# SECRETARIAT FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS

> Established by Executive Order 05-13 Rev. 1, the Secretariat for Political Affairs has three departments: the Department for the Promotion of Democracy, the Department for the Promotion of Governance, and the Department of Crisis Prevention and Special Missions.

## Department for the Promotion of Democracy

*Inter-American Forum on Political Parties (FIAPP)*

The activities of the Inter-American Forum on Political Parties in 2005 focused on five main areas: national technical assistance projects, promotion of the gender perspective and of women's participation in politics, lobbying for an agenda of political party reform and institutionalization, and generating practical know-how. Among the more prominent activities were the programs to support the National Constitutional Assembly processes in Bolivia; international observation for the seating of Ecuador's Supreme Court of Justice; and activities to encourage dialogue and political reform, conducted under the Democratic Values and Political Management Program in Guatemala.

During this reporting period, FIAPP provided support to the OAS missions that observed the most recent political transitions in Ecuador and Bolivia to identify lines of cooperative endeavor with representative institutions in these countries. In the case of Bolivia, the outcome of the Mission was the design of a political-technical cooperation program for relevant national bodies that lasted approximately two years.

Through FIAPP, specialized technical assistance was organized and provided as part of the missions of the Permanent Council and the Secretary General to Ecuador to determine the support to be provided to strengthen democracy, in response to a request from the Ecuadorian Government. Through technical assistance programs to Colombia, Venezuela and Peru, assistance was provided on matters related to promoting political dialogue, strengthening the institutions of democratic government and improving democratic governance. Under the Democratic Values and Political Management Program in Guatemala, FIAPP worked with the Guatemalan Special Congressional Committee for Electoral Matters on amendment of the Electoral and Political Party Law and creation of the National Registry of Persons Law (RENAP).

FIAPP also cooperated with the ministries of women's affairs in Central America to discuss affirmative action measures, the adoption of quotas within political parties and political training. It also organized subregional meetings, such as the CARICOM forum on strengthening political parties; the workshop on implementation of the new law on guarantees and presidential re-election in Colombia; and the discussion on financing prospects in Mexico. FIAPP is currently working on a study comparing the status and prospects of the political parties in the Andean Region and has a large collection of publications (www.upd.oas.org/fiapp).

*Electoral Observation Missions and Programs to Strengthen Electoral Systems and Processes*

Improving voting processes and procedures, which continues to be a challenge that is vital to the transparency and legitimacy of the region's democratic institutions, is the paramount objective of this program. The effort focuses on organizing and conducting Electoral Observation Missions in the member States that so request, providing support to build up the institutions of the electoral authorities of the countries in the region, and modernizing electoral processes and systems.

By the end of 2005-2007, the region will have been witness to an extraordinary number of elections during that period. Of the more than 30 elections that will take place in those two years, almost half will be presidential elections. Given the circumstances, the OAS's role becomes particularly relevant since, at the request of the corresponding governments, the Organization will be observing a good number of those elections.

In 2005, the OAS General Secretariat observed seven elections, including a first-time mission to observe political primaries in Honduras. These elections, organized and overseen by a newly-created electoral authority, are especially noteworthy since they represent important progress from the standpoint of citizens' political participation, which now includes participation in the primary institution in any democratic system of government, which is the political party.

The OAS deployed a group of 113 people to observe the Honduran General Elections in November 2005, held to elect the President and Vice President of the Republic, Deputies to the National Congress, mayors and municipal councils.

The MOE, at the invitation of the Government of the Republic of Suriname, was installed with a mandate to follow the course of the May 25 election, in which members of the National Assembly and district and local councils were elected.

The Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, for its part, extended an invitation to the OAS to organize and deploy an Electoral Observation Mission on the occasion of the elections held on December 4, 2005, to select Deputies to the National Assembly.

The OAS deployed an Electoral Observation Mission to observe the General and Mayoral Elections held in Bolivia on December 18, 2005. The Mission consisted of a group of 166 international observers who hailed from practically all the member States of the OAS. It did a rapid-count tally that confirmed the official results announced by the CNE.

As for the support given to the member States in 2005 to help them build and modernize their electoral institutions, assistance continued to be provided to initiatives such as institution building and strengthening in Guatemala and Honduras; modernization of the handling of civil records and citizen registry in Honduras, Paraguay and Haiti; promoting citizen participation and support for political-electoral legislative reforms in Guatemala; and modernization of the electoral institutions in Peru, Honduras and Ecuador.

Particularly important among these programs was the support provided to Haiti's Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) with organization and management of the presidential elections. In Haiti, thanks to the support offered by the Special Mission in Haiti, the OAS conducted an electoral technical assistance program to design and introduce a voter-registration system. Thanks to this program: i) identification papers were issued to over three million Haitians; ii) a permanent registration system was created; iii) a complete and reliable electoral roll was put together; iv) an identification document for voters was prepared; and lastly v) the bases for a civil registry system were established.

Similarly, electoral horizontal cooperation continued to be promoted among the countries of the Hemisphere through the Inter-American Electoral Technology Network (RITE) and the Inter-American Electoral Technology Program (PITE). Within this framework, the IV Inter-American Meeting of Electoral Technology was held in Bogotá, Colombia with more than 20 election authorities from the Hemisphere participating. This important event, held on April 6 and 7, 2005 in partnership with the *Organización Electoral de Colombia*, continued the effort to promote and enhance the sharing of knowledge, practices and experience in electoral technology among election-related authorities. This

initiative showcased the progress achieved by the OAS and the various inter-American electoral authorities in this last year, and the scope of the new technologies that they have acquired or developed.

Under the Horizontal Cooperation Agreement signed with Brazil's Supreme Electoral Tribunal, the OAS continued to support the pilot exercises in e-voting in Paraguay, Panama and the Dominican Republic.

Finally, under the heading of "special programs", progress was made in 2005 on implementation of the Rural Judicial Facilitators Program in Nicaragua.

*Strengthening of the Legislative Branch*

As for inter-parliamentary cooperation, the Program to Support the Strengthening of Legislative Institutions (PAFIL) provided advisory services and technical assistance for the Meeting of the Presidents and Speakers of the Legislative Branches of Government in Latin America, held in Bogotá, Colombia.

To help combat corruption and ensure transparency in the business of legislating, the Program had meetings with the Group of Latin American Parliamentarians against Corruption [*Grupo de Parlamentarios Latinoamericanos Contra la Corrupción*] (PLACC) and held a Conference on Anti-Terrorism Legislative Action in the Eastern Caribbean States in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

PAFIL embarked upon coordination of a project on the Role of the Legislative Branches with regard to free trade agreements, proposed by the Forum of Presidents and Speakers of the Legislative Branches of Central America and the Caribbean Basin and financed by FEMCIDI. In the first phase, a project was approved for research into the agenda for satisfying the competitiveness requirements under international trade agreements.

**Department for the Promotion of Governance**

The ability of a democratic political system to endure rests upon the strength and vitality of its political institutions and culture. The Department's mission is, therefore, to provide advisory services, information and technical support to the OAS General Secretariat and to the member states on strengthening democratic institutions and culture.

*Promotion of Democratic Values and Practices*

Articles 26 and 27 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter call upon the General Secretariat to support the strengthening of a democratic culture by developing education programs for children and youth as a means of ensuring the continuation of democratic values, including liberty and social justice. To accomplish this, the development of democratic values and practices must be stimulated and promoted, in order to arouse and nurture within this Hemisphere the new generations' interest in and commitment to the democratic political processes and their participatory spirit.

Through the Program for the Promotion of Democratic Leadership and Citizenship, the OAS has, since 1995, been a hemispheric catalyst in shaping a new democratic leadership. The program provides academic and methodological resources for training young leaders from the Hemisphere through regional and national courses in democratic institutions, values and practices and political management. The purpose of the courses is to strengthen young people's knowledge of democracy and their commitment to it; to teach the use of the tools of political analysis; to instruct young people in how to use modern information and communication technologies as applied to the practice of politics; and to promote the analysis and sharing of experiences among young leaders in the region. These are intensive courses lasting approximately nine days. They cover theory, analytical exercises and case studies on topics such

as the challenges to democracy; political parties and electoral systems; political communications; negotiation techniques and leadership. The instructors in the courses are leading experts and distinguished political figures from the countries of the region.

A total of 13 national and regional courses were conducted in 2005. Tailored for young leaders, these courses on democratic institutions, values and practices were given in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Mexico, Peru and Suriname. The more than 500 young leaders who participated came from political parties, the media, academia, civil society and the armed forces. Cooperating in this program were dozens of counterpart institutions, including the Inter-American Development Bank, as well as hundreds of academic experts, presidents and high-ranking officials.

With the assistance of the ministries of education of Peru and Argentina, the program also launched the distance course for elementary- and secondary-school teachers on the Inter-American Democratic Charter and the teaching of democratic values. The main goal of the pilot course is to train 1,500 Peruvian teachers to design "democratic classrooms" in which young democratic citizens are shaped.

In keeping with the mandates of the IV Meeting of Ministers of Education, the General Secretariat supported design and implementation of the Inter-American Program on Education for Democratic Values and Practices, a hemispheric initiative to promote the culture of democracy through education by means of research, professional development, educational resources and information sharing.

*Program of Support for Decentralization Processes*

Technical support continued to be provided to the High-Level Inter-American Network on Decentralization, Local Government and Citizen Participation (RIAD), established to help put into practice the commitments undertaken at the Inter-American Summits.

RIAD completed the series of subregional meetings to enable central governments to share experiences and to promote dialogue with local protagonists such as national and regional associations of municipalities and civil society organizations involved in local development. In addition to the subregional meetings held for the Central American and CARICOM countries, and the First Meeting of Federal States of the Americas, held the previous year, as RIAD Vice Chair for South America Peru hosted the First RIAD Meeting for the South American countries in Lima, in August 2005. That encounter also afforded an opportunity for the South American countries to enter into a dialogue with one of the regional municipal associations, FLACMA (*Federación Latinoamericana de Ciudades, Municipios y Asociaciones)* [Latin American Federation of Cities, Municipalities and Associations].

Jamaica, as Vice Chair for the CARICOM subregion, and Trinidad and Tobago, as host country, convoked a ministerial conference in August 2005 where key players in central and local government and in civil society continued to examine the challenges that decentralization and participation pose and the progress made. Also supporting and participating in that meeting was the Commonwealth Local Government Forum. The meeting made headway on the formation of the Caribbean Forum of Ministers agreed upon the previous year, to be the vehicle to coordinate fulfillment of the commitments and activities of RIAD/OAS and of the Commonwealth in these fields. It also worked on a regional strategy for decentralization and community participation and approved the Port-of-Spain Accord reflecting the meeting's results and the decisions reached there.

To further strengthen RIAD and in compliance with a specific mandate, the Technical Secretariat moved ahead on the creation of a technical and financial support group, with contributions received from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and technical assistance provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). With the technical advisory services of experts

from 13 subregional, regional and international agencies, especially the International City/County Municipal Association, a fair was organized on the theme of "Decentralization and Municipal Best Practices." The experiences of eight municipalities from the Hemisphere were documented and introduced on video and in interactive format. The activity was timed to coincide with the third ministerial meeting of RIAD. The Technical Secretariat conducted promotional and technical support activities for RIAD, including its Web page, a Central American research project on "Strengthening Decentralization in Central America" with funding from the Inter-American Development Bank. Two editions of the six-month on-line (virtual) course on "Decentralization and Local/Regional Development" were done in 2005, with the architects of decentralization policies participating. The on-line course was conducted in cooperation with Chile's Universidad Alberto Hurtado.

RIAD's activities were reported to its third ministerial meeting, held in Recife, Brazil, October 26 through 28, 2005, and to the Fourth Summit of the Americas, held in Mar del Plata, Argentina in November 2005. The ministerial meeting's theme was "Local Government, Citizen Participation and Regional Development: Fighting poverty, generating jobs and income, and democratic governance." In addition to the meeting's plenary sessions, time was also set aside for regional dialogue on these themes. The Government of Brazil was elected to chair RIAD, and Costa Rica, Chile, Jamaica and Mexico were the countries elected to be the Network's regional Vice Chairs, working with the Chair in heading up and leading the Network and carrying out subregional activities. The first meeting of the executive committee for this period was convoked by Brazil and met on March 27 and 28, 2006, where it approved a plan of thematic approaches and activities to steer the work of RIAD in 2006-2007.

Finally, it is important to note that in its Declaration, the Fourth Summit of the Americas recognized the work that RIAD had done on the very themes being examined at that Summit.

*Secure Identities Project in the Caribbean Subregion*

During this reporting period, activities associated with projects to strengthen and modernize civil registries in Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines were carried out. Progress was also made on arrangements to carry out new national activities in Antigua and Barbuda and St. Kitts and Nevis.

Professor Albert K. Fiadjoe of the University of the West Indies (Cave Hill, Barbados) completed a study comparing civil registries in a number of Caribbean countries. The study looked at the laws, rules and organizational and administrative practices used by a number of responsible institutions to ascertain the identity of persons. The study produced various recommendations on how these institutions could improve operations to conform to the 2004 Declaration of Nuevo León, specifically the focus on "modernization of the State as an important element for strengthening democratic and good governance, combining effectiveness and efficiency with greater access to services, transparency, and responsibility in management and the consolidation and professionalization of the civil service."

Publication of this study and a ministerial meeting are planned, but the necessary funds must first be secured. Working with the Office of the General Secretariat in Jamaica, planning began on efforts to facilitate promotion of "horizontal cooperation" among the CARICOM member countries on the issue of the right of identity, to showcase a possible plan to train staff of the civil registries in coordination with Jamaica's Registrar General's Department (civil records). Here again, execution of this component of the program will depend on whether the needed funds are secured.

**Department of Crisis Prevention and Special Missions**

This Department, which replaces the previous Office for the Prevention and Resolution of Conflicts, assists the Secretary General in preventing and resolving any political-institutional crises that may or could arise in the region. Accordingly, the Department seeks to combine the institution's capacity for political analysis with its capacity for preventing, managing and resolving crises and conflicts.

In response to requests from the governments of Bolivia, Ecuador and Nicaragua, technical assistance and advisory services were offered in 2005 to the missions deployed in those countries. The Secretary General is actively engaged in these missions, which are conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Inter-American Democratic Charter and pursuant to resolutions of the General Assembly and the Permanent Council.

The Mission of the Secretary General's Special Representative in Bolivia, headed by Horacio Serpa (Colombia), was geared to enabling dialogue with a broad spectrum of actors, while accompanying national authorities and the Bolivian people in their quest to find avenues of understanding. The work of the Mission was instrumental in achieving a peaceful electoral process that had the credibility and legitimacy necessary for the rival candidates in the race to accept the outcome and despite the many existing challenges.

The purpose of the Mission of the Secretary General's Special Representatives in Ecuador, Sonia Picado (Costa Rica) and José Antonio Viera-Gallo (Chile), was to follow the process of selecting the members of Ecuador's Supreme Court. The OAS was supportive of the Ecuadorian Government's efforts in the critical process of re-establishing the Supreme Court in the wake of a serious political-institutional crisis that led to the departure from office of President Lucio Gutiérrez and the swearing in of President Alfredo Palacio. The work done to assist the reordering of the institutions of State underscored the importance of coordinated action on the part of the OAS, the United Nations and the Andean Community of Nations (CAN), in partnership with national and civil society organizations.

The Mission of the Secretary General's Special Representative in Nicaragua, headed by Mr. Dante Caputo, followed the dialogue that took place in that country from June to October 2005. The Mission facilitated the dialogue between the Government and the various sectors of Nicaraguan society, against the backdrop of a political crisis with the potential to rock the stability of democratic institutions in the country. The OAS supported the efforts made by the Government of Nicaragua and the various political sectors to ensure governance and restore the balance among the branches of government through the agreements struck. Those agreements materialized in a Framework Law, which was a step toward settling the political crisis in the country, creating the conditions to ensure the Government's stability and a normal election process.

Between February 2005 and March 2006, the Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP/OEA) participated in 20 demobilizations of the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC) in the Peace Process spearheaded by the Colombian government. During this period, thanks to the work of its seven offices spread across Colombian territory, MAPP/OEA verified the demobilization, disarming and reinsertion of more than 18,000 AUC combatants. In this context, the MAPP/OEA implemented a pilot project in the municipality of Tierralta, department of Córdoba, for communities affected by the violence and where armed elements were a particularly presence. Under this project, community leaders were trained as conciliators "in equity" to help settle conflicts within their communities peacefully. This Mission also includes a specialist in charge of incorporating the gender perspective in the conduct of the MAPP.

The Central American Program for Strengthening Democratic Dialogue (PCA) continued to be implemented during this reporting period. Its primary purpose is to build institutional capacity and strengthen local, national and subregional strategies for facilitating political dialogue and establishing mechanisms to manage conflict within the Central American countries.

During this reporting period, the Department implemented the Training Program on Gender, Conflict and Peace Building in the Andean Region, and the OAS' Conflict Prevention and Resolution Systems Program in Bolivia (PSPRC), which helped the Government of Bolivia design and implement a strategy and policy on the issue of conflicts and featuring capacity building for representatives of the government and of civil society to enable them to engage in negotiation, political dialogue and the resolution of conflicts.

The Department continued its work of interstate political facilitation through the Peace Fund. The OAS General Secretariat smoothed the way for Belize and Guatemala to sign an agreement on a framework of negotiation and confidence-building measures, on September 7, 2005. Under that agreement, the two countries pledged to begin a new round of negotiations. The First Ministerial Negotiating Session was on November 14 and 15, 2005, in San Pedro, Belize. The second session was held on February 10, 2006, at OAS headquarters in Washington, D.C. At this session, the Secretary General proposed that the process of negotiation begin with the maritime area of the territorial differendum.