



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation
to the Mission to the 38th Regular Session of the General
Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS)**

**Canadian Section of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum
of the Americas (FIPA)**

**Medellín, Colombia
June 1 to 3, 2008**

Report

A delegation from the Canadian Section of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA) joined the FIPA Technical Secretariat at the 38th Regular Session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) in Medellín, Colombia from June 1 to 3, 2008. The delegation included Members of Parliament Mr. James Bezan, Mr. Mario Silva and Mr. Marcel Lussier. The delegation was accompanied by Ms. Danielle Labonté, Association Secretary.

The members of the delegation from the Canadian Section of FIPA had a particular interest in the main theme of the Assembly, *Youth and Democratic Values*, and felt that this Mission could increase their level of understanding of issues of hemispheric interest. They also felt that it could improve their capacity to bring the recommendations back to Canada for further discussion and consideration.

The delegation was an observer at the Plenary Sessions, which included regular business items such as elections, activity reports and adoption of resolutions and program-budget. These sessions were also of great interest as Heads of delegation presented their countries' views on the theme of the General Assembly and on hemispheric priorities such as sustainable development and security. The Plenary Sessions also provided a forum for the presentation of views and progress on specific questions such as the Malvinas Islands and the peace process in Colombia. The Declaration of Medellín on Youth and Democratic Values was approved at the final Session. It is included in Appendix 1. The Canadian delegation also observed the discussions during the Meeting of the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG) where the Heads of delegation discussed, in particular, the upcoming Summit of the Americas to be held in Trinidad-and-Tobago in April 2009.

The Mission was not only an opportunity to observe the meetings as part of the General Assembly agenda but also to promote FIPA, through meetings with Heads of delegations, and to gain support for furthering the linkages between FIPA and the OAS. During its Address to the OAS Permanent Council delivered in Washington D.C. on October 24, 2007 (Appendix 2), the President of FIPA reaffirmed the request that the OAS formally recognize the contribution from the Parliaments in general and from FIPA in particular to the development of an inter-American agenda. He suggested that the relations between the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the United Nations provide a good example of a model of cooperation and described four concrete measures that could be implemented for a more efficient collaboration between FIPA and the OAS:

1. Open direct and official channels of communication with the OAS through activities such as annual presentations of a FIPA report to the OAS Permanent Council, the participation of OAS representatives in FIPA's Plenary Assemblies, the regular communication with the Subsecretariat of Political Affairs about themes of common interest, the exchange of information regarding resolutions and decisions at the legislative level, and, the development of a bilateral dialogue in moments of regional crises;

2. Establish mechanisms that allow for greater parliamentary contribution to the regional negotiations and debates, respecting the division of powers, in order to obtain an agenda for Inter-American cooperation through activities such as direct presentations of the recommendations consensually adopted by the legislators from FIPA's Plenary Assemblies to the OAS, and, more effective monitoring of the compliance with the Inter-American commitments;
3. Establish a greater technical cooperation between the two organizations in the addressing of common interests such as: the struggle against poverty, parliamentarians' capacity building, the strengthening of the legislative institutions, trade, the fight against terrorism, the promotion of gender equality, sustainable development, and, fight against drug trafficking through activities such as the development of capacity building networks, with the participation from the OAS and its agencies, that would join regional bodies, such as IADB, ECLAC, OAS, and other organizations experienced in parliamentary capacity building; and
4. Grant FIPA a special status to participate in OAS General Assemblies, in inter-American Summits and in other meetings of interest to Parliaments.

The mechanisms for cooperation suggested by the President of FIPA during its Address to the OAS Permanent Council were useful elements to discuss with Heads of delegation in an effort to gain their support and receive their views on the subject.

To this effect the delegation met with the Chairs of the Commissions on Foreign Relations of the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Congress of Colombia; Ambassador Osmar Chofhi, Permanent Representative of Brazil to the OAS; Ambassador Hector E. Morales, Jr., Permanent Representative of the United States to the OAS; Mr. Dante Caputo, Secretary for Political Affairs for the OAS; and, Mrs. Suzanne Laporte, Secretary for External Relations for the OAS. The delegation also received a written statement from the delegation representing the Congress of the Union of Mexico affirming its support for stronger FIPA-OAS cooperation.

The members of the Canadian Section of FIPA received favourable responses during the meetings and witnessed the interest and support for a formal recognition of FIPA and for stronger mechanisms for cooperation. During the meetings the delegation also received ideas on how to proceed to formalize the cooperation between the two organizations. One method would be to adopt a resolution at the next FIPA Plenary Assembly and to gain support of the member-countries to designate FIPA as their parliamentary representative at the OAS. Another method would be to adopt a resolution to develop a Memorandum of Understanding with the OAS describing the mechanisms of cooperation. In the end, the members of the delegation concluded that a combination of both methods would be most fruitful.

In Medellín, the delegation also pursued other FIPA objectives. It met with Ambassador Luis Rodriguez, National Coordinator of the Secretariat for the V Summit of the Americas to continue the dialogue on the participation of FIPA at the upcoming Summit and during the pre-Summit discussions. The delegation also met with the Director of

Multilateral Relations of El Salvador regarding the upcoming delivery of an official request to the Legislative Assembly of El Salvador to host the next FIPA Plenary.

The meetings in Medellín offered an opportunity to the members of the Canadian Section of FIPA to learn more on the contribution of Canada in Colombia. The department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, with its partners working in the region, organized site visits of two projects in the city of Medellín aimed at helping Colombians meet their basic needs, protecting the rights of those affected by the conflict and promoting peace and non-violent conflict resolution methods throughout the region.

For the first visit, the members of the Canadian delegation were accompanied in one of the poorer communities in Medellín which has particularly suffered from the conflict most residents having been displaced to this city from other regions of Colombia. They met with the *Leaders Looking Forward for a Human Network of Peace (LATE PAZ)* where they witnessed the impacts of the joint initiative between the Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP) and the OAS in this community. After listening to some individual stories, they learned how this project helps the community organize itself to better represent its rights and to provide basic services to its residents. The MAPP-OAS project is supported by the department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade through the Global Peace and Security Fund.

For the second visit, the members of the Canadian delegation were accompanied to a project site of SAVE the Children Canada Comprehensive Education and Protection Response to Internally Displaced and Vulnerable Children and Youth, which is supported by the Canadian International Development Agency. This project aims to reinstate and maintain children's right to education and offer better quality education in communities that are affected by the conflict. The members of the delegation visited a school in one of the poorer communities in Medellín mostly attended by children of families that are victims of armed conflict and displacement in Colombia. After listening to the roles of various stakeholders and representatives, the members of the delegation learned how this initiative promotes the right to education and educates children on their rights and on non-violent means to resolve conflicts.

The two visits provided members of the delegation with opportunities to experience first-hand the realities in Colombia and to gain a better understanding of the impacts of the conflict in this country. They also allowed them to attest to the positive results of initiatives funded by Canada through various organizations.

In the deliberations following the meetings in Medellín, the Canadian delegation concluded that its participation had been a productive experience. This event provides an excellent opportunity for Canadian parliamentarians to familiarize themselves with the OAS objectives, discussions and decisions. This allows them to play a role in further defining and implementing programs that are initiated to support the OAS. This event also provides opportunities for FIPA to continue promoting its work and furthering its relations with the OAS. As the relations between the two organizations grow stronger, it is anticipated that FIPA will take a much stronger and active role during the OAS activities. It is suggested that the Canadian Section of FIPA continue sending a delegation to participate in the annual General Assembly of the OAS.

Finally, the Canadian delegation would like to thank the department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ambassador Matthew Levin and officials from the Canadian Embassy in Colombia as well as Ambassador Graham Clark and officials from the Permanent Mission of Canada to the OAS and in particular, Mrs. Ingrid Knutson, Counselor, Alternate Representative of the Permanent Mission for their support in the planning and coordination of the program.

Respectfully submitted,

Mr. James Bezan, M.P.
Chair
Canadian Section
of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum
of the Americas (FIPA)

Hon. Céline Hervieux-Payette, P.C., Senator
Vice-Chair
Canadian Section
of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum
of the Americas (FIPA)

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Section of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA)
ACTIVITY	Mission to the 38 th Regular Session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS)
DESTINATION	Medellín, Colombia
DATES	June 1 to 3, 2008
DELEGATION	
SENATE	None
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. James Bezan Mr. Mario Silva Mr. Marcel Lussier
STAFF	Ms. Danielle Labonté, Association Secretary
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 14,546.31
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 2,091.82
HOSPITALITY	\$ 0
PER DIEMS	\$ 1,205.31
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 0
MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES	\$ 264.37
TOTAL	\$ 18,107.81