression can flourish.

The ministers approved the first phase of the Work Program of the Inter-American Cultural Policy Observatory (ICPO), which was based on a multiphase plan to be implemented gradually, using a network of similar organizations and Internet portals in the region. An interactive ICPO pilot portal was introduced. The Second Ministerial instructed the OEST to develop, with outside funding and based on that virtual model, the first phase through subregional nodes (Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Barbados, and Nicaragua).

For the Second Ministerial in Mexico, coordination meetings were held to further the Plan of Action of Mexico. Also participating were the Inter-American Development Bank, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), the Andrés Bello Agreement (CAB), the Andean Development Corporation (CAF), the Latin American School of Social Sciences, Mexico campus (FLACSO-Mexico), the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture (OEI), and UNESCO. The commitments made were presented to the ministers by the OEI's representative, who was the elected spokesperson. The OEST will be responsible for following up on a number of these initiatives.

To discuss civil society's contributions to the main themes of the Second Ministerial, work continued to be accomplished through the OEST's "Virtual Forum-Civil Society." A workshop to confer with civil society was held (Chile, July 26-27), with representatives from coalitions and networks of various cultural federations participating. The document "Perspectives from Society" was signed, which reflects civil society's concerns and recommendations. Two spokespersons then presented it at the Second Ministerial.

The Permanent Portfolio of Consolidated Programs in Culture continues to be updated. It contains the programs that the ministries of culture and high-level authorities want to share with their counterparts and is a fundamental piece in the horizontal-cooperation strategy that the General Secretariat coordinates.
Science and technology

The OEST is the Secretariat of the Inter-American Committee on Science and Technology (COMCYT) and of the Meeting of Ministers and High Authorities of Science and Technology within the Framework of CIDI. It is also Executive Secretariat of the Inter-American Metrology System (SIM) and maintains close ties with the Committee for Scientific and Technological Development of Central America and Panama (CTCAP), the Pan American Standards Commission (COPANT), and the Inter-American Accreditation Cooperation (IAAC). In this capacity, the OEST provided permanent technical advisory services to national councils of science and technology, regional bodies, and internal organs of the OAS, including the IACD, CIDI, and COMCYT.

The OEST continued to develop the Program of Activities in Science and Technology for Hemispheric Cooperation, which has provided input for the preparations for the meeting of ministers and the Office's areas of activity. Under this Project, the fourth workshop on "Science and Technology for Social Development" was held in Jamaica (March), while the workshop on "Consolidation of Hemispheric Policies in Science and Technology" was held in Washington, D.C. (April), where the policies and recommendations from the four previous workshops were consolidated. The Fourth Regular Meeting of COMCYT was held in Washington, D.C. Its decisions formed the foundation of the preparations for the First Meeting of Ministers and High Authorities of Science and Technology, held in Lima, Peru, on November 11 and 12, 2004. In preparation for that meeting, two meetings were held in Washington, D.C. (June and September), as were informal meetings of the working subgroup.

Delegates of 21 countries participated in the Ministerial, which was held under the joint auspices of the National Council on Science and Technology of Peru (CONCYTEC). They adopted the Declaration and Plan of Action of Lima, whose principles attach due importance to science, technology, engineering, innovation, and education as major factors driving the economic and social development of the countries of the Hemisphere, while recognizing the need to create employment as a response to poverty and to strengthen democratic governance. The delegates deliberated on and approved 15 hemispheric initiatives. The Ministerial also recognized the efforts of young scientists, awarding prizes to 15 young scientists who were the winners of national science fairs; it encouraged closer relations with civil society, thereby marking the start of that sector's participation in the discussion of science and technology within the OAS; it also encouraged closer ties with economic and scientific authorities, inviting them to participate in a seminar on science and technology financing and priorities in Latin America and the Caribbean, cosponsored by the IDB and ECLAC. The findings of that seminar were shared at the ministerial meeting.

The hemispheric initiatives prepared for the ministerial meeting are taken from topics of interest being developed in the member states and in the OAS, such as:

In the technological services sector, the Office continued to support efforts to consolidate SIM and the IAAC. Technical advisory services were provided to both, and the Office participated in SIM's General Assembly, held on Margarita Island, Venezuela, in November 2004. It also participated in the meetings of its Council. In preparation for the meeting of ministers, hemispheric projects were envisioned, including

legal metrology for the Caribbean; productive competitiveness and employment, geared toward improving the productive sector; and engineering for the Americas, to build up local capacity in this realm, with support from Hewlett-Packard.

In biotechnology and food technology, the Office continued to support the arguments in favor of a hemispheric instrument for building biotechnology indicators. The Office participated in the World Biotechnology Forum, held in Chile in March 2004; and a biotechnology initiative was submitted to the meeting of ministers for consideration, prepared on the basis of the recommendations made by the workshop on "Scientific and Technological Development in the Americas," held in Ecuador in December 2003.

On the subject of information technologies and telecommunications, the Office continued to support the interconnectivity efforts that will facilitate access to the new generation of advanced Internet technologies and applications in the region. During the meeting of ministers, initiatives were proposed advocating the interconnection of national educational and research networks, including CLARA (Latin American Advanced Networks Cooperation); development of advanced networks for the Caribbean; and development of databases, portals, scientific publications, and journals. The Office also participated in meetings of Internet2, Red ScienTI, and others.

The Office supported consolidation of specialized data networks, such as SIM, SIMBIOSIS (Multinational System of Specialized Information on Biotechnology and Foods), RICYT (Ibero-American/Inter-American Network on Science and Technology Indicators), INFOCYT (Science and Technology Information Network for Latin America and the Caribbean), and RELAQ (Latin American Chemistry Network). The Office also maintained the mirror pages of RICYT, INFOCYT, and RELAQ and the Internet pages of SIM, SIMBIOSIS, the meeting of ministers, and others. A virtual room was introduced for the meeting of ministers and for the dialogue with civil society.

On the subject of science and technology indicators, the support provided for the activities of RICYT was in the form of technical advisory services, in conjunction with the Ibero-American Program in Science and Technology for Development (CYTED). An initiative was approved seeking the creation of a regional program of science and technology indicators.

The collaboration with CYTED is ongoing. The Office participated as an observer in its XXIV General Assembly, held in Chile.

With regard to gender and science and technology, mainstreaming the gender perspective into science and technology policies and programs in the Americas was a priority. With support from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC)-Canada, two situational studies were prepared that served as a frame of reference for a Meeting of Experts on Gender and Science and Technology, held in Washington, D.C., (August) and organized in collaboration with the CIM and the UNCSTD's Gender Advisory Board. The results of that event were used to prepare a document titled "Recommendations for Integrating a Gender Perspective in Science and Technology Policies and Programs in the Americas." That proposal was approved at the meeting of ministers as a hemispheric initiative. Other activities in this area are being carried out in cooperation with UNESCO.

On the subject of digital government, based on the initiative approved by the Meeting of Ministers and with support from the United States' National Science Foundation (NSF), experts in digital government discussed issues related to the establishment and development of successful national and regional efforts in digital government, emphasizing the digitalization of government functions. The Project on Transnational Digital Government continued to be carried out. Being executed in collaboration with Belize and the Dominican Republic, this project applies five advanced information technologies to

national procedures for controlling immigration in remote border areas. In 2004, the experimental system was presented to Dominican officials. National and transnational tests will be conducted in 2005 and the system installed. This system can be used for other government functions as well.

Working in coordination with NSF, hemispheric initiatives were prepared in the areas of materials and global change, associated with the efforts under the Inter-American Collaboration in Materials Research (CIAM) and the Inter-American Institute for Global Change (IAI). The goal is to strengthen those institutions' programs in the region and to encourage greater participation on the part of the countries.

In collaboration with the Inter-American Network of Academies of Sciences (IANAS), an initiative was formulated that promotes scientific education; another initiative, this one with the Pan American Institute of Geography and History (PAIGH), promotes the use of geographic information systems for the integral development of the countries; still a third initiative promoting the popularization of science is being carried out in collaboration with Brazil's Ministry of Science and Technology.

Social development and combating poverty

The First Meeting of the Inter-American Committee on Social Development (CIDES) within the Framework of CIDI was held in Santiago, Chile, in April 2004. The following were among its most salient results: (1) adoption of the rules of procedure and election of the officers of CIDES, Chile (Chair), El Salvador (Vice Chair), and Jamaica (Vice Chair); (2) approval of the steps to follow to update the Inter-American Program to Combat Poverty and Discrimination; (3) approval of the terms for preparation of the CIDES work program by the Committee's officers; and (4) El Salvador's offer to host the Meeting of Ministers of Social Development in 2005. The Meeting's final report was drawn up. Formulation of the CIDES work program was completed as were the preparations to carry out that program in 2005.

The OEST continued to serve as Technical Secretariat of the Social Network of Latin America and the Caribbean in 2004. In discharging this function, its duty was to administer the Network's voluntary fund and lend a hand in conducting the activities planned in the Network's 2004 work program. It provided its support for workshops where experiences and knowledge could be shared and passed along: in Honduras (January), in Peru (August), and in Uruguay (November). It was also instrumental in organizing and staging the First Meeting of the Network's Coordinating Committee in Santiago, Chile (April), and the Social Network's Ninth Annual Conference, held in San Pedro Sula, Honduras (September).

Under an agreement signed with the IDB, the General Secretariat serves as executing agency of the Inter-Regional Program of Internships among the Social Network's member institutions. Under this program, the OEST prepared the final report covering execution of the Network's activities.

Following the guidelines contained in the OAS' Inter-American Program to Combat Poverty and Discrimination, particularly as regards the priority attached to vulnerable groups such as children and young people, the Office cooperated with and participated in events organized by academic centers in the region. In September it presented a paper at the Second International Conference *"Crianças e Adolescentes Crescendo em Contextos de Pobreza, Marginalidade e Violencia na America Latina,"* held under the auspices of the Pontificia Universidade Catolica of Rio de Janeiro. In November, it collaborated with Chile's Universidad Diego Portales on its Master's Degree Program in Social Policy and the Rights of Children and the Family.

Employment and labor development

A workshop was held in conjunction with the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) on the impact of trade and integration on labor (May). It was attended by international experts and representatives from

the ministries of labor of 21 member states. In response to a recommendation of Working Group 1 of the Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor (IACML) on the Labor Dimensions of the Summit of the Americas Process, studies were done on the challenges and opportunities that labor markets might face as a result of economic integration within the Summit process.

The meeting of the working groups of the Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor (IACML) was organized and held at OAS headquarters (May 12 through 14, 2004). Working Group 1: Labor Dimensions of the Summit of the Americas Process, examined how labor is dealt with in the free trade agreements and the implications of globalization and integration for the informal sector, among other matters. Working Group 2: Institutional Strengthening of the Ministries of Labor, discussed the development of mechanisms to modernize ministries of labor and ways to use their resources to maximum advantage. Participating in this meeting were representatives of 21 ministries of labor, COSATE, CEATAL, and the key international organizations in the IACML process, namely the World Bank, the IDB, the ILO, and PAHO.

Under the Horizontal Cooperation Strategy, the OEST, working in cooperation with the Ministry of Labor and Social Security of El Salvador, conducted the Workshop on Occupational Health and Safety in San Salvador (April 29 and 30, 2004). The Workshop examined the issue of the health and safety of workers against the backdrop of the integration processes in the Hemisphere. In attendance were all the ministers of labor of Central America, representatives of the ministries of the other subregions, international organizations (ILO, PAHO, IDB, SICA), and specialized centers. The Workshop also provided an opportunity to do some critical analysis of the subregional experience of the Regional Occupational Health and Safety Center (CERSSO) as a model for other subregions. The Ministry of Labor of Belize offered to help the CARICOM member countries analyze a critical transfer of the CERSSO model. The participating countries and organizations issued the Recommendations of San Salvador, a document that includes key issues that the region should target in connection with occupational health and safety.

The ministers of labor who attended the XIII IACML, held in Brazil in September 2003, decided to have a feasibility study done with a view to developing an inter-American mechanism "with the objective of deepening international collaboration and coordination to modernize labour administrations and support the IACML in its mandate to strengthen the capacities of the Ministries of Labour in the Hemisphere." They also instructed the past, present, and future Chairs pro tempore of the IACML (the troika) to take the lead in a study conducted with the support of the Secretariat under the OEST's responsibility. The study was done by three experts, from Brazil, Canada, and Mexico, with technical assistance from the OAS. The latter convened three coordination meetings that were also attended by the ILO and other organizations. It also provided advice on the presentation of a preliminary version of the study to the meeting of the working groups of the IACML (May 2004). The study was completed in November and will be presented at the meetings of the IACML working groups, slated for April 2005.

The 45th Directing Council of PAHO established, for the first time, a dialogue with the IACML on the subject of workers' health and safety. The PAHO Directing Council welcomed the past, present, and future Chairs pro tempore of the IACML and representatives of the ministries of labor from other countries of the region. They gave a presentation on the progress of the XII, XIII, and forthcoming XIV IACML in the area of worker health and safety. The Directing Council of PAHO adopted a resolution to continue working to build a strategic alliance between the health and labor sectors.

The XVII World Congress on Safety and Health at Work, sponsored by the NSC, the ILO, and the USDOL/OSHA, will be held in September 2005. The III Hispanic Forum will be among its activities. In preparation for this Congress, the NSC, PAHO, and the OAS convened an Occupational Health and Safety Hemispheric Leadership Meeting, attended by the Ministries of Labor of El Salvador, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Canada, Peru, and the United States.

The Ministerial Council on the North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation (ACLAN), in coordination with the OEST, organized and financed the Workshop on Supporting Economic Growth through Effective Employment Services" (held in Cancún, Mexico, September 29-30, 2004), as a contribution toward implementation of the Plan of Action of the XIII IACML. The purpose of the Workshop was to serve as a forum to discuss effective employment services for the contribution they can make to economic growth. It featured lessons learned on the design and application of various models of employment services within the region's labor markets. It also examined the cooperative initiatives among countries, with a view to developing, within the IACML framework, proposals for ongoing cooperative activities to make better and more effective use of employment services systems.

Because skills certification plays an absolutely central role in making the workforce more employable, the OEST has been putting together a Virtual Course on Certification of Labor Competencies. It draws mainly upon the experience of the Labor Competency Standardization and Certification Council (CONOCER) of Mexico. Expectations are that this course will be delivered through the Educational Portal of the Americas sometime in 2005.

Office of Sustainable Development and Environment

The Office of Sustainable Development and Environment (OSDE) is the office of the Secretariat that bears chief responsibility in the area of sustainable development and environment in the region.

The General Assembly and the Inter-American Committee on Sustainable Development (CIDS-III) have issued mandates directly to the Office. Furthermore, in the Plan of Action for the Sustainable Development of the Americas, adopted in Bolivia in 1996, the Heads of State and Government entrusted the OAS with a number of mandates. The Plans of Action adopted at the Santiago and Quebec Summits underscored the Organization's role in following up on the Bolivia Summit. The Office's activities are in response to the measures called for in the Inter-American Program for Sustainable Development, which is an integral part of the Strategic Plan for Partnership for Development 2002-2005 and will steer the work that the OAS will do in carrying out the Summit mandates. Its work also serves to carry out Agenda 21, the "Millennium Development Goals," and other agreements emanating from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992); the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (Barbados, 1994); the United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002); and other regional and global meetings on the topic. The Office will also respond to the actions that member states adopted in the area of sustainable development, as follow-up to the agreements reached in the Declaration of Nuevo León, adopted at the Special Summit of the Americas, held in Monterrey, Mexico, in January 2004.

The Office is also committed to continuing to provide the member states with support in critical areas of sustainable development and environment, and to assisting the countries in the design, development, and execution of policies, projects, and programs to enable the member states to better cope with the challenges they face in the area of integrated management of water resources, preservation and conservation of the biological diversity, adaptation to climate change, renewable energy, management of natural hazards risks, and environmental management and economics.

Activities related to the Summit in Bolivia

The activities conducted to follow up on the Santa Cruz de la Sierra Plan of Action continued. The Office provided its support to the Working Group on Sustainable Development, established by CEPCIDI in 2002 in response to the recommendation received from the Third Regular Meeting of the Inter-American Committee on Sustainable Development (CIDS).

In furtherance of the mandates related to the Santa Cruz de la Sierra Plan of Action and the Third Regular Meeting of the Inter-American Committee on Sustainable Development, the Office conducted the following activities:

- Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network

Because of the importance of protecting the biodiversity of the Americas, the Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network (IABIN) was created by mandate of the Summit of the Americas on Sustainable Development to serve as an Internet-based technical and scientific cooperation forum seeking to increase coordination among the countries of the Hemisphere in compiling and sharing biodiversity-related information and then using that information in decision-making and education. The purpose of IABIN is to promote the conservation, use, and sustainable development of the biological diversity in the Americas by better managing biological data and making more information available for decision-making. While IABIN is planned as a decentralized system of data suppliers in which the information is preserved and controlled by the suppliers themselves, one of its key features is the existence of a single point for accessing the network's combined resources.

In 2002, the IABIN Council asked the OAS to serve as executing agency for IABIN's plan of action. The latter involves activities totaling US$35 million. Recently, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) approved financing of US$6 million for that plan's implementation, which the OAS General Secretariat will execute by way of the OSDE.

Furthermore, agreements were reached on the priorities for sharing data on biodiversity with the Americas' pioneering information technology institutions in that area. Cofinancing totaling US$28.9 million, coming from 76 regional or national institutions and programs, has been identified. The project will work to: (a) develop an Internet-based network, under decentralized administration, to provide access to scientifically reliable information on biodiversity–data now available in individual institutions and agencies of the Americas; (b) provide the tools needed to learn from that wealth of resources, which in turn will provide the premise for constructive decisions on how best to preserve that biodiversity; and (c) provide a means for sharing information in the Americas that is relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of the biological diversity, and thus promote and facilitate technical and scientific cooperation to help accomplish the mandate of the Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

The Secretariat is in charge of IABIN's daily activities. The IABIN Council selected the City of Knowledge, a nongovernmental organization headquartered in Panama City, to serve as the host organization of the IABIN Secretariat.

The IABIN access portal is at www.iabin.net and is becoming a gateway to information on biodiversity in the Americas and a means to interconnect data from a variety of institutions and agencies involved in preserving and conserving the biodiversity. The portal provides easy-to-use interfaces to share knowledge. IABIN is also developing a search catalogue for data on biodiversity and information resources that will enable users to identify and locate the content available on the network: databases on biodiversity, publications, museum collections, value-added information (such as points of high biodiversity, eco-regions, and invasive species) and other databases on the subject. Other value-added tools are planned, and will be created through the activities of the Secretariat and the network.

- Environmental law

In the area of environmental law and economic policy, the Office has worked at both the regional and hemispheric levels to strengthen economic, social, and environmental policies so as to ensure that they are

mutually reinforcing and contribute to sustainable development. The Office has also focused on building up capacities for environmental management amid the economic integration and liberalization of trade in the region. Its Inter-American Forum on Environmental Law (FIDA) strengthens the agenda on environmental cooperation, to help the OAS member states comply with environmental and health standards required for market access. The Office has started environmental impact assessments in MERCOSUR, the Andean Region, Central America, and the Caribbean on the environmental effects of trade and the legal-institutional options and options for sustainable policies within the framework of economic integration. The projects in this area include the following:

The project "Institutional Capacity-Building in the Context of the Free Market" does environmental impact assessments associated with trade and economic integration. The assessments of Argentina and Brazil have been completed, and the studies done of Paraguay, Uruguay, Costa Rica, and Guatemala are currently under review. Similar studies are in progress for Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, and the Caribbean.

The project "Capacity-Building Needs and Priorities in Trade and the Environment in Central America" is intended to identify lessons learned on trade assessments, with the emphasis on building up institutional capacity in El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua. The plan is to develop an agenda for cooperation that focuses primarily on the new challenges that the region faces as a result of the new economic and trade reforms. With these developments in mind, OAS/OSDE organized an informal meeting with the ministers of environment of Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, which enabled all parties to discuss the immediate priorities at both the national and regional levels. The priority areas of emphasis will be agriculture, tourism, and textiles.

This project "Challenges Posed by Economic Integration for the Agricultural Sector" features activities in environmental management in El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua, to give the countries of the region an overview of the principal environmental problems and trends in trade in the agricultural sector.

The purpose of the "Trade and Environmental Health Initiative" is to develop a joint initiative between the Office of Sustainable Development and Environment and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) on the implications that globalization and trade have for environmental health in the Americas.

Activities related to the Summits of the Americas

- Property registration

With a view to furthering the progress accomplished with implementation of the program to improve property registration systems in compliance with the mandates of the Second and Third Summits of the Americas, the OSDE has continued to cooperate with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). That program is conducted through the Virtual Office of the Inter-Summit Property Systems Initiative (IPSI), a mechanism that USAID and the OAS created for that purpose with USAID funding.

- Renewable energy

The Office continued to serve as Technical Secretariat of the Renewable Energy in the Americas Initiative (REIA). It supported the countries' efforts to promote sustainable energy use in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In Chajul, El Quiche, Guatemala, the Initiative helped build a small hydroelectric plant. REIA carried on its activities within the Global Sustainable Energy Islands Initiative (GSEII), raising significant amounts of external funding from the United Nations Foundation/UNIDO. That Initiative has identified a number

of potential renewable energy projects in Dominica, Grenada, and Saint Lucia and is working with local businesses to carry out those projects. GSEII is also establishing a program to fund solar energy in Saint Lucia, which will be supervised by the Saint Lucia Cooperative League. The program will offer loans to homeowners to purchase solar-run water heaters for their homes. The Office is also serving as executing agency for the Eastern Caribbean Geothermal Development Project, financed by the Global Environment Facility (Geo-Caraibes) in Dominica, Saint Lucia, and Saint Kitts and Nevis. The project is in its development phase (PDF-B). Technical missions have already been conducted in the three countries and complete explorations have been done in Saint Kitts and Nevis. Assistance was also provided to the countries to introduce legal reforms, policy changes, and capacity-building activities. Work has also gotten started on the design of the Geothermal Drilling Risk Fund.

The Office has been designated as Regional Secretariat for the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEEP) for Latin America and the Caribbean. As Regional Secretariat, the Office develops databases on renewable and efficient energy at the regional level, while providing support to regional projects and to requests for financing filed with the Partnership's International Secretariat. The Office is also in charge of promoting and advocating the development of renewable energy and energy efficiency in the region by coordinating capacity-building initiatives, organizing informative seminars, and enabling the formation of partnerships among project donors and the exchange of information.

- Management of Natural Hazards Risk

In keeping with the mandates from the Summit, the Office continued to develop projects designed to help reduce vulnerability to natural hazards. It continued to provide member states with support in executing the Inter-American Strategy for Policy on Vulnerability Reduction, Risk Management and Disaster Reduction. The Office also provided assistance to the Permanent Council's Committee on Hemispheric Security and its working groups on issues related to FONDEM, the Inter-American Committee on Natural Disaster Reduction (IACNDR), risk management, and reconstruction in the wake of the 2004 hurricanes.

The Office took part in the interagency technical meetings of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and its Working Group on Risk, Vulnerability and Disaster Impact Assessment, and participated in the Presiding Council of the ProVention Consortium with the World Bank, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, regional multilateral banks, and nongovernmental organizations. It provided advisory services in ProVention projects on assessment of mitigation options and community-risk assessment.

In the Caribbean Hazard Mitigation Capacity Building Project (CHAMP), the Office collaborates with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA) and with the Caribbean Development Bank's Disaster Mitigation Facility (CDB/DMFC) on the formulation of a Model National Policy for Disaster Mitigation. Steps were taken to begin adapting this model in the four pilot countries: the British Virgin Islands, Grenada, Saint Lucia, and Belize. Consultations were conducted to put together safer building practices and a curriculum for safer building practices, to be completed in early 2005. The program's central focus is generation of a common digital database (CDD) to be used to steer the evaluation of activities in hazard mapping and vulnerability assessment (HMVA), and thus facilitate hazard mitigation planning. CHAMP's activities have been reprogrammed to tackle the new problems created by the region's catastrophic 2004 hurricane season.

In cooperation with UNESCO and the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the Hemispheric Plan for Reducing the Education Sector's Vulnerability to Disasters (EDUPLANhemisférico) featured prominently in a Latin American Conference on Education and Disaster Reduction as a contribution to the World Conference on Disaster Reduction. Another program also got under way with hemisphere-wide participation, namely, Disaster Reduction on University

Campuses in the Americas (DRUCA). One objective is its possible presentation at the Third Hemispheric Conference on Disaster Reduction in the Education Sector, to be held in July 2005.

Cooperating with international financial institutions (IFIs), the Office worked with the World Bank to prepare an analysis of opportunities for natural hazards risk management in Central America, considering its experience in disasters and its regional, national, and sectoral plans. Through training and technical advisory services, the Office continued to provide advisory services to the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) in natural hazards risk management.

The Office is partnering with the International Red Cross and its Regional Delegation in Panama in the Program on Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) for Latin America and the Caribbean. The program includes the development of tools that communities can use to make their economic and social infrastructure less vulnerable to hazards.

The Fourth Workshop on Vulnerability Assessment Techniques (VAT-IV) was held in cooperation with the Caribbean Development Bank and the United States' National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The VAT process is on the way to being adopted by the ProVention Consortium, which includes Asia.

- Water management

The Office continued to support the countries' efforts to promote integrated and sustainable management of water resources, particularly in watersheds spanning more than one country and in coastal areas. It also continued to support projects that helped design national and regional policies for integrated management of water resources in the Americas. Specifically, these projects involve the River Plate, Amazon, Bermejo, San Francisco, San Juan, Pantanal, and Upper Paraguay River Basins and the Guarani Aquifer, and are carried out under Cooperation Agreements concluded with UNEP, UNESCO, and the World Bank and with a financial contribution from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), as well as other regional projects and initiatives. The Office also supports execution of other national projects carried out in collaboration with the Government of Brazil. A description of these projects and a brief summary of the activities carried out appear below:

The "Strategic Action Program (SAP) for the Binational Bermejo River Basin" promotes the Basin's sustainable development and prevention of the environmental degradation it is suffering, particularly as regards erosion, sedimentation, and water quality. The implementation phase of the project is in its third year, with funding from the GEF totaling 11.4 million.

The purpose of the "Strategic Action Programs for Integrated Management of Water Resources and the Sustainable Development of the San Juan River Basin and Its Coastal Zone (SJRB)" is to contribute to the conservation and preservation of ecosystems and the region's social and economic development, and to address transboundary problems in the Basin through integrated management of its water resources and coastal zone. The project is currently finalizing the formulation of a Strategic Action Program (SAP) based on studies carried out of the water resources and the coastal area, which included a survey and analysis of physical, chemical, and biotic data and socioeconomic information, with emphasis on the gender situation and roles, cross-border human migration patterns, human migration between rural and urban areas, and climate variability. Demonstration projects were also completed. From the very outset, civil society–through grassroots organizations, nongovernmental organizations, local governments, and other parties–had a hand in designing these projects. The project has been extended until June 30, 2005, in order to complete the SAP and prepare and negotiate a bridge project to be submitted to the GEF, for close to one million dollars. Its purpose would basically be to get into place the institutional, administrative, technical, and legal infrastructure needed to carry out the SAP.

The purpose of the project "Integrated Management of Land-based Activities in the São Francisco River Basin" is to contribute to the sustainable development of the San Francisco River Basin and its adjacent coastal area. It includes an environmental analysis to identify and measure the priority issues; execute a plan involving key stakeholders, namely, the public and interested groups; strengthen and improve laws and institutions; and craft an integrated watershed management program. The project completed its activities when the Basin Committee was installed and preparation of the Ten-Year Plan for the Water Resources in the São Francisco Basin (2004-2013) was completed, approved by the Committee, and accepted by the stakeholders in the Basin.

The project "Execution of Integrated Watershed Management Practices for the Pantanal and Upper Paraguay River Basin" is for execution of the watershed management program for the Pantanal and the Upper Paraguay River Basin. The activities in this project focused on strengthening and restoring the environmental health of the ecological system, providing protection to threatened species within the Pantanal, and executing strategic activities to get to and deal with the root causes of the degradation. The project completed all the studies, test projects, and formulation of the Strategic Action Plan for Integrated Management of the Upper Paraguay River Basin and the Pantanal. That material is now being edited and will be published shortly.

The purpose of the "Guarani Aquifer System Project (GUARAS)" is to assist Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay with joint preparation and execution of a common institutional, legal, and technical framework to manage and preserve the Guarani Aquifer System for current and future generations. In the past year, the main calls for tenders have been announced, which include construction of a base map and preparation of an overall hydrogeological study. Four pilot projects have been developed and negotiated and will get under way next year. Twelve memoranda of understanding were signed with universities in the four countries, to conduct nine studies being funded by the Government of the Netherlands. A total of 24 projects in environmental education were selected to be part of the Citizenship Fund. This fund was established to encourage civil society's active participation in the project, most especially by indigenous groups. The communication and reporting strategy was mapped out and efforts were made to publicize the activities and create an awareness of the project and its proposal in regional and national forums, including MERCOSUR, where an ad hoc group was established for the GUARAS.

The main objective of the project "Strengthening of the Water Sector in Brazil (SRH)" is to bolster the initiatives of Brazil's Secretariat of Water Resources vis-à-vis formulation and execution of national policies in the water sector.

The project "Sustainable Development of the Parnaíba River Valley" promotes execution of an irrigation infrastructure plan for the Parnaíba River Valley. It involves a diagnostic study of the Parnaíba Basin and its socioeconomic potential. The project is crafting a plan of action for the Valley's integrated development, including strategic goals that have to be accomplished to achieve the Basin's sustainable development.

The project "Integrated Actions for Planning the Sustainable Development of Amazonia (PRODESAM)" is intended to help complete a development plan for Brazil's Amazon region. It includes updating a database on that region, in order to update, expand, and modernize the existing database and assist with formulation of development plans in Brazil's Amazonian states.

The project "Formulation of a Framework for the Sustainable Management of the Transboundary Water Resources of the River Plate Basin" is intended to develop a framework for coordinated action to move in the direction of a more integrated vision of the Basin. The project focuses particularly on the role that surface and underground waters play in mitigating the effects of climate change, and on developing a

water use strategy that will resolve or ease the stress of areas currently undergoing deterioration and/or desertification and the semi-arid area of the Gran Chaco, including proposals for pilot or demonstration activities. During the reporting period, work was done on the Transboundary Diagnostic Analyses and National Overviews for the five participating countries. A proposal is being prepared for the GEF for formulation of the Strategic Action Program. The project was extended until June 2005 in order to complete the activities in which climate-prediction models and hydrometeorological monitoring systems are being created and to complete the final documents and negotiate the next phase of the project with the GEF.

As Technical Secretariat, the Office continued to provide its assistance to the Executive Committee, the Advisory Council, and the Foundation of the Inter-American Water Resources Network (IWRN).

The Project "Development and Implementation of Mechanisms to Disseminate Lessons and Experiences in Integrated Transboundary Water Resources Management in Latin America and the Caribbean–DELTAMERICA Project" continued. Its main objective is to develop mechanisms and tools to pass along lessons learned and best practices in integrated water resource management. In 2004, the project focused on subregional dialogue and on developing and implementing virtual nodes. Web portals for Brazil and the Southern Cone (located in the Office of Argentina's Deputy Secretary of Water Resources) were launched. Also, an interface was developed enabling portals to relay data directly to the IWRN's central portal. Further progress was made in compiling the lessons and best practices learned from the GEF projects conducted under its International Waters Program (International River Basins and Aquifers) and other relevant projects in the Americas.

The Office continued to serve as a hub enabling articulation among the national focal points of the Inter-American Water Resources Network with regard to the Hemispheric Follow-up Meeting to the IV World Water Forum.

Activities associated with General Assembly mandates

As a follow-up to the efforts started under the Caribbean Planning for Adaptation to Climate Change Project (CPACC), the Office received a request from the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to execute a one-year project funded by the Global Environment Facility. The goal of the project will be to improve Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' preparedness to respond and adapt to climate change. The project got under way in April 2004 and will be completed in early 2005. The activities include an improved capacity to monitor sea level and climate; an evaluation of the technological needs to adapt them to climate change; an update of greenhouse gas emissions, and a campaign to educate the public and make it aware of the activities on climate change, targeted at both the general public and at specific sectors.

Adaptation to climate change is being introduced into Caribbean development plans through an initiative adopted by the Caribbean Development Bank in conjunction with the OAS and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The objective of the initiative is to make natural disaster assessment and climate change a factor in the preparation of projects and the Bank's own review process, in partnership with the participating countries. The Office is providing its support to this initiative by integrating policies on climate-change adaptation and disaster mitigation for Saint Lucia.

Execution of CIDI's integral cooperation project

The Office is conducting a FEMCIDI-financed project in the border region between Suriname and Brazil, jointly with the indigenous communities of Trio and Wayana. The purpose of the project is to preserve and expand the cultural and physical environment, sustainable development, education, capacity-building,

health, and safety of the communities in that region. Some of the activities completed in 2004 were the creation of lanes to enable communities to communicate with each other; general training in health, and surveillance and supervision of indigenous lands to prevent outside incursions.

Activities with international organizations

The Office collaborated with the IDB on the preparations for the Regional Policy Dialogue among Vice Ministers of Environment of the Americas. It also took part in the subregional preparatory meetings that the IDB organized with the Vice Ministers, and collaborated in preparing the report that the IDB and other agencies will present to the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The Office also worked with UNEP's Geneva office to prepare a report on building capacities for environmental management in a trade-liberalization environment.

Office of Scholarships, Training, and Information Technology

The mission of the Office is to help develop the human resources of the countries of the region through the Scholarship and Training Programs and use of the new information and communication technologies. The Office is made up of the scholarships and training area and the information technology area, both geared toward developing human potential.

In 2004, the Office of Scholarships, Training, and Information Technology continued to help build capacities in the countries of the region by putting into practice a number of strategies geared toward expanding the scholarship programs and using its resources more efficiently. The strategies put into practice have focused on the following:

- Maximizing the number of scholarships awarded with the available funds by using innovative mechanisms to improve the program's cost-benefit ratio.
- Identifying and implementing strategies for greater access to higher education and professional and technical training.
- Establishing new mechanisms that better match national development priorities.
- Developing alliances and partnerships with existing scholarship programs in the member states and in the permanent observer states.
- Consolidating and expanding the use of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) to train human resources.

Here, the Office has two main objectives. The first has to do with execution of the Scholarship and Training Programs, cooperating with the member states in their efforts to achieve their integral development objectives by cultivating and modernizing their human resources in the priority areas established by the Summits of the Americas, in CIDI's Strategic Plan for Partnership for Development, and by the Organization's General Assembly. In furtherance of that objective, in 2004 the OAS Scholarship and Training Programs awarded almost 1,300 on-campus and distance-education scholarships to qualified persons from the OAS member states. The second objective is to expand human-resource training through the use of ICTs; to accomplish that objective, in 2004 it helped train over 5,500 people through the Educational Portal of the Americas.

More efficient use of resources

The co-funding of OAS scholarships by a broad consortium of universities in the region, in combination with the OAS' mechanism for placing scholarship recipients, has been one of the most effective initiatives put into practice in recent years. Between 2001 and 2004, partnerships of this type multiplied the funds

available to the OAS Scholarship and Training Programs by combining those funds with the resources of the universities participating in the consortium. Thus far, cofinancing agreements have been concluded with almost 60 universities in Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Jamaica, Mexico, Peru, the United States, Uruguay, and Venezuela. By more effectively using the Organization's resources, the number of scholarships for studies has gradually but markedly increased in the last three years, thereby maximizing the return on the budgeted funds assigned to the Office for graduate scholarships. It is important to note that the scholarships for graduate studies and research account for around 88 percent of the funds appropriated in the budget for scholarships and training. However, as Table 1 shows, there has been an increase of almost 50 percent between 2001 and 2004.

Table 1: Evolution of Scholarships for Graduate Studies and Research

	2001	2002	2003	2004	% change 2001-2004
Number of scholarships and extensions granted	282	348	469	421	49.3
Approved budget (US$ thousands)	6,364.4	5,603.0	5,603.0	5,603.0	-12.0

Greater access to higher education and training

In 2004, the Office of Scholarships, Training, and Information Technology stepped up its efforts to expand its distance-education activities. This is the area that offers the greatest potential because, in cost-benefit terms, it can do more to open doors to higher education and training. Distance education has made important strides in pedagogical efficiency. Accordingly, the Office is currently in an advanced stage of negotiations with Spain's Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED) and with Mexico's Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITESM). Once those negotiations have concluded, they will open up greater distance-education opportunities, enabling qualified persons from Latin America and the Caribbean to pursue online studies.

Establishment of strategic partnerships with other entities that grant scholarships

Partnership with scholarship programs in the member states to cofinance scholarships for studies abroad was another effective strategy for maximizing efficiency in the use of funds from national scholarship programs both by supplementing the OAS funds and by capitalizing the agreements that the OAS has concluded with numerous universities and interagency programs.

In addition to the joint fellowship program in ecology that the OAS Scholarship and Training Programs have had with the Fulbright Program for some years now, in December 2004 the General Secretariat of the OAS, the Ministry of Planning and Cooperation of Chile (MIDEPLAN), and Chile's International Cooperation Agency signed a cooperation agreement setting out the terms and conditions for cofinancing Chilean scholarship recipients pursuing studies in universities or specialized centers of excellence in the OAS member states. Under the terms of this agreement, the "Presidente de la República" Scholarship Program will have access to the institutions of higher learning that are part of the OAS University Consortium, thereby getting the advantage of the lower tuition fees and other financial aid mechanisms established under the agreements signed with the OAS. Similar negotiations are under way with national institutions in Argentina, Brazil, and Colombia.

Talks are also in progress with the Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional (AECI) for a graduate scholarship program jointly funded by the two organizations, and with the Fundación Carolina, also of Spain.

Convergence with national priorities

The chief criterion for selecting scholarship recipients are the priority areas listed in CIDI's Strategic Plan. Thus, the Office reviews the Strategic Plan and extracts from it a list of eligible areas of study. The Office also examines the results of the regional programming meetings for FEMCIDI-funded projects, and the needs and priorities of the member states.

Accordingly, efforts have been made to have provisions incorporated into the policies and regulations governing the OAS scholarship programs to make such agreements procedurally possible.

Scholarships awarded in 2004

- Academic Studies Scholarships

The Graduate Studies Program awards scholarships for graduate (master's and doctoral) studies in institutions of higher learning in the region. The number of students pursuing master's degrees and doctorates with OAS scholarships has increased steadily. Nonetheless, the demand for the educational opportunities required to build institutional capacities in new areas is growing exponentially and has been a topic of particular concern at the Summits of the Americas and in OAS mandates. In 2004, the OAS awarded a total of 421 scholarships for on-campus graduate studies: of these, 265 were new scholarships and 156 were extensions of existing scholarships. The estimated worth of those scholarships is approximately US$5.6 million. A breakdown of the scholarships awarded in 2004 appears in Appendix F to this report.

For its part, the Undergraduate Studies Program awards scholarships to eligible students to complete the last two years of undergraduate studies for a bachelor's degree, *Licenciado*, or equivalent degree. While the program is for English-speaking students from the Caribbean, General Assembly resolution AG/RES. 1387 (XXVI-O/96) directed that the benefits of this program be extended to Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Paraguay, provided external resources were obtained. In 2004, the OAS awarded 114 scholarships for undergraduate on-campus studies: of these, 102 were new scholarships and the other 12 were extensions of existing scholarships. The estimated cost is approximately US$0.7 million.

- Professional Development Scholarships

The professional development scholarships offer opportunities for people to update their professional expertise in areas of specialization related to the priority areas of the OAS and CIDI. These scholarships are offered by the governments of the OAS member states and permanent observers, regional or international organizations, public and private institutions, and institutions of higher learning through the OAS and with OAS co-funding. They are awarded for on-campus training or distance education, through programs offered online and by the Educational Portal of the Americas and other institutions. Professional development scholarships are also offered for specific programs of studies proposed by the inter-American committees of the OAS or by the technical units of the General Secretariat. This type of scholarship has been awarded primarily in the areas of telecommunications, international law, human rights, and journalism. In 2004, the OAS awarded a total of 727 professional development scholarships, at an approximate cost of US$1.3 million.

The Educational Portal of the Americas

Established pursuant to a mandate from the Third Summit of the Americas and officially inaugurated in September 2001 during the Meeting of Ministers of Education (Punta del Este, Uruguay), the Portal was created to help train human resources through the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs). In existence for three years, the Educational Portal of the Americas (www.educoea.org) has by now helped to train more than 10,000 professionals across the region. It has reached more than 200 countries and territories worldwide, with over 184 million visits and approximately a thousand new users registered each month (additional information is available in Appendix F to this report).

Its Virtual Classroom, an online interactive teaching-learning environment, has continued to offer such courses as "Quality in Basic Education" (in English, Spanish, and Portuguese); "Introduction to the Formulation of E-Government Strategies" (in Spanish and English); "Food Education"; "How Should Ethics, Social Capital, and Development Be Taught in the University?"; and "Science, Technology, and Society: Contributions to be gained from the gender focus." Some 18 courses in CIDI's priority areas are in preparation and will be offered in 2005.

One of the most visited services in 2004 was the Portal's Digital Library, with close to 100 journals and scientific monographs available at no cost, including La Educ@ción, the INTERAMER collection, the Inter-American Review of Bibliography (RIB), and the series "Trends for a Common Future." The Portal has also continued to maintain and update its database with over 4,500 programs and courses from over 1,500 accredited universities in the region. Also, every month it carries news and events related to distance education in the region, and circulates information on the OAS Scholarship and Training Programs.

Institute of Advanced Studies for the Americas

The Institute of Advanced Studies for the Americas (INEAM), an initiative of the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Inter-American Organization for Higher Education (IOHE), is a virtual campus that uses a combination of traditional, online, and multimedia methods to offer its programs and courses. These include the Educational Portal of the Americas. INEAM also offers educational services by availing itself of contributions from universities and centers of excellence everywhere in the region. Thanks to the support received from external sources of funding, INEAM is able to offer financial aid (partial or full) to applicants selected from the member states, as shown in Appendix F.

In mid-2004, an INEAM honorary committee was created to provide guidance and receive support to carry out INEAM's activities. Its members are academic authorities, former heads of government, and members of civil society and the private sector, as well as observers from international organizations such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the World Bank, the United Nations, and UNESCO. INEAM also has other honorary bodies, such as its Governing Council, which oversees INEAM's plans, projects, and activities, and four technical advisory committees composed of experts in their respective areas: (a) the Academic Committee, which assesses the current needs for human-resource development with a view to the region's prospective development; (b) the Accreditation Committee, which evaluates online and/or multimedia educational offerings to determine whether they qualify for academic accreditation at the inter-American level; (c) the Educational Management Committee, which analyzes the current and future capacities of the region's institutions of higher learning and universities to develop educational services through ICTs; and (d) the Committee on Multimedia, which oversees the educational quality of INEAM's services through the Educational Portal of the Americas. It is important to underscore the fact that all the members of these bodies provide their services and cooperation *ad honorem.*

The First Meeting of the Accreditation Committee was held at the Universidad de Pompeu Fabra, in Barcelona, Spain, on June 14 and 15, where the group examined and worked on the activities in its work program, prepared recommendations and guiding principles, and elected its officers.

As part of the activities planned for the fourth and final year of organization of the Educational Portal of the Americas and in furtherance of an agreement established in 2000, in December 2004 a memorandum of understanding was signed between the University of New Mexico's ISTEC (Ibero-American Science and Technology Education Consortium) and the OAS, to create an INEAM regional academic center at ISTEC headquarters in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The center will host on-site meetings and seminars, further efforts to raise funds from the private sector, hold the first meeting of INEAM's Governing Council in mid-2005, and support and maintain the Portal's technological infrastructure, with no financial implications for the OAS. Moreover, negotiations are in progress to establish subregional INEAM centers in Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Trinidad and Tobago, and elsewhere.

Special Events

The OAS provided technical and administrative support to the Fifth International Event in Education, Professional Training and New Technologies, Virtual Educa 2004, held in Barcelona, Spain, from June 16 to 18, 2004, as part of the World Forum of Cultures. More than 1,200 people from all the OAS member states and the European Union participated in the many activities, workshops, and meetings staged at that event. The participants also established the International Association Virtual Educa (ASIVE) to organize future events.

With private sector support and as part of Virtual Educa 2004, INEAM awarded the Inter-American Prize in New Technologies to two initiatives: "Robotics and Learning by Design," presented by Costa Rica's Omar Dengo Foundation, and "Portable Technology in the Classroom," presented by the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. Honorable mentions went to three other initiatives: "*Red Telar*" [*Todos en La Red*] of Argentina; "Digital Geo-technologies at the Secondary Level" from the Universidade do Vale do Paraiba (UNIVAP), Brazil; and "Virtual School" from Caldas, Colombia. Special awards in the field of social responsibility went to the Bizcaya Provincial Council and to REDOX, for their initiative "DEMA Virtual del Futuro"; and "Quality of Education" to Dr. Gabriel Ferraté Pascual, President of the Universidad Abierta de Cataluña for what he has done to develop and strengthen the knowledge society through the virtual "meta campuses."

Office of Trade, Growth, and Competitiveness

With Executive Order 04-01, corr. 1, the Trade Unit became the Office of Trade, Growth, and Competitiveness, responsible for the topics of tourism, growth and competitiveness, trade, and the Foreign Trade Information System (SICE). Upon issuance of Executive Order 05-03, corr. 1, the Office was reorganized and is currently composed of the Division of Trade and Information, the Division of Growth and Competitiveness, the Division of Tourism and Small Enterprise, and the Inter-American Ports Division.

In resolution AG/RES. 2014 (XXXIV-O/04), adopted at its thirty-fourth regular session, held in Quito, Ecuador, the General Assembly reaffirmed the OAS' commitment to supporting the free trade and economic integration process in the Hemisphere. It also reaffirmed its support for the FTAA Hemispheric Cooperation Program.

Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA)

Between February 2004 and February 2005, the Office provided assistance to the member states related to two types of forums in the FTAA process: the meetings of the FTAA Negotiating Groups, and the meeting of the deputy trade ministers held in Puebla, Mexico, in February 2004. These activities were coordinated by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), which are the two institutions partnered with the OAS on the Tripartite Committee (TC).

The work done by the Office to support the Negotiating Groups centered around their mandate and included the compilations, studies, analysis, and technical assistance that those groups requested.

In the Ministerial Declaration of Miami, the Ministers made a number of specific requests of the Tripartite Committee, namely: (1) that the Tripartite Committee and the Consultative Group on Smaller Economies (CGSE) continue to support the Trade Negotiations Committee (TNC) to keep the latter's report on the progress achieved in relation to the treatment of differences in the levels of development and the size of economies in each of the Negotiating Groups up to date; (2) that the CGSE, with the Tripartite Committee's support, "present recommendations to the TNC ... on financing methods and facilities to address the adjustment needs resulting from the differences in the levels of development and size of the economies of the Hemisphere"; and (3) that the countries, with the Tripartite Committee's assistance, finalize the trade capacity-building (TCB) strategies as appropriate and organize subregional meetings with donors to continue discussions on the TCB strategies.

At the present time, FTAA negotiations have been suspended and may resume at any time, whenever the participating governments so decide. The Cochairs of the FTAA (Brazil and the United States) planned a meeting for January 26 and 27, 2005, to try to arrive at a consensus document that will enable the FTAA negotiations to resume.

Foreign Trade Information System

The purpose of the Foreign Trade Information system (SICE) is to provide complete and current information on trade in the Hemisphere, in the OAS' four official languages. Since the SICE data was first entered on a web page (www.sice.oas.org), the number of users has increased steadily. In 2004, the site had 6,000 visitors a day.

SICE has documents on the following topics: the FTAA process; trade agreements and bilateral investment treaties between the member countries of the OAS; commercial arbitration; e-commerce; competition policy; intellectual property rights; technical barriers to trade; services; trade-related institutions; general information on the countries; businesses and chambers of commerce; and quantitative data, including trade flows, tariffs, and prices.

With the Administrative Secretariat of the FTAA, the SICE maintains the FTAA's Document Distribution Service, which was introduced on May 1, 1999. That service allows restricted access to documents generated in the FTAA negotiation process. By late 2004, the documents available at the site numbered over 28,000.

As part of the Tripartite Committee, SICE administers the FTAA's official website (www.ftaa-alca.org). This site contains all the public documents from the FTAA process, databases, publications, information on the progress of the negotiations process, and an expanded section featuring contributions from civil society and the results of the workshops conducted with representatives of civil society.

As a function of mandates received from the ministerial meeting held in November 1999 in Toronto, the Office-SICE, as a member of the Tripartite Committee, is in charge of keeping an updated calendar, with the deadlines set by the negotiating groups to receive input from delegations.

Inter-institutional cooperation

As part of the Tripartite Committee, the Office continues to work in close cooperation with the IDB and ECLAC to provide assistance to the various FTAA bodies. It has also worked on specific projects with other international organizations, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and subregional organizations like the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI), the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI), the Andean Community, the Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (CRNM), MERCOSUR, and the Secretariat for Central American Economic Integration (SIECA).

Technical cooperation

Following approval of the FTAA Hemispheric Cooperation Program (HCP) and with the inclusion of the topic of cooperation for trade capacity-building in other free trade agreements, the Office has expanded its menu of activities to assist the countries in this area. This menu includes the following areas of support:

- Support in mapping national or subregional trade capacity-building strategies

In 2004, efforts were made to help some countries modernize their trade capacity-building strategies. Those strategies were developed in 2003, during the first meeting of the HCP donors, where the Office worked with 11 countries to assist them in formulating their national or subregional strategies that define, prioritize, and articulate the cooperation they need in the area of trade. The Office's assistance was in three main spheres: preparation for negotiations, implementation of trade commitments, and adaptation to integration, including productive capacity and competitiveness in the region.

- Training of government officials and dialogue with civil society on trade policy

The following were among the Office's activities in 2004:

- *Advanced Training Program for Government Officials on multilateral and regional approaches to trade for the Americas*. Course organized and financed by the OAS, in partnership with the WTO, delivered at the University of the West Indies in Barbados and at Georgetown University, in Washington, D.C. The WTO has recommended that this course serve as a model for short courses on Trade Policy under the Doha Development Agenda.
- *Training Program in Trade Policy for Professionals in Barbados,* in February and March 2004, at the Center for International Services (CIS) of the University of the West Indies and the Centre for Trade Policy and Law (CTPL) at Carleton University in Canada.
- *Master's Degree in Trade Policy, presented in partnership with CIDA and the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, Barbados.* The purpose of this program is to train, over a three-year period, at least 60 professionals, including 40 from the OECS, in International Trade Policy, to address specific vulnerable areas unique to the subregion. The program is organized to include six months of professional experience on the Cave Hill campus of the University of the West Indies, in an institutional setting where the skill

sets needed in the OECS and in the other CARICOM countries in the area of international trade policy can be examined.

− *Round of workshops, conferences, and discussions on trade policy, for high-ranking executives, managers, and other leaders.* This training modality, targeted primarily at the entrepreneurial sector, was successfully used in Panama, Central America, and the Andean Community, in partnership with the ministries responsible for trade policy and business associations. This round has been designed to strengthen skills related to trade and to promote dialogue between the public and private sectors and civil society.

− *Program to Strengthen Capacities for Implementation and Administration of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs).* In May 2004, the Office of the Under Secretary for International Trade Negotiations of Mexico's Secretariat of Economy organized the Seminar titled "Hemispheric Experiences in the Administration of Free Trade Agreements." A total of 13 Latin American countries participated. The program had funding from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Based on the success of this first seminar and in response to requests for follow-up activities, the Office and the Secretariat of Economy of Mexico have designed a Program to Build Trade Capacities related to the Implementation and Administration of FTAs. The program is in large part based on Mexico's own experience in this area (which the Latin American countries regard as a good model). However, it also takes into account the best practices of countries like Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, and the United States.

− "*Civil Society and Free Trade*" Projects in Guatemala and Colombia*,* in conjunction with the Canadian Foundation for the Americas. The Office worked with the Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL) on implementing projects in Guatemala and Colombia to assist consultations with civil society within the framework of the negotiation of FTAs with the United States. In Guatemala, the project furthered the CAFTA dialogue among the differing groups of Guatemalan civil society. They convened a Consultative Committee that set the guidelines as to how best to present the topic in 20 seminars nationwide. In Colombia, the Office assisted the project with a series of workshops in 16 cities in the country. The workshops were attended by representatives of the private sector, civil society, and the academic community, and by journalists. These workshops will publicize and further the dialogue on the FTA with the United States and will examine issues related to the trade agenda and to the domestic agenda for competitiveness.

− *Program to support initiatives to modernize government procurement systems.* The Office is working with the member states on an analysis of government procurement systems and on orchestrating technical cooperation initiatives aimed at supporting the development of strategies and the design of projects to modernize government procurement systems. The initial thrust is online publication of information on government procurement transactions. During this reporting period, subregional coordination meetings were held in the Andean Community and in Central America. Furthermore, with the support of Brazil's Ministry of Planning and the Sao Paulo state government, a Latin American Seminar on Government E-Procurement was held where the Inter-American Network of Government E-Procurement was launched. Also held during this period was the first session of an e-forum on government procurement, which went over the Chilean experience in this area. Future forums were organized to examine the experiences of Mexico, the United States, and Costa Rica in government e-procurement. In addition, national profiles were put together with the history, current state, and trends in the development of government e-procurement systems in 12 member states of the OAS. To do this, the Office has specific contributions from the United States Permanent Mission to the OAS and from the Institute for Connectivity in the Americas

(ICA). The OAS Office of Scholarships and the United States General Services Administration (GSA) helped with the Latin American Seminar in Brazil.

- *Program to support the participation of micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in government procurement and access to e-markets and online technical services*. The Office compiled information on support for MSMEs' participation in government procurement and e-commerce, with financing from FEMCIDI and from the United States Permanent Mission to the OAS. That information will be circulated over the Internet. The Office has also established cooperative relations with Brazil's Ministry of Planning and SEBRAE, and with the United States General Services Administration (GSA), given the wealth of experience these institutions have in organizing MSME training programs to prepare them to participate in government procurement.

- *Program to support MSMEs' use of Internet services and information technology in business operations*. The Office has been supporting the countries of Central America and the Andean Community to help them build up the institutional framework that will support modernization of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprise, endeavoring to make better use of Internet services and information and communications technologies to handle the MSMEs' needs in such areas as setting up businesses, association and supply chain, export management, and participation in government procurement. In the FEMCIDI-supported Central American project on this subject, the Office helped stage two meetings of deputy ministers in order to coordinate the project and stage three Central American workshops. One result of these workshops has been the creation of an Ad Hoc Committee of Deputy Ministers for the Promotion and Development of Micro-, Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises. The ministers and presidents of Central America have already endorsed that committee's creation. This Office is working with the Committee to prepare and promote a Central American Strategy for Development of E-MSMEs in the subregion. The Office has also established the terms of a collaborative effort with the General Secretariat of the Andean Community and with CLAMPI, the Latin American Confederation of Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprise, to promote the E-MSMEs in the countries of the Andean Community.

- With support from CIDA, the *Program in Trade Capacity-Building for the Caribbean* included execution of the following projects: impact studies, modernization of laws, trade reference centers, public information and a "single window" to facilitate investment, and establishment of a consultative committee.

Tourism

The annual tourism work plan is guided by the mandates and recommendations from the various Summits of the Americas, the Inter-American Program for Sustainable Tourism Development, the Plans of Action of the Inter-American Travel Congresses, and the CIDI Strategic Plan for Partnership for Development 2002-2005.

Support for tourism is rooted in an appreciation of the industry's potential as an engine for sustainable economic growth and development and in the need to keep diversification, innovation, and upgrading of the tourism product ongoing in order to improve the member states' competitiveness in the international tourism marketplace. To accomplish these macro objectives and to use what little human and financial resources it has to maximum advantage, the Office's emphasis has been on an exchange of lessons learned and best practices among member states, particularly as regards the small tourism businesses. This report summarizes the Office's principal activities in 2004 and the first two months of 2005.

- Formulation of Policies and Plans

In 2004, personnel from the Office participated in various subregional meetings in Central America and the Caribbean. Consultations were also conducted with a number of South American countries about their policies and plans.

- Education and Training

Under the *USAID-sponsored Small Tourism Enterprise Project (STEP)*, programs have been implemented for training and certification for small hotels, with partners like CIDA-CPEC and the American Hotel and Lodging Association (AHLA).

As part of the *Local Cuisine and Restaurant Sector Development Project*, financed with FEMCIDI funds, the Office worked with the Culinary Institute of America on implementation of seminars and workshops in the Caribbean.

Under the *Training for Competitiveness and Tourism Growth Project,* the Office began to organize data on the impact that the free trade agreements have on the tourism business and to design activities that increase awareness of these impacts within the tourism sector.

The *Central American Small Hotels Assistance Project (PAPH)* has worked to develop handbooks that focus on quality service, planning, advertising, marketing, and the use of the new digital technologies. These handbooks have been used in training programs in the region.

In the security area, under the STEP Project the Office has run six seminars in the Caribbean region targeting people working in the hospitality business. The Office has also finalized a cooperation agreement with the United States Department of State for implementation of a project on "*Disaster Preparedness of Tourism Infrastructure in CARICOM.*" Under the *Central American Small Hotels Assistance Project (PAPH)*, financed with funds from FEMCIDI, a handbook was developed on "Tourism Security," adapted to the region's specific needs.

- Institutional development

Under the cooperation agreement with the Caribbean Tourism Organization, the Office was instrumental in implementing programs to promote careers in tourism and make young people aware of the opportunities it offers. Through this collaboration and with the Caribbean Hotel Association's participation, a course was held in Barbados to provide instruction to trainers.

- Tourism Product Development

Progress has been made toward creating quality standards. As part of the *Small Tourism Enterprise Project (STEP)*, best practices have been singled out and publicized. Efforts have also been made to make the public more conscious of the environment and its importance. Work has also been done on a program for environmental assessment of tourism establishments by staging a series of eight seminars.

The *Central American Small Hotels Assistance Project (PAPH)* has worked to establish quality standards and a system for rating small hotels in the Central American region. Standards and rules have been established to reduce the impact that these small hotels have on the environment. Small hotel associations are being formed and strengthened in each Central American country and their economic participation is being promoted in the new programs being proposed to complement the project and to be funded by other

institutions. The project has also endeavored to promote the Central American tourism product as a region, and a Guide to Small Hotels in Central America has been put together.

The Office has been providing assistance to the Central American member states to develop the proposed *Coffee Tourism Route Project.* The goal of the Coffee Tourism Route Project is to generate proceeds from local tourism by developing tourism attractions associated with the coffee industry. This will help the participating communities diversify their economies and mitigate the effects of the crisis in the coffee business. The project started in Costa Rica and has spread throughout Central America.

- Data processing and technology transfer systems

Assistance continued to be provided to small businesses in the Caribbean and Central America in the use of computers, their application in the work of the business, the creation of web pages, and the use of the Internet as a communications and marketing tool.

Thanks to the cooperation of the "*Fundación Turismo para Todos*" and its website, a virtual resource center has been created for the small hotels of the Central American region. That website has also been used to circulate training materials. (http://www.paph-oea-cct.com/mk)

Finally, as part of the STEP Project new "resource centers" were equipped in two Caribbean member states.

Inter-American Committee on Ports

Established by General Assembly resolution AG/RES. 1573 (XXVIII-0/98), the purpose of the Inter-American Committee on Ports is to serve as a permanent inter-American forum for the member states of the Organization, in order to strengthen cooperation in port development, with active private sector participation.

To rise to the challenges posed by the port sector and to carry out the CIP's Plan of Action 2004-2007, the Secretariat conducted activities calculated to achieve the following objectives:

- Strengthening the inter-American dialogue on ports

The CIP is the only forum where the highest-ranking government port authorities from the countries of the Americas are able to confer. This kind of dialogue is essential to fulfilling the mandates from its meetings, from the meetings of the Western Hemisphere Transport Initiative, and from the Summits of the Americas. To that end, the Secretariat held the VI Meeting of the Executive Board and meetings of its subcommittees: Policy and Coordination; Port Planning and Management; Statistics, Costs, and Fees; Port Development for Cruise Tourism; River and Lake Port Development; Training; and Regional Port Development (Managua, December 2004). It also held additional meetings of its Subcommittee on Policy and Coordination (Washington D.C., March 2004) and of its Subcommittee on Port Planning and Management (Santiago, Chile, November 2004).

- Cooperation for inter-American port development

With the following activities, geared to enabling port modernization and development, the following was accomplished:

1. Promotion of the Agreement on Cooperation and Mutual Assistance among Inter-American Port Authorities. The agreement, which establishes the legal framework for

that cooperation, was approved by the CIP in 2001. In December 2004, Ecuador, Chile, and Mexico signed the agreement, bringing the total number of parties to 17. Argentina and Peru have already ratified the agreement.

2.   Training. Training is the Committee's priority cooperative activity. The Secretariat planned, programmed, and implemented activities and arranged for the additional outside funding needed to carry them out. In all, 600 officials and executives from the member states benefited from these projects.

- Courses and seminars: Port Security, Efficiency, and Investment, Lima, Peru; Costs and Fee Regulation in Ports, Lima, Peru; Port Management, Madrid, Spain; Port Technology, Operations, and Environmental Management, Santander, Spain; Port Reforms, Managua, Nicaragua; and Strategic Port Tariffs Workshop, Managua, Nicaragua.
- Western Hemispheric Port Security Conference (Miami, Florida, February 2004) on the Implementation of the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code of the International Maritime Organization (IMO).
- Funds were obtained from the Valenciaports Foundation for fellowships to enable executives to participate in master's degree programs in port management and intermodal transport at the Universidad Pontificia de Comillas, Spain.

3.   Specialized technical assistance was provided to the port authorities and administrations directly, to meet specific needs. Prominent here was the support to the:

- General Bureau of Ports, Mexico, the United States Maritime Administration, and Argentina's Transportation Secretariat, for organization of meetings of the Technical Advisory Groups they chair, relations with associate members, publication of an information document, and so forth.
- Venezuela's INEA, on the subject of "women's participation in the port sector."
- The Dominican Port Authority, to prepare a project eligible for a grant.

4.   Specialized information and promotion of the CIP. Responding to requests for information, the Secretariat prepared reports, studies, documents, the CIP brochure, and a periodic port newsletter. It kept current the CIP's portal at www.oas.org/cip, and started publication of the magazine *CIP* to promote the sector and report port-related information.

- Intensification of relations with international cooperation agencies and the private sector

Efforts were stepped up to raise funds and other resources and to better earmark those resources for projects of mutual interest. To that end, the Secretariat:

- Signed a memorandum of understanding, between the American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA) and the OAS/CIP, to cooperate in training, technical assistance, participation in events, and sharing of best practices.
- Engaged in activities of mutual interest (courses, seminars, internships) with Spain's *Puertos del Estado*.
- Became a member of the Executive Board of the Ibero-American Port Forum.
- Participated in and supported activities conducted by: the AAPA; the IDB; the World Bank; ECLAC; the Andean Community of Nations; the Port Training Conference; UNCTAD; the Central American Maritime Transportation Council; the Ibero-American Institute of

Logistics; the Secretariat of the Western Hemisphere Transport Initiative; the International Maritime Organization; the National Port Enterprise, Nicaragua; the Oversight Agency for Private Investment in Transportation Infrastructure, Peru; and Spain's *Puertos del Estado,* Port of Valencia, and Port of Santander.

- The International Association of Ports and Harbors recognized the CIP as one of its "friendly organizations."
- The following are among the autonomous entities that served as associate members of the CIP's Technical Advisory Groups and contributed technological and financial resources: the *Administración General de Puertos*, the Port of Bahía Blanca, and Mollendo Equipment Co. Inc. (Argentina); the Maritime Security Council, Great Lakes, the Port of Miami, the Port of Houston, the Port of Texas City, Stevedoring Services of America, and Rapiscan Security Products (United States); the Port Security Program (Guatemala); Abarloa, ICAVE, NAVEGA and OCUPA (Mexico); INDESMAR and TISUR (Peru); and the Port of Maracaibo (Venezuela), among others.

The Secretariat provides support to the Committee's officers in the performance of their functions and technical and administrative services to the Committee; coordinates and executes activities and cooperation projects entrusted to it; keeps the CIP's institutional memory; and organizes its meetings. It also raises external resources for its operations and administers those resources. This Office receives funds from the OAS Regular Fund to cover the cost of the Secretary's position; any other expenses are paid out of funds provided by the port authorities and other outside contributions.

Office of Development Policies and Programs

The Office of Development Policies and Programs (ODPP) comprises the Division of Development Policies, which serves as Secretariat of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI) and its subsidiary bodies, and the Division of Development Programs, which administers and evaluates the Special Multilateral Fund of CIDI (FEMCIDI) and other partnership-for-development projects and activities.

Division of Development Policies

The Division coordinated the activities involved in the follow-up of mandates issued by the General Assembly, the Ninth Regular Meeting of CIDI, and those adopted at the various sectoral meetings, both the ministerials and the meetings of the inter-American committees.

In cooperation with other offices of the General Secretariat, the Division planned, coordinated, and supported the preparation and holding of the following sectoral meetings: (1) the First Meeting of the Inter-American Committee on Social Development; (2) the Second Inter-American Meeting of Ministers of Culture and Highest Appropriate Authorities; (3) the Fourth Meeting of the Inter-American Committee on Science and Technology; (4) the Second Meeting of the Inter-American Committee on Education; and (5) the First Meeting of Ministers and High Authorities on Science and Technology. A more detailed account of the agreements that the member states adopted at each meeting appears in the chapter on the activities of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI).

As Secretariat of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI), the Division planned and coordinated CIDI's Ninth Meeting. In preparation for this meeting, the DDP organized the necessary meetings of the various organs and prepared reports and technical documents on the subjects in its assigned area; it also assisted with the exchange of specialized information related to cooperation policies in the Strategic Plan's priority areas that figured on CIDI's agenda.

Finally, the Division was responsible for planning and coordinating the 15th Regular Meeting of the Management Board of the Inter-American Agency for Cooperation and Development (IACD), held at Organization headquarters on May 3, 2004. It also assisted the Board by processing online inquiries concerning the management of the technical cooperation projects financed with funds from the Special Multilateral Fund of CIDI (FEMCIDI).

Division of Development Programs

- FEMCIDI Programming 2004

The Executive Secretariat for Integral Development (SEDI) received 129 project profiles to consider for the programming cycle of the Special Multilateral Fund of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (FEMCIDI) 2004. The member states' pledges to FEMCIDI 2004 totaled US$7,648,228, distributed among the various sectoral accounts. That breakdown is itemized in the pages that follow.

The project profiles that met the established selection requirements were referred to the specialized units and offices of the General Secretariat with the request that they give their technical opinion on those profiles. Based on those opinions and on the level of pledges in each sectoral account, the Executive Secretariat identified those project profiles that, given their technical merit, could make a contribution toward satisfying the member states' development needs. As a result, 116 projects presented by 33 countries were included in the Preliminary Proposed Programming. As in previous years, the number of projects presented and the amount of funding being requested far exceeded the funds pledged. Consequently, a number of projects were dropped from the Preliminary Proposed Programming, because they were wanting in technical merit and because the needed funds were not available.

The Management Board of the IACD authorized an exception for the FEMCIDI Programming Cycle for 2004 in the form of changes to certain dates in the programming calendar. The changes gave the member states until December 15, 2004, to make good on their pledges. Between October and December, the Secretariat worked with the institutions proposing projects to polish the proposals.

The recommendations that the Nonpermanent Specialized Committees (CENPES) make on these projects in May 2005 will be sent to the IACD's Management Board which by mid-March is to approve the Programming of Partnership Activities FEMCIDI 2004 (for execution in 2005).

- Execution of FEMCIDI 2003

Early in 2004, execution of 99 projects got under way. These were the projects that the CENPES had recommended at their October 2003 meeting and that the IACD's Management Board had approved in November of that year. The total amount involved was US$9,226,346. The projects funded and a breakdown of the appropriation by sectoral account appears below:

- Trade: 10 projects for US$798,602;
- Social development: 13 projects for US$937,289;
- Education for US$3,026,117;
- Culture: 4 projects for US$131,843;
- Science and technology: 10 projects for US$2,047,984;
- Democracy: 6 projects for US$382,569;
- Tourism: 6 projects for US$761,406;
- Environment: 10 projects for US$1,012,842; and
- Integral development: 1 project for US$ 127,694.

The Division collaborated with the executing institutions on preparation of the project execution plans; it processed transfers of funds; in cooperation with the Offices of General Secretariat in the Member States, it helped monitor execution and analyze progress reports, and made suggestions and technical observations as to the documentation to be presented to the CENPES in the case of multi-year projects.

- Training in project formulation

The Division worked with the member states to train personnel in how to use the instruments needed to formulate regional and national partnership projects that are applying for funding from international financial institutions and from regional and national cooperation agencies. In 2004, workshops were held, targeted at government officials and officials of nongovernmental organizations in the Bahamas, Barbados, Paraguay, Ecuador, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua. In all, over 200 people received training.

- Evaluation of FEMCIDI-financed projects

In 2003, the Division began to coordinate the first round of evaluations of projects funded by FEMCIDI, which ended in the first quarter of 2004. The evaluations of 36 projects (26 multinationals and 10 nationals) were done by independent consultants. The sampling included projects from each geographic subregion of the Organization, and from each priority area set out in the Strategic Plan for Partnership for Development.

It is worth noting that the evaluations indicate that 94 percent of the projects evaluated were very consistent with the governments' policies and priorities and with the priorities that the member states had established within the framework of the OAS. Also, 86 percent achieved the anticipated results, although to differing degrees. Still, 83 percent of the project-executing agencies were judged to have used the resources they were granted to good effect and the ratio between a project's costs and its results was reasonable.

The IACD embarked upon the second round of evaluations in the first half of 2004, with the selection of a sampling of 39 projects whose financing was awarded in 2001 and 2002. The independent consultants will finish up their work when they deliver the reports in the first half of 2005, at which point the results of the evaluation will be reported to the member states.

Secretariat for the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission

The Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL), established by the General Assembly in 1994, has technical autonomy in the performance of its functions, within the limits set by the OAS Charter, the CITEL Statutes, and the mandates of the General Assembly. It serves as the OAS' principal advisory body in telecommunications-related matters. Its mission is to promote continuous development of telecommunications in the Hemisphere.

The purpose of CITEL's programs is to create a greater awareness of the role that telecommunications play in the region's economic and social development, and to formulate guidelines and standards on critical issues. The objective for the future is to review CITEL's priorities in order to continue and, if possible, expand the assistance provided to the countries in planning, using, modernizing, and maintaining the technologies best suited to providing service to all strata of society and thereby guaranteeing universal access to information and knowledge. More detailed information is available at CITEL's web page, including the schedule of activities planned for 2005.

To meet the expectations of the member states and associate members and thus preserve its standing as one of the region's preeminent intergovernmental organizations in the area of telecommunications, numerous strategic activities were conducted. Of those, the following stand out:

Follow-up and dissemination of the Agenda for Connectivity in the Americas and the Plan of Action of Quito

CITEL continued to disseminate the Agenda for Connectivity in the Americas and the Plan of Action of Quito, which contains the principles and objectives for formulating and implementing connectivity-related activities. Because the document is multilateral in nature, the Office for the Summits Process, in coordination with CITEL, is promoting its development and subsequent implementation. A report is being prepared containing an evaluation of connectivity in the region.

Training for telecommunications professionals

To respond to the increasing need for personnel trained in telecommunications, CITEL has been working with recognized training centers in the region, particularly with the Center of Excellence for the Americas of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), to provide the priority training programs for telecommunications professionals. In 2004, 15 courses (10 distance and 5 on-campus) were offered on policy, regulation, management, and telecommunications technology, awarding more than 270 fellowships to recipients across the region.

Telecommunications policies and regulation

The principles of effective regulation are similar for most countries. With that in mind, CITEL and the ITU have made headway in updating the *The Blue Book: Telecommunication Policies for the Americas*, a manual that provides a broad understanding of the trends and practices in basic regulatory issues so as to strengthen the harmonization process, legislation, and regulation in the region. Three meetings were held to examine the document, which is expected to be completed by mid-2005.

Regulations now in force are being examined to determine whether the provisions governing the provision on satellite communications services, especially to reach regions that land-based communications systems cannot reach, can be simplified in any way. Also, the web page contains the laws and regulations governing the provision of satellite services and all the information that interested parties need in order to apply for licenses in the countries of the Americas, and is kept up to date.

Using information compiled at a Seminar on Cybersecurity, the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission worked with the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (CICTE) and REMJA's Group of Governmental Experts on Cyber-crime to develop a comprehensive draft cybersecurity strategy for the member states. That strategy takes a multidimensional and multidisciplinary approach to tackling the problem of cybersecurity and was approved by the General Assembly at its thirty-fourth regular session, held in June 2004.

Reports are currently being prepared on strategic issues for the region, among them the following: analysis of the economic aspects of universal service in the countries of the region; a study on the selection of the most appropriate financial resources and updating of the document "Guidelines and Practices for Interconnection Regulation," which provides examples of specific regulations currently in force and used by the countries to implement these principles.

Technical matters, coordination of standards, and telecommunications equipment conformity assessment

Important technical research is being done on how to improve access to telecommunications and the information and communications technologies (ICTs). Prominent here is the work being done to establish the current state of the use of frequency bands on the radioelectrical spectrum and recommendations on how to harmonize the use of the spectrum for fixed and mobile land-based telecommunications services, with particular emphasis on the 400 MHz and 5GHz bands. CITEL also continues to disseminate technical information about new technologies and services, particularly on issues related to the transition from 2.5 Generation to 3rd Generation.

As for coordination of technical standards, two new documents were approved on security issues for communications systems: ITU-T Recommendation X.805 "Security architecture for systems providing end-to-end communications" and IETF RFC 2401 *"Security Architecture for the Internet Protocol."* Also approved was a technical document on the "Structure of the study on voice characteristics in converging networks that use IP*"* to clarify the characteristics and trends of voice over IP (VoIP) – Internet providers within voice services in convergent networks.

Digital terrestrial television opens up new avenues for accessing information and sharing it. Accordingly, more work was done on preparation of a *"Guide to Digital Terrestrial Television in the Americas"* for rapid implementation of these systems across the region. The multiplier effect of the considerable savings to be had will also help speed the orderly conversion from analog television to digital television. Conversion to digital television service will also make more efficient use of the electromagnetic spectrum.

Recognizing that there are challenges to be surmounted to make efficient and effective use of the Internet, studies have been undertaken on government policies and experiences in managing blocks of IP addresses in the countries of the region, including a comparative analysis of these experiences that identifies "Best Practices."

To improve the conditions under which products are introduced onto the market, CITEL continued to work on harmonization of conformity assessment processes in the region. It participated in seminars where it explained CITEL's Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA). A number of countries are already participating in its various phases, while others are taking steps to put the ARM into practice, which may mean amending domestic laws and regulations whenever necessary. An international workshop is planned for 2005 to examine the scope of these procedures. CITEL also continued to update the "Yellow Book on Telecommunication Equipment Conformity Assessment Processes in the Americas."

Preparation of common hemispheric positions at international meetings

One of CITEL's priorities is to reconcile viewpoints in the region. A concrete example was the preparation for the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA-04) held in Florianópolis, Brazil, in October. There, CITEL presented a number of proposals to improve methods and standards in the ITU, to ensure that the issues most relevant to developing countries are studied, such as rates, the security of networks, and 3rd Generation mobile systems.

The *travaux préparatoires* are under way for the regional meeting for the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC), the Plenipotentiary Conference of the International Telecommunications Union, and the World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT). These three conferences, all slated for 2006, are of particular importance as their purpose is to adopt, on a global scale, the ITU's development programs, work strategies, and future management, as well as

standards for allocating international telecommunications resources and services, including services that use IP.

Preparations have also gotten under way for the ITU's World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC), which will be held in 2007 and will examine some 30 topics, including the following: the progress made with the new modulation techniques, adapting control techniques and the spectrum requirements for HF broadcasting, and studies to establish criteria for sharing and coordination and notification procedures for satellite networks

Better coordination among subregional, regional, and international organizations

CITEL has established a number of cooperation agreements with the following organizations on issues of mutual interest: the Hispanic-American Association of Research Centers and Telecommunication Enterprises (AHCIET); the Andean Telecommunication Enterprises Association (ASETA); the Alliance for Telecommunications Industry Solutions (ATIS); Committee T1 (EU); the African Telecommunications Union (ATU); Caribbean Latin American Action (C/LAA); the CDMA Development Group (CDG); the European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations (CEPT); the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI); 3G Americas; the Global VSAT Forum; the International Astronautical Federation (IAF); the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO); the Telecommunications Industry Association (TIA (EU)); the Regional Commonwealth in the Field of Communications (RCC); the Postal Union of the Americas, Spain and Portugal (PUASP); and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). Because these types of agreements make it possible to explore a number of issues early on, they help improve efficiency, avoid duplication of effort, and reduce the time required to resolve problems.

Support to the member states and associate members in sharing information and best practices to deal with the changes in telecommunications

This goal is very much related to the role that CITEL has traditionally played as a forum in which the member states and associate members can provide each other with mutual support. The workshops help to spread specialized knowledge of cutting-edge technologies. In 2004 the following workshops were held:

- Workshop on Cybersecurity, where the legal, technical and political implications of cybersecurity were discussed.
- Workshop on Economic Issues, to examine the cost structures of the major telecommunications services and their relationship to the globalized markets.
- Workshop on next-generation networks (NGN), which analyzed various issues to be considered when introducing these technologies and the international standards and regulations. The workshop also identified users' needs and considered the advisability of regionally-concerted efforts to migrate to NGN.
- Workshop-Videoconference on IP services, in cooperation with USTTI, to promote frank dialogue and open discussion of critical issues related to the introduction of the voice IP transmission technology in the Americas.

During this reporting period, 750 copies of the Joint CITEL/AHCIET Seminar on Broadband Satellite Services, held in 2003, were published electronically. That seminar had presented an overview of broadband service, analyzed existing applications, and established general conditions and requirements for broadband implementation in the Americas.

Also during this reporting period, work began on a plan focusing on the private sector, geared to publicizing CITEL and heightening its profile. One of the steps taken was to begin circulation of the e-bulletin titled "info@CITEL" in July 2004. This is a new tool that the administrations, the private sector, and everyone interested in telecommunications can use to stay abreast of its activities. It is published on a monthly basis.