

THE OAS: ITS RELEVANCE TODAY

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INTRODUCTION

The General Assembly of the Organization of American States will hold its thirty-third regular session in Chile, June 8 through 10, 2003.

Founded in 1890 under the name of the International Union of American Republics (and then the Pan American Union in 1910), the Organization of American States is the world's longest-standing intergovernmental political organization. But long before 1890, our forefathers and liberators, who founded the new republics almost a century earlier, had aspired to such a union. They were visionaries who understood the importance of forging alliances to stand up against the European powers, which regarded the independence of the American hemisphere as a threat to their own interests.

The OAS is the Pan American Union's successor and came into being in Bogotá, Colombia in April 1948, at a time when that country was in the grips of an episode of political violence that history calls the "Bogotazo."

Since its origin, the OAS has coped with enormous challenges.

Even back then, the job of building and holding together a regional organization composed of the world's greatest superpower, the United States, and its neighbors was not a simple one, given the enormous disparity in size and might. Compounding the problem was the ideological conflict, as the world that emerged from the Second World War was divided between two mutually exclusive agendas. At one time or another in their countries' history, many governments of the region opted for the socialist agenda, which challenged United States supremacy.

Yet, while these two competing agendas were a factor for long periods of the Organization's history, they never managed to disable it or render it superfluous. To the contrary, the OAS was often the stage for memorable confrontations, as happened on the occasion of the Cuban missile crisis (1962), the invasion of Santo Domingo (1965) and later the invasion of Grenada (1983).

In all those decades—starting in 1948 and continuing through to the end of the Cold War—the one setback for the Organization's membership was the exclusion of the present government of Cuba. Although Cuba is still a member country, it has been suspended since 1962.

Since then, the OAS has been inaccurately portrayed as an asymmetrical international organization dominated by the United States.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The OAS has been the architect of countless measures at the hemispheric level, especially since the early 1990s, when Canada, Belize, and Guyana became full members. Although these measures may not be widely known, they have in many ways changed the face of the Americas for the better.

With the next regular session of the General Assembly fast approaching, the Permanent Mission of Chile to the OAS thought this would be a good opportunity to provide all circles of opinion interested in these issues with up-to-date information about the principal sources shaping the OAS' work.

As this document will show, the OAS is actively involved in a multitude of sectors vital to the development of its member countries.

The OAS also serves as a hemispheric political forum to which its member states can bring their concerns when they require collective action to deal with problems that arise.

The OAS' recent missions in Peru, Haiti, and Venezuela eloquently demonstrated that the Organization is uniquely suited to effective collective action in defense of the guiding principles of the inter-American system.

The first areas discussed in this document will be the two that are the central topics of the OAS: defense and promotion of human rights and democracy. The document will then focus on the Summit process, which is today the source of most Organization mandates. It will then discuss important sectors of OAS activity and some recent additions to its agenda. These include anti-corruption, the fight against drugs, hemispheric security, free trade, technical cooperation, education, sustainable development, and eradication of poverty.

Excluded from this description are many areas where the OAS, along with the institutions of the inter-American system, has also been active: in the health area, through the Pan American Health Organization; in economic and social development, through the Inter-American Development Bank; in agricultural development, through the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture; in telecommunications, through the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission; in ports, through the Inter-American Committee on Ports; in child protection and child care services, through the Inter-American Children's Institute; in the area of the promotion and protection of the human rights of women, through the Inter-American Commission of Women; and in other areas dealt with by the Pan American Institute of Geography and History and other organizations.

This is the third time in its history that our country has played host to the OAS –in 1976, 1991, and now in 2003.

The OAS that visits us today is clearly poised to become the linchpin of the hemispheric system which, through the Summit process, is moving towards new forms of integration in the Hemisphere in the first decade of the 21st century.

For this reason, and because the work of the OAS is at times not well known, we have felt it useful to write this document and to circulate it. Additional information may be found on the OAS home page at www.oas.org.

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I. DEFENSE AND PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The inter-American system for the promotion and protection of human rights is one of the Organization's most successful mechanisms and traces its origins to a number of resolutions adopted at the Eighth International Conference of American States (Lima, Peru, 1938). These include the resolution titled "Freedom of Association and Freedom of Expression for Workers," "The Lima Declaration in favor of Women's Rights," resolution XXXVI wherein the American Republics stated that "any persecution on account of racial or religious motives ... is contrary to the political and juridical systems of America" and, most especially, the resolution titled "Defense of Human Rights."

The inter-American human rights system was formally instituted in 1948. That year, the Ninth International Conference of American States, held in Bogotá, adopted the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man. At that same Conference, the OAS Charter was adopted, based on the principle of respect for the fundamental rights of the human person.

The system's legal framework are the provisions embodied in the **American Convention on Human Rights** or "**Pact of San José**," signed in November 1969. This, the system's foremost instrument, has two additional protocols: the Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights "Protocol of San Salvador" (signed in 1988) and the Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights to Abolish the Death Penalty, signed in Asuncion on June 8, 1990. Four more treaties have also been added:

- the *Inter-American Convention to Prevent and Punish Torture*, signed in Cartagena de Indias on December 9, 1985;
- the *Inter-American Convention on Forced Disappearance of Persons* and the *Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women "Convention of Belém do Pará"*, both signed on June 9, 1994, in the Brazilian city of that same name, and
- the *Inter-American Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities* signed in Guatemala City on July 7, 1999.

Of the 25 countries that have ratified or acceded to the "Pact of San José," 22 countries have accepted the *binding jurisdiction of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights*. They are: Argentina, Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Trinidad and Tobago, however, denounced the Convention in 1998.

The system has two oversight bodies with distinct but mutually reinforcing functions, authorities, and roles: the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. With these two bodies functioning in tandem, the system processes individual cases, conducts on-site visits, prepares country reports, has special rapporteurs for certain issues, adopts precautionary and provisional measures, shepherds friendly settlement proceedings, and so on.

In its many reports, the Commission has criticized general situations constituting human rights violations in the member countries, or violations of specific rights, such as the rights of women, children, migrant workers, or indigenous peoples. For this last group, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has steadfastly supported the Organization's efforts to draft an Inter-American Convention on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The initial draft prepared by the Commission has been under negotiation for several years now, and the final text is expected to be signed shortly.

In its annual reports, the Commission assesses compliance with the international commitments that the countries of the region have undertaken in respect of human rights and makes recommendations for the observance of and respect for these rights.

The presence of a mechanism for individual complaints, also featuring precautionary measures, has saved human lives, has restored justice in many cases and has provided redress to countless victims of human rights violations. A significant percentage of these complaints end in friendly settlements reached between victim and State. A smaller percentage of cases are settled by the Inter-American Court, whose judgments are binding upon those States that have accepted the Court's litigious jurisdiction.

The doctrine set out in the Commission's reports and the Court's case law is an invaluable contribution to the fight to ensure respect for human dignity and should be a source of constant inspiration and guidance for those called upon to be the stewards and navigators of our countries' destinies.

II. DEFENSE AND PROMOTION OF DEMOCRACY

The Inter-American Democratic Charter, approved in Lima on September 11, 2001, is just the most recent step in the OAS' steadfast allegiance to democracy, an allegiance that began with adoption of the Organization's Charter in 1948. There, member states are urged "to promote and consolidate representative democracy."

Over the years, the OAS has taken on an active role in defending democracy in the member countries, with due respect for the principle of nonintervention upheld in its Charter.

In 1991, at the twenty-first regular session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States, held in Chile's capital, the member states signed the "Santiago Commitment to Peace and the Renewal of the Inter-American System." They also approved resolution AG/RES. 1080 (XXI-O/91) titled "Representative Democracy." The latter created a mechanism to effectively respond to an irregular interruption of the democratic political institutional process in any member state of the Organization.

Approval of these resolutions was a turning point -pre- and post-1991- in the history of multilateral politics in this Hemisphere. Democracy began to move out of the realm of moral prescript to become an international juridical imperative accepted by all OAS member states (with the exception of Cuba, which has been suspended since 1992).

Nonetheless, it would be a serious mistake to believe that the OAS reinvented itself in 1991. From the time the American nations won their independence, democratic government has been a constant objective of the Pan American movement. It began as a driving ideal, gradually evolved into a moral principle, and eventually became a binding provision set forth in the Charter of the OAS.

Haiti was the first test of General Assembly resolution AG/RES. 1080. When military forces expelled President Jean Bertrand Aristide on September 30, 1991, the mechanism created just a few months earlier in Chile was set in motion. Since then, the Organization's collective effort has been mobilized in a number of member states to defend the democratic system of government, testimony to the considerable progress made within the inter-American system toward what is now beginning to be recognized as the right to democracy.

The road to the OAS member states' recognition of representative democracy as the paradigm for government has been long and hard. History has demonstrated that the instruments created were not up to the task and that their ambiguous interpretation allowed anti-democratic regimes to become entrenched.

The grave institutional political crisis that representative democracy endured in the late 1990s prompted the Organization to look for new ways to respond and to protect and strengthen democracy. At two meetings held in Canada, the session of the General Assembly that met in Windsor, Ontario in 2000, and then the Summit of the Americas in Quebec in 2001, the first steps were taken to realize the ideal of an Inter-American Democratic Charter. The idea was to clarify and reinforce the provisions related to promotion, preservation, defense, and strengthening of democracy by codifying them.

In June 2001, the General Assembly instructed the Permanent Council to draft that Charter, the final text of which was signed on September 11, 2001, at a session gripped in global shock and indignation at the terrorist attacks that had occurred that very day in the United States. A new instrument of the inter-American system was minted that day, one that systematically sets out the principles and standards of collective action in cases of alteration or interruption of the democratic institutions of government.

One of the Inter-American Democratic Charter's greatest contributions to the progressive development of international law is that it expressly upholds the peoples' right to democracy and their governments' obligation to promote and defend it. The adoption of the Inter-American Democratic Charter bespeaks the considerable progress that collective support for the emerging right to democracy has made within the inter-American system.

Within the Organization, however, the defense and promotion of democracy stretches far beyond the preparation of legal texts. The OAS has a Unit for the Promotion of Democracy (UPD), perhaps best known for its election observation missions in the region. However, the work of the Unit is on a much larger scale and involves a commitment to improving the institutions of democratic government and cultivating a culture of democracy in the member states of the Organization.

Created in 1990, the Unit has since played an ever more relevant role in promoting democratic values; building up representative institutions, such as parliaments and electoral bodies, and providing technical assistance for institutional modernization, better governance, and peaceful resolution of conflicts.

The UPD has also taken on an ever growing leadership role in the implementation of the mandates from the Summits of heads of state and government. In furtherance of those mandates, the Unit has taken up issues critical to improving the quality of democracy in the region, such as the crisis of the political parties and boosting decentralization processes.

To support better quality political representation, as mandated by the heads of state and government of the region at the Quebec Summit, the UPD has headed up the Inter-American Forum on Political Parties, which brings together the major political parties of the region, from across the ideological spectrum. The idea is to generate a sustained dialogue with electoral institutions, with civil society organizations, with cooperation agencies and with other stakeholders, to jointly push an agenda aimed at modernizing and reforming political parties and party systems in the Hemisphere. On the issue of decentralization, the Unit serves as Technical Secretariat to the Meeting of Ministers and High-level Authorities Responsible for Policies on Decentralization, Local Government and Citizen Participation at the Municipal Level and the High-Level Inter-American Network on Decentralization, Local Government and Citizen Participation, which enable governments to share experiences and information on the policies and practices that have been successful in strengthening citizen participation and developing democratic government at the local level.

III. THE SUMMITS PROCESS AND THE HEMISPHERIC AGENDA

For the last ten years, a general consensus on political and economic principles—based on democracy and market economics—enabled unprecedented cooperation and integration throughout the Hemisphere.

In this context, the heads of state and government of the Americas decided to meet to decide what the fundamental precepts of the new hemispheric agenda would be. The First Summit of the Americas was held in 1994 and from it came a new way of tackling the priorities and objectives for the region's political, economic, social, and cultural development.

The decision to institutionalize these meetings resulted in what is known as the "Summit Process," an intergovernmental dialogue at the highest level where ideas are shared, a common language is being cultivated and mandates for collective action are planned. Three Summits have been held thus far: the first in Miami in 1994, the second in Santiago in 1998, and the third in Quebec in 2001. While the OAS did not have a central role in preparing the documents for the Miami Summit, the Secretary General attended and explained his idea of the OAS' role in relation to the new agenda and the priorities established by the dignitaries in the Declaration and Plan of Action of the First Summit of the Americas. At that Miami Summit, the heads of state and government decided to assign the OAS a number of mandates, which then became priorities on the Organization's own agenda. The OAS was instrumental in implementing 13 of the 23 initiatives agreed upon in Miami.

At the Second Summit of the Americas, held in Santiago, Chile, the OAS took active part in the *travaux préparatoires*, providing technical assistance and organizing preparatory meetings in areas like education, science and technology, public participation, drugs, and others. The Santiago Summit charged the OAS with implementing many of the mandates on almost every issue, and specifically designated it to serve as the "institutional memory of the process."

It was at the Third Summit of the Americas that the OAS assumed a central role in the process, as it was appointed to serve as Secretariat of the Summit Process. It was also entrusted with executing many of the mandates in various areas and with coordinating the work of the international organizations in discharging the mandates.

This evolution of the OAS' involvement in the Summit Process points up how the OAS agenda and the agenda of the Summit Process are converging and a single inter-American agenda is beginning to emerge.

IV. THE OAS AGAINST CORRUPTION

The battle against corruption has been a constant concern in the Americas. In the OAS framework, the anti-corruption issue first came to the fore in 1992, was carried forward with General Assembly resolutions in 1994, was reiterated at the Miami Summit and then took permanent hold with the process that led to the adoption of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption in 1996.

This convention broke new ground. Not only was it the first international juridical instrument on the subject, but still is the only one in which the fight against corruption is regarded as an unremitting effort in which the states undertake commitments to both punish and prevent corruption and recognize the necessity of involvement from every quarter: the state, the private sector, civil society, and the international community.

To aid in the work of fighting corruption, a Follow-up Mechanism for Implementation of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption was established to gauge compliance with the Convention's provisions.

This mechanism was created in response to a mandate from the Third Summit of the Americas, where the leaders of the region pledged to reinvigorate their fight against corruption and to work to strengthen cooperation among states in this area. By enhancing the Convention with approval of the follow-up mechanism, the States Parties have determined that the Convention will be the map charting the course of collective hemispheric action to fight corruption.

V. THE ANTI-DRUG FIGHT

The Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), created in 1986 by a resolution of the OAS General Assembly, is the Hemisphere's most important regional political forum in the fight to combat the drug problem.

One of CICAD's most important initiatives is the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM), created by the Second Summit of the Americas, held in Santiago in 1998. There, the heads of state and of government pledged to develop a single, objective, multilateral evaluation mechanism that would track the individual and collective progress achieved in the efforts made by the countries of the Hemisphere to deal with the drug problem. By creating the MEM—based on the principles of respect for the states' sovereignty, territorial integrity, and their domestic legal systems—the countries

of the Hemisphere were acknowledging that drugs were a complex, transnational problem that necessitated an integral, balanced approach on the part of the states. Accordingly, the only viable and effective tool for combating the drug problem is international cooperation within a framework of shared responsibility.

The MEM is a peer evaluation process, wherein all the countries evaluate and are evaluated. The MEM does not impose penalties; it is a collaborative process. By sharing information and strategies, the countries are able to get a clear picture of what their needs and weaknesses are. Working together, they can identify areas where the law needs to be improved or where greater cooperation, research, or resources are required.

The first evaluations were presented to the Third Summit of the Americas, held in Quebec in April 2001. On a visit to the OAS that same month, the President of the United States, George W. Bush, described the MEM as a "major achievement" and said that "Our Hemisphere is more united in addressing this problem, both in supply and demand, than it has ever been before." This is an important point, because the MEM is being viewed as an alternative to the U.S.' unilateral certification procedure.

The first round of MEM evaluation, for the 1999-2000 period, produced reports on the 34 member countries and a general hemispheric analysis. These reports included 439 recommendations, an average of 14 per country, about measures that the countries and the region should take to wage a more vigorous anti-drug fight. On January 30, 2002, a report was published on the progress achieved as of that date. It examined the specific measures that each country had taken to put the MEM recommendations into practice.

The MEM's second round of evaluations covered the 2001-2002 period. A total of 34 national reports and one hemispheric report were published in January 2003.

VI. HEMISPHERIC SECURITY

With the end of the Cold War, the emergence of new players in international relations, and the phenomenon of globalization, the old threats to security have been compounded by other risks emerging within the Hemisphere.

The heads of state and government identified these threats at the Third Summit of the Americas, April 2001, as the following: the illicit traffic drugs and firearms; the growing danger posed by organized crime and corruption; environmental vulnerability exacerbated by the susceptibility to natural disasters; the transport of nuclear waste; economic vulnerability, particularly vis-à-vis trade; new health threats like the global pandemic of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) and the rising levels of poverty.

Later, at the regular session of the General Assembly held in Barbados in June 2002, the foreign ministers recognized that "security threats, concerns and other challenges in the hemispheric context are of diverse nature and multidimensional scope, and that the traditional concept and approach must be expanded to encompass new and non-traditional threats, which include political, economic, social, health, and environmental aspects."

It is patently evident that these new threats do not respect borders and that individually the states do not have the means to successfully conquer them. Greater cooperation among the OAS' 34 member states is, therefore, vital. For that reason, at the Second Summit of the Americas, the heads of state and government decided to hold a Special Conference on Security, a decision that the Third Summit reaffirmed. The Conference is slated for Mexico during the month of October 2003, at a date to be yet determined.

The Plan of Action of the Second Summit, held in Santiago in 1998, established three mandates for the Special Conference on Security, which were to: "follow up on and expand topics relating to confidence and security building measures; analyze the meaning, scope, and implications of international security concepts in the Hemisphere, with a view to developing the most appropriate common approaches by which to manage their various aspects, including disarmament and arms control; and pinpoint ways to revitalize and strengthen the institutions of the Inter-American System related to the various aspects of Hemispheric Security."

This Conference is part of the inter-American system's commitment to the region's security. Substantial progress has been made on that commitment in the form of conventions approved and new bodies created, among them the following: the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) and its Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM); the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials (CIFTA) and its Consultative Committee; the Inter-American Convention against Terrorism and the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (CICTE); the Inter-American Democratic Charter; the Inter-American Convention against Corruption, and the Inter-American Committee on Natural Disaster Reduction (IACNDR).

While new security threats have surfaced, there is an awareness in the region that the old threats—although somewhat abated—still persist. To ease tensions, the region has set in motion a number of confidence-building measures.

Regional conferences were held on this subject in Santiago (1995) and San Salvador (1998), as was a meeting of experts in Miami (2003). As a result, a significant increase has been achieved in the number of OAS member states that have signed and ratified various international legal instruments, such as: Protocol II, as amended, of the United Nations Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects; the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production, and Transfer of Antipersonnel Mines and Their Destruction; the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction; the Inter-American Convention on Transparency in Conventional Weapons Acquisitions, and the participation of all Latin American and Caribbean states in the Treaty of Tlatelolco. Cuba's accession to this last Treaty has strengthened the first inhabited nuclear-weapon-free zone in the world.

Progress has also been made with signature and ratification of inter-American instruments adopted in response to new security threats, such as the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials, and the Inter-American Convention against Terrorism.

Regarding the prevention of conflicts, the Hemisphere has had the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (TIAR) since 1947, signed and ratified by 23 OAS member states. In this treaty, states parties formally condemn war and undertake in their international relations not to resort to the threat or use of force except in self-defense or when approved by the United Nations Security Council. They also pledge to attempt to settle their disputes by peaceful means before taking them to the United Nations.

The inter-American system also has the 1948 American Treaty on Pacific Settlement “Pact of Bogota,” which 21 member states of the OAS have signed and 14 have ratified. In this treaty, states parties again pledge to refrain from the threat or use of force or any other form of coercion to settle their differences, and to settle their controversies by regional pacific procedures before referring them to the Security Council of the United Nations.

In 2000, the OAS General Assembly adopted a resolution establishing the “Fund for Peace: Peaceful Settlement of Territorial Disputes.” The purpose of the Fund is to provide member states of the Organization that so request with financial resources to help defray the costs of proceedings previously agreed to by the parties for the peaceful resolution of territorial disputes among member states.

VII. FREE TRADE IN THE HEMISPHERE

At the first Summit of the Americas, held in Miami in 1994, the heads of state and government of thirty-four of the thirty-five nations of the Western Hemisphere agreed to launch a process to create the “Free Trade Area of the Americas,” an initiative whose purpose is to eliminate, among the countries of the region by no later than 2005, the barriers obstructing their goods’ and services’ access to markets.

There, the democratically elected heads of state and government of the Western Hemisphere signed a declaration of principles titled “Partnership for Development and Prosperity: Democracy, Free Trade and Sustainable Development in the Americas” and a Plan of Action.

The objectives of the partnership were as follows:

- To preserve and strengthen the community of democracies of the Americas
- To promote prosperity through economic integration and free trade
- To eradicate poverty and discrimination in our Hemisphere
- To guarantee sustainable development and conserve our natural environment for future generations.

To achieve these four basic objectives, the heads of state and government approved a plan of action containing 23 initiatives, one of which—indeed the most important—was the creation of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).

The Organization of American States, the Hemisphere’s principal political organ, had no role in the process as originally conceived. However, in the eight years since Miami, the Summit process and the OAS have drawn closer and closer, to the point that it was decided that starting in 2002, the

OAS General Assembly would also be an opportunity for the ministers of foreign affairs to examine the progress made in the Summit process. In practice, the OAS has become the Technical Secretariat for the Summits and performs an active supporting role in the FTAA negotiations.

At the present time, the Organization, through its Trade Unit, is partnered with the Inter-American Development Bank and ECLAC to form a Tripartite Committee that provides technical support with the trade negotiations, improves the flow of information, and ensures effective coordination with regional and subregional organizations.

VIII. COOPERATION IN THE OAS

Under its Charter, one of the Organization's essential purposes is to promote, by cooperative action, the economic, social and cultural development of its member states.

From the Organization's establishment in 1948, initiatives in this area were channeled through the Inter-American Economic and Social Council and the Inter-American Cultural Council (and then their successor, the Inter-American Council for Education, Science, and Culture), and through the specialized conferences and organizations.

When in 1961 the OAS was designated coordinator of the programs conducted under the "Alliance for Progress"—then the most sweeping technical cooperation initiative ever undertaken in the region—, cooperative action began to figure more prominently within the Organization. Around the mid 1970s, however, factors began to take shape that, twenty years later, would cause a drastic drop-off in the monetary value of the cooperation delivered through the OAS, and the structures, means, and objectives that attended that cooperative action would be reconfigured. In the early 1990s, the OAS' profile in the area of technical cooperation was at a very low level. In fact, the Organization was handling less than 1% of the resources that governments made available for partnership for development in the region.

Against this backdrop, the Protocol of Managua was adopted in 1992, and entered into force in 1996. It altered the Organization's approach to cooperation by introducing the concept of "integral development" and adopting a new paradigm whereby "[i]nter-American cooperation for integral development is the common and joint responsibility of the Member States." This change was intended to replace the "vertical" model of technical cooperation, identified with "technical assistance" and the practice of sending in experts most of whom came from donor countries. The new model is one of "horizontal cooperation," where the countries directly exchange assistance between and among themselves, with the OAS functioning as catalyst or facilitator.

The Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI) became the organ in charge of formulating, promoting, and steering technical cooperation. An Executive Secretariat was created for CIDI and, in 1997, so was a Special Multilateral Fund (FEMCIDI). Finally, in 1999, the OAS General Assembly created the Inter-American Agency for Cooperation and Development (IACD) as an organ of CIDI, whose purpose is to promote and administer execution of projects, programs, and activities in partnership for development.

To be sure, partnership for development in the OAS is not confined to the Organization and its member states. It also encompasses work conducted in conjunction with multilateral institutions like the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank, the Andean Development Corporation, structures like the Social Network of Latin America and the Caribbean and civil society entities.

While technical cooperation is being redirected toward the integral development objective, the amount involved is relatively small—less than US\$100 million per year—by comparison to the large amounts marshaled by organizations like the Inter-American Development Bank, the UNDP, and donor countries' official development assistance programs. Take, for example, the prestigious OAS fellowship program, which has a considerable multiplier effect in the region, having trained generations of leaders and professionals. Yet in 2001, it had only US\$8.7 million. There is the sense that, the declared interest of the member states and the General Secretariat notwithstanding, social issues—technical cooperation among them—are not accorded privileged treatment within the OAS.

Now that the OAS is in the mainstream of the Summit Process, and as the recommendations from the Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development begin to be addressed, the social agenda may eventually figure more prominently within the Organization and technical cooperation [partnership for development] could be empowered as an effective tool for achieving social goals.

IX. EDUCATION AND THE OAS

From the time it was established, one of the constant concerns in the Organization of American States has been to raise the standards and levels of education in the Hemisphere. But progress came in fits and starts for the first ten years of the Organization's existence, as the debate centered around what the appropriate educational systems for the region should be.

It was only with the resolution of Maracay (1968) that concrete progress began to be made in the field of education. In that resolution, the member states resolved to espouse the new core ideas about development and cooperation, which led to adoption of the Inter-American Educational, Scientific and Technological, and Cultural Development Programs.

The interest that the heads of state and government have in stepping up efforts in the area of education was particularly apparent at the Second Summit of the Americas, whose main theme was education. There, the heads of state and government recognized the need to introduce sweeping educational reform processes in the Hemisphere, across every level of the educational system, by building broad-based consensus with regard to the problems in education and by enlisting commitment and effort from every quarter of society to overcome those problems.

The Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI) is working to execute the mandates from the Education ministerials. With the support it will receive from the new Inter-American Committee on Education (CIE), created in 2002, it is to monitor fulfillment of the commitments undertaken at the Summit of the Americas and propose courses of action, summit programs, and horizontal cooperation strategies, with the emphasis on a hemispheric dialogue on education.

To that end, the ministers established the Education Plan of Action, which includes the so-called thematic programs: equality and quality in education; school management, decentralization, social participation and teacher professional development; youth learning, secondary education, and job-skills certification; higher education, science and technology, and academic mobility; and the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) in education.

X. THE OAS AND PROMOTION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The OAS' concern for environmental issues dates back four decades, when efforts got underway to take an inventory of the Hemisphere's natural resources. Today, with the Unit for Sustainable Development and Environment as the technical instrument and the Inter-American Committee on Sustainable Development as the policy body, the Organization is working to promote a concept of economic development that is consistent with preservation of the environment, to save it for present and future generations.

The framework was established in the mandates emanating from the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992, the Summit of the Americas on Sustainable Development, held in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, in 1996, and the work ordered by the Summits of the Americas.

Featured among the areas of activity in sustainable development are water resources, climate change and coastal zone management, biodiversity, natural hazards, renewable energy, public participation, environmental law and environmental education, all organized under the Inter-American Program for Sustainable Development.

In these projects, the OAS works in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Bank, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the IDB, and other such entities.

The Unit for Sustainable Development conducts a variety of technical cooperation projects to address the member states' needs. In the 2001-2002 period, it managed a portfolio of projects valued at approximately US\$60 million, 97% of which came from external funding.

XI. THE OAS AND ERADICATION OF POVERTY

The eradication of "extreme poverty," which the OAS Charter states is one of the Organization's essential purposes, is an aspiration not yet realized and a mission not yet accomplished, either as an Organization goal or an empirical reality. According to World Bank figures, almost 170 million people are living in poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean today.

Eradication of poverty began to figure more prominently on OAS agendas when the concept of "integral development" was added to the Charter, described as one of the conditions essential to peace and security in the region.

In the Charter, the member states agree that equality of opportunity, the elimination of extreme poverty, equitable distribution of wealth and income and the full participation of their

peoples in decisions relating to their own development are, among others, basic objectives of integral development.

To achieve those objectives, the member states agree to devote their “utmost efforts” to accomplishing certain basic goals, including: a substantial and self-sustained increase of per capita national product; equitable distribution of national income; modernization of rural life and reforms leading to equitable and efficient land-tenure systems; accelerated and diversified industrialization, especially of capital and intermediate goods; fair wages; eradication of illiteracy; proper nutrition, and adequate housing.

The mandate in the OAS Charter is reinforced by the goals for elimination of poverty and discrimination emanating from the United Nations Copenhagen World Social Summit in 1995, the special session the UN Special General Assembly held in 2000 for Follow-up to the Social Summit +5, and the development objectives from the UN Millennium Summit, all of which have a regional dimension. Still further reinforcement comes at the hemispheric level in the form of the Plan of Action from the Summits of the Americas process.

Combating poverty is one of the purposes of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI). CIDI undertakes this mission on a number of fronts, articulated in the Inter-American Program to Combat Poverty and Discrimination. A Strategic Plan for Partnership for Development, 2002-2005, was also approved within the CIDI framework, and underscores the fact that the fight against poverty and inequality, especially the elimination of extreme poverty, is the common and shared responsibility of the member states.

These mission statements about conquering poverty are coupled with the strong political message that the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the region sent when they signed the Inter-American Democratic Charter in Lima, Peru, on September 11, 2001. That document points out that “Democracy and social and economic development are interdependent and are mutually reinforcing” and that “Poverty, illiteracy, and low levels of human development are factors that adversely affect the consolidation of democracy.”