



# OAS AT A GLANCE 2007





The publication I have the pleasure to present provides an overview of some of the outstanding activities of the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (OAS), in 2007, in its efforts to address the problems facing our region today.

The overall situation in our part of the world is promising. We have gone a long way toward consolidating our democracies, strengthening governance, and protecting human rights. The outlook is also positive for integral development and we have been able to build into our policies the principles of inclusion and equity as the basis for prosperity. The General Secretariat can also be proud of its contribution to a new notion of what is meant by security, which has paved the way toward universal recognition of its multiple dimensions.

Our Organization has made important contributions in all these areas. We have moved successfully to strengthen the relevance of the OAS and increase its capacity for action, while achieving concrete results in the strategic areas of our work. Yet huge challenges lie ahead, which we, as Member States, must address collectively. I am grateful to the member countries of our Organization, as well as to the staff of this Secretariat for their commitment to continue to strive for that more prosperous and peaceful Americas we all yearn for and that the peoples of the hemisphere deserve.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Insulza', enclosed within a large, stylized, horizontal oval shape.

José Miguel Insulza  
Secretary General  
Organization of American States

POLITICAL AFFAIRS



"OAS Special Missions support the strengthening of governance in the region."



"The OAS integrates sister communities".

The nations of the Hemisphere are continuing their robust efforts to renew and strengthen democratic governance. Through its Secretariat for Political Affairs, the OAS carried out several special missions to address specific situations and political-institutional crises in the region. The Secretary General continued to lend his support to the efforts of the Government of Ecuador to promote the stability of the democratic system and to proceed with the Constituent Assembly process.

In the phase following demobilization of the United Self-Defense Units of Colombia (AUC), the OAS Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP/OAS) focused on verification of the dismantling of that illegal group's armed units and the reintegration of over 30,000 former combatants. It also monitored public order in the areas where the AUC had operated and implementation of the Justice and Peace Law. At the same time, the International Forensic Commission was established at the request of the Colombian Government to assist and take part in the identification and investigation concerning the deaths of 11 local lawmakers in the Department of Valle del Cauca.

The presence of the Commission also served as an additional guarantee of the process of identifying bodies and the cause of death. The Commission's official conclusions were set forth in a report of the Secretary General to the Permanent Council.

The OAS also continued to perform its international political facilitation role with respect to the differendum between Belize and Guatemala. The year 2007 also saw the Santa Rosa Community Resettlement Project, which consists of the voluntary transfer of a community of 17 Guatemalan families located in the Adyacancy Zone between Belize and Guatemala. The necessary land was acquired and 11 of the 17 families making up that community were transferred.



"The OAS promotes the stability of the democratic system."

Also, numerous electoral processes were carried out in the region, which the OAS accompanied with eight electoral observation missions in six of its member states. More than 650 observers and experts on electoral matters took part in those missions. At the same time, work continued on the standardization of the criteria and methodology used for such missions. In October 2007, a manual was published detailing, for the first time, the legal principles applied by the observers in the performance of their duties. The gender factor was also applied to the observation missions, in accordance with General Assembly mandates calling for greater gender balance in all OAS bodies.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights continued to work in support of justice and the rule of law in the countries of this Hemisphere. The work of the Inter-American Commission and Court supports Member States in making crucial advances in law, policy and practice at the national level. As the legitimacy of the system continues to increase, it faces demands which grow in both number and complexity. Individuals present an ever-increasing number of petitions before the Commission; civil society and states request more hearings covering more diverse issues; the Commission carries out expanded thematic initiatives; and it receives additional mandates from the General Assembly.

During 2007, the Commission held three periods of sessions at Headquarters, and one special session in Asunción, at the invitation of the Government of Paraguay. During these sessions, the Commission held 94 hearings and 80 working meetings. Within its individual petition system, the Commission received a record number of 1,456 new complaints. The Commission accepted 126 petitions as satisfying the minimum requirements for opening a case, raising the total number of individual petitions and cases currently being processed to 1,251. The Commission approved 51 reports on admissibility, 14 reports on inadmissibility, five reports on friendly settlement, and 13 preliminary reports on the merits. During the year, the Commission published four final reports on the merits, submitted a total of 14 cases to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.



Further, with respect to the Court, the Commission participated in a series of hearings on contentious cases, provisional measures and follow-up before the Court. Further, the Commission issued a total of 40 requests that Member States take urgent precautionary measures to prevent irreparable harm to persons.

The Commission continued to develop its initiatives on key human rights questions through its thematic rapporteurships. In 2007, the Rapporteurship on the Rights of Women entitled produced two reports *Access to Justice for Women Victims of Violence in the Americas*, and *Violence and Discrimination against Women in the Armed Conflict in Colombia*. The Rapporteurship on persons "Deprived of Liberty" carried out the Latin American Seminar on "Best Prison Practices" designed to bring together representatives of member states, experts and nongovernmental organizations, who reported on successful prison practices being implemented in their respective countries and shared positive experiences on how to eradicate human rights violations in prisons, in order to better confront this important challenge that affects all countries in the region. Finally, the Commission published the report "Access to Justice as a Guarantee of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights: A Review of the Standards Adopted by the Inter-American System of Human Rights" as part of ongoing efforts to assist member states in achieving enhanced respect and protection for these rights.

During this period, the Commission carried out a series of visits to different countries of the region. The Commission issued its report *Access to Justice and Social Inclusion: The Road Towards Strengthening Democracy in Bolivia*, and with respect to the situation of human rights and the demobilization process in Colombia, it published its *Report on the Implementation of the Justice and Peace Law: Initial Stages in the Demobilization of the AUC and First Judicial Proceedings*.



"Ensuring effective participation."

## MULTIDIMENSIONAL SECURITY

The OAS member states are cooperating in several fields to confront threats to hemispheric security. The OAS has begun coordinating the first regional meeting of ministers responsible for public security. This important meeting will be held this year in Mexico, providing a forum for dialogue at which all the member states can share their experiences and views and coordinate actions designed to reduce violence and crime in the Americas. This conference could become a framework for technical and political cooperation in the Hemisphere on all matters related to public security.



"The Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM) supports the member States in their efforts to control the illicit drugs scourge and identifies vulnerabilities in areas that need to be improved."

The Secretariat boosted its programs aimed at preventing and dealing with drug abuse; reducing the supply and availability of illicit drugs; strengthening national drug control institutions; enhancing money laundering controls; and helping member states improve data gathering and analysis. In 2007, the Secretariat published the report entitled "Achievements of the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM), 1997-2007," which analyzes the first 10 years of the MEM and reflects the achievements and challenges of drug control policies in the Hemisphere, as well as the benefits of the MEM process for member states.

It is worth noting that this is the first time that data taken from the MEM evaluation reports have been used to support United Nations analyses and data. That amounts to significant recognition by the international community of the proven record and effectiveness of the Mechanism.

The OAS made important strides during 2007 in its task to remove thousands of landmines that posed a threat to civilians in countries affected by conflict. Over 7,390 mines were destroyed and more than 313,800 square meters of land were cleared in Nicaragua, Ecuador, Peru, and Colombia.



"Operation to destroy munitions stockpiles."

The OAS program accomplished one of its most important achievements by destroying antipersonnel mine and munitions stockpiles in several countries. In 2007, the Organization launched the initial phase of a program to destroy obsolete munitions in Nicaragua. These operations completed the destruction of approximately half of the estimated 2,000 tons of excess, obsolete and expired munitions in Nicaraguan Army stockpiles. Also in 2007, the OAS provided the Colombian government technical and planning expertise in the destruction of some 18,000 weapons turned in by paramilitary groups as part of the government's initiatives to demobilize these illegal groups. In addition to supporting these landmine clearing efforts and munitions destructions, the OAS helped with mine risk education; victim assistance and socioeconomic reintegration of formerly mined zones.

## INTEGRAL DEVELOPMENT



"The OAS facilitates the exchange of experiences in the Energy Sector."

The OAS continued striving to meet the challenges of reducing poverty, promoting social equity, and, at the same time, achieving economic development. Together with its member countries, the OAS designed and implemented policies, programs, and projects geared primarily to human capacity-building, institution-building, and effective public policies, especially in education, employment, social development, culture, trade, science, technology, sustainable development, and the environment.

Following up on the Declaration of the General Assembly in Panama – "Energy for Sustainable Development" – the Secretariat carried out projects and held major meetings on that subject. National authorities and international experts met to review the status of sustainable renewable energy, with a view to acquiring and exchanging more in-depth knowledge among the participants from the energy sector, and increasing the sustainability of such energy sources in the Americas. In 2007, a technical assistance project got under way in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and El Salvador to promote bio-energy.

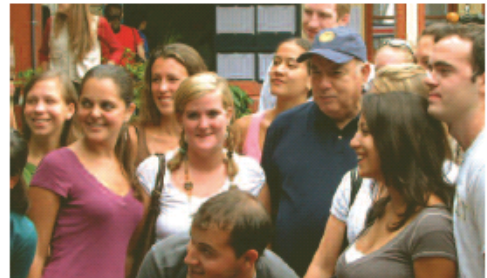


The Assistant Secretary General, as part of an ongoing process, has led several missions to coordinate the Organization's efforts in Haiti. Other OAS initiatives in that country include the Program for Universal Civil Registry in the Americas which supports that government's efforts to establish ongoing registration of individuals. The OAS used a modern, sustainable registry system, which is accessible for all Haitians. This program has registered more than 600,000 citizens since September 2007, bringing the total number of registered Haitians, so far, to 4.2 million.

Through its Scholarships Program, the Secretariat has made a significant effort to promote and develop human capital in the member states. A new Manual of Procedures for the Scholarship and Training Programs of the OAS was approved in 2007. It is designed to make the program more transparent, accountable, and objective. Two selection processes were conducted resulting in the selection of nearly 500 students eligible for scholarships.



"The OAS registers 4, 2 million citizens in Haiti."



"Promoting human capacity building in the Americas through education."



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