



Organization of
American States



FORTIETH REGULAR SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE
ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES

SUMMARY OF THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE HEADS OF DELEGATION AND REPRESENTATIVES
OF CIVIL SOCIETY ON THE THEME OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

“PEACE, SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN THE AMERICAS”

Lima, Peru – June 6, 2010

The Dialogue between the Heads of Delegation and Representatives of Civil Society, held in the framework of the XL OAS General Assembly, facilitated the exchange of experiences on the central theme of the General Assembly “Peace, Security and Cooperation in the Americas.” The Dialogue was presided by Ms. Nidia Vilchez Yucra, Minister of Women and Social Development of Peru, in her capacity as representative of the host country of the XL General Assembly.

Minister Vilchez welcomed the members of civil society to the Dialogue and stressed that in her country, the active participation of civil society organizations is a priority and referred to the activities carried out with civil society in the context of the XX Pan American Child Congress, which took place September 22-25, 2009 in Lima, as an example of Peru's commitment to work with civil society and hear their ideas and recommendations related to the issues of inter-American agenda.

The Assistant Secretary General of the OAS, Ambassador Albert Ramdin, welcomed the participants and reaffirmed that OAS' continuing support of the Dialogue with civil society. Ambassador Ramdin recognized the importance of civil society groups and reiterated the commitment of the OAS to continue working with civil society in the future. Ambassador Ramdin briefly reviewed the activities with civil society during the past year and noted that the activities carried out by the OAS are designed to broaden the channels for citizen participation in the design and implementation of regional public policies, facilitate transparency and access to information on the initiatives of the OAS and promote the diversity of ideas and visions in the hemisphere. The Assistant Secretary General then explained the structure of the meeting before turning the floor over to the Chair of the Dialogue, Ms. Nidia Vilchez Yucra, Minister of Women and Social Development of Peru.

Ms. Vilchez first offered the floor to Mr. Emmanuel Diet, representative of the XXVIII Model General Assembly of the Organization of American States (MOAS) that took place at the University of San Martín de Porres in Lima, Peru from May 12 to 15, 2010 and brought together approximately 500 students from 43 universities from around the Americas. Mr. Diet, who served as the Secretary General of the MOAS, stated that during the simulation, the student participants were able to come to agreements despite their countries' differences, demonstrating how through dialogue we can shape common positions.

Mirroring the Fortieth OAS General Assembly's theme of “Peace, Security and Cooperation in the Americas,” he shared that the students debated and approved resolutions on the prevention of political crises, the participation of women in political, social, and economic decision-making, transparency in the

acquisition of arms, the role of civil society in handling environmental issues, and changes in the methodologies for paying quotas in the OAS. Mr. Diet stressed that the youth who participated in the simulation felt more united and better prepared as future leaders. After presenting the resolutions of the XXVIII MOAS to Minister Vilchez and the Assistant Secretary General, Mr. Diet closed by emphasizing the important role that young people can play in the implementation of programs that promote peace and democracy.

The representative of the youth network, Mr. Gerardo Robinson, thanked to the OAS General Secretariat for facilitating a youth dialogue on June 4, 2010 in the framework of the XL OAS General Assembly, which allowed young people to have a voice in the decision-making process to promote the development of the hemisphere. Mr. Robinson stated that young people are grateful to the OAS for the chance to demonstrate their capacity as leaders. He also expressed his wish for the youth to be considered separately as a group distinct from the civil society sector and commented that the young people are preparing themselves for the Sixth Summit of the Americas that will take place in Colombia in 2012. Finally, Mr. Robinson emphasized that the National Secretariats for Youth could be strategic partners in carrying out awareness campaigns to motivate youth in social entrepreneurship.

Ms. Delia Ferreira Rubio, on behalf of the civil society organizations that work on the fight against corruption and representative of Transparency International, spoke on the role of civil society within the framework of the OAS. She established three concrete recommendations: First, Ms. Ferreira Rubio called for a rejection of a proposed resolution that would put conditions on the participation of civil society organizations in the OAS based on national legislation. Secondly, Ms. Ferreira Rubio affirmed that access to information allows citizens to be educated participants in the democratic process and advocated for the passing of the Model Inter-American Law on Access to Information. Thirdly, Ms. Ferreira Rubio stated that it is time to move from recognizing the right to participate to an effective participation by civil society guaranteed through permanent consultation mechanisms in the OAS. To this end, she urged Member States to approve the "Draft Strategy for Strengthening Civil Society Participation in the Activities of the Organization of American States.

Mr. Ramiro Orias of Corporacion Ocasá, in representation of the Red Participación y Justicia and organizations working on the theme of democracy, centered his intervention on the status of democracy in the Americas, indicating that we are facing great challenges since in many countries the existence of a true democracy is questioned. Mr. Orias made reference to the coup d'état in Honduras, recommending that Honduras should not be permitted to return to the OAS until there is a clear path to restore democracy in the country, respect and protection of human rights, guarantees of an independent judicial branch, and a process of demilitarization. He highlighted the importance of strengthening the enforcement and implementation mechanisms of the elements of the Inter-American Democratic Charter in order to avoid another disruption to democratic order in the region.

He recommended the creation of a special rapporteurship on democracy within the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) with the purpose of observing and evaluating the implementation of the elements established in article 3 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, and to develop indicators for their measurement that would be reported to the bodies of the Inter-American System. The Member States should extend an open invitation to the rapporteurship to enter into their countries and should create a special fund to ensure its financing. Mr. Orias also proposed strengthening the role of the Secretary General within the framework of article 20 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter to exercise a more active role in the prevention of crises and strengthening democracy.

Mr. Luis Eduardo Salcedo of the Asamblea Permanente de la Sociedad Civil por la Paz, representing organizations working in the area of peace, indicated that peace must be tightly linked with social equality, human security, the administration of justice and full access to opportunities. In order to foster a culture of peace, the Member States must avoid an arms race, expressions and importation of military conflicts, and the use of the military for territorial disputes.

To achieve these goals, the civil society representative suggested that the Member States and the OAS prioritize the principles of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, preserve the pacific solution of conflict through political and diplomatic means, and avoid any call to war. Mr. Salcedo stressed that to establish a culture of peace between the States and intergovernmental organizations, it is necessary to use multilateral approaches and work with civil society to overcome the obstacles to creating a culture of peace, such as narcotrafficking, illegal arms trade, and other forms of crime that finance illegal organized groups that weaken democratic institutions and peace. He also commented it is necessary to contribute to the political, non-military approach to the internal armed conflict in Colombia, prevent its internationalization, preserve peace on the borders and incentivize multilateral cooperation that fosters a culture of peace.

After the first segment of interventions by civil society, the Chair offered the floor to the Member States.

Ambassador Duly Brutus, Permanent Representative of Haiti to the OAS, began his intervention by thanking civil society from the hemisphere for their support, cooperation and solidarity following the earthquake that struck Port of Prince on January 12, 2010. This solidarity was an example of the spirit of cooperation that exists in the region and the role of civil society and the Haitian Diaspora in the development process and prosperity in his country.

Ambassador Jose de Jesus Martinez Gonzalez, Alternate Representative of Panama to the OAS, congratulated the government of Peru for holding the General Assembly and expressed his desire that all the countries of the hemisphere follow the example of Peru and establish a Ministry of Women in their respective governments to bring justice to all women throughout Latin America. He expressed his concern for the disqualification and the closing of spaces for civil society in some countries of the Americas as had been done in the past against political parties, the church, media and the private sector, under the argument that these sectors promote certain political interests. Ambassador Martinez stated that Panama supports civil society and is against any limitation that impedes its participation, and that the only restriction that should exist is the respect for democracy and the fostering of peace.

Ambassador Carmen Lomellin, Permanent Representative of the United States to the OAS, emphasized her country's support of meetings and dialogues with civil society and stressed the civil society's fundamental role in fostering a culture of peace and in supporting efforts to bolster citizen security and safety throughout the region. Ambassador Lomellin stated that respect for human rights and democratic governance are crucial for sustained development, security and peace, and she emphasized the United States' efforts to work with civil society and human rights defenders in order to contribute to its work, guarantee freedom of expression of the media and maintain independent branches of government and the rule of law.

She also reiterated her country's support of universally identified ideals that define how governments should relate to NGOs, including governmental laws that protect, not impede peaceful operation of NGOs in an apolitical, consistent, fair and transparent manner; and that NGOs should be able to seek

funding for their activities from domestic, foreign and international sources. Ambassador Lomellin reaffirmed the United States' ongoing commitment to encourage adherence to international principles and positive change through democratic and peaceful processes in partnership with civil society and OAS Member States.

The Vice Minister of Multilateral Affairs of Colombia, Ms. Adriana Mejia Hernandez, congratulated the OAS for its initiatives with civil society to create spaces for the exchange of ideas between citizens and the Member States. She emphasized that the themes of respect and protection of human rights, participation of women in political, economic and social life, and the integral development of communities are fundamental parts of the work of the Member States. The theme of the General Assembly is timely due to the current threats to public security that impact the population, such as drugs, terrorism, illegal arms trafficking and organized transnational crime.

The Colombian representative underscored the programs in her country related to the implementation of democratic security policies that allow her government to offer its citizens guarantees in the exercise of their civil, ideological and political rights. In addition, she mentioned that the recent OAS Electoral Observation Mission reported that the last presidential elections had been the calmest in four decades. She also commented that Colombia recently passed policy to promote equal opportunities for the afro-Colombian population that establishes mechanisms to broaden opportunities for access to integral development and reduce the gaps in living conditions and the well-being of the afro-Colombian population. She also mentioned the advancements in the formulation of a public policy relating to indigenous peoples in cooperation with other Member States and international organizations. The Vice Minister reiterated the government of Colombia's commitment to disarmament and international security, and the reduction of the impact of antipersonnel landmines and cluster munitions, emphasizing that all cluster munitions were destroyed in Colombia in 2009.

The Undersecretary for Foreign Policy of the Dominican Republic, Ms. Alejandra Liviano, commented that the negotiations of the Declaration of Lima focused on military spending and national security, which implies recognition of the appropriate level of spending with respect to the States' security needs and the importance of dedicating greater resources to improve people's living conditions. The commitments made in the area of security must coincide with the commitments to democracy, sustainable development and social inclusion. Ms. Liviano cited the financial crisis of 2008-2009 and the new constitution of the Dominican Republic as cases, which called on all sectors of society to listen to the ideas of the people and as examples of the cooperation that can occur between a State and civil society.

Ambassador Denis Moncada, Permanent Representative of Nicaragua to the OAS, greeted the civil society representatives and reaffirmed Nicaragua's will to continue working to develop and strengthen spaces for citizen participation. Ambassador Moncada stressed the right in his country of all citizens to establish a civil society organization without discrimination in order for them to realize their aspirations in accordance with their own interests and to participate in the economic, social and cultural development and in the strengthening of human rights. Ambassador Moncada expressed that Nicaragua is a country open to citizen participation in its different forms and reiterated the leading role of the citizenry in the nation's political agenda and in the administration of State resources in benefit of the people's social conditions through a participatory, democratic system with institutional mechanisms that allow for the fluid interaction between the State and society. He also said that it must be recognized that there is not one sole model of democracy, but many forms, such as representative, direct and participatory democracy. He noted that the participation of civil society as well as social and

constructive community organizations that foment the establishment of a climate of peace, stability, security and cooperation in the region is required.

After the first segment of presentations from the Member States, the Minister of Women and Social Development of Peru gave the floor to the civil society networks of working on issues, such as human rights, security, women's rights, persons with disabilities, sexual orientation and gender identity, and Afro-descendants.

On behalf of civil society organizations that work in the area of representing human rights and security, Mr. Ronald Gamarra, of the Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos de Peru, expressed the importance that all security policy must fundamentally have a respect and guarantee for human rights through effective and timely access to decent living conditions, without exclusion. In this regard, civil society considers that the opposite of this are policies that prioritize security of the State. This is reflected in the growing initiatives and implementation of plans of militarization as the only solution to social conflicts, as well as the criminalization of young offenders and the exclusion of large sectors of the population to access to rights related to health, education and life.

The representative of the civil society organizations working in the area of human rights and security highlighted the lack of developments, actions and initiatives that recognize and protect older persons and indigenous peoples. In this regard, he recalled that the OAS has tools from its own political bodies. He cited the example of the 2002 report of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) on terrorism and human rights, whose recommendations have not been reflected in the security initiatives currently promoted in the region. He also recalled that the Permanent Council gave a mandate to the IACHR to verify the situation of human rights defenders, from which several recommendations were issued that were not sufficiently answered by the States, but which certainly demand a timely and binding compliance mechanism.

On behalf of organizations working in the issue of women's rights, Ms. Karen Lucia Borges Queiroz, representative of *Catolicas pelo Direito de Decidir*, affirmed that the current oppression suffered by individuals affects their ability to make a free choice regarding their sexual orientation, abortion, and contraceptive methods. Ms. Borges affirmed that in the majority of countries in the region, this type of oppression occurs in homes, schools, and work places and is reflected in gender violence, machismo and human trafficking. In this regard, Ms. Queiroz indicated that the right of people to freely choose without discrimination is imperative; emphasizing that only through our differences will we attain the peace we desire. She added that the elements that make up peace are "our bodies, lives, and territories" and peace can not be built through the oppression of individuals.

Mr. Wilfredo Guzman Jara, representative of the Disabled Peoples International – Latin America Region and on behalf of disability organizations of the Americas, began by noting that there are 104 million people with disabilities in the Americas and that 80% of them live in poverty and extreme poverty; more than 90% of school-aged children do not attend school; and 80% of people with disabilities are unemployed. Also, he presented a proposal to Member States to raise the issue of disability within the Declaration of Lima, in which it requests that the OAS finance, from its regular fund, the activities of the Committee for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities and to provide resources to the technical secretariat in relation with the Decade of the Americas for the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities.

He expressed that there are three international treaties in this area, for which civil society calls for compliance by Member States in accordance with national and international norms. He also stressed the need for public investment in education, health, rehabilitation, employment and accessibility, in proportion to the population that people with disabilities represent in the context of inclusive development. He cited the example that Peru registered an economic growth over the last number of months that is not reflected in the conditions of the disabled, offering the example that of the 900,000 school-aged children with disabilities, only 48,000 attend school.

Finally, the representative of organizations that work in the area of disability argued that currently we live in a world in which governance, democracy and pluralism do not mean persons with disabilities necessarily benefit from these elements. The national and international political class led to the situation in which persons with disabilities live "far from development." In this sense, he called for political and citizen participation of persons with disabilities among other issues with electoral quotas.

Ms. Sherling Shanaz, representative of the Society Against Sexual Orientation Discrimination (SASOD) and on behalf of the organizations working in the area of right of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transvestite, transsexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTTTI) persons, expressed concern that the Declaration of Lima does not relate the theme of peace and security with the protection and promotion for human rights and non-discrimination. She stressed that socio-economic development policies should be linked to human rights. In this regard, she mentioned her concern about the existence of laws that infringe on the rights of people based on issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. Additionally, she stated that peace and security are not possible if individuals are not able to develop a life plan and do not enjoy the full protection of their fundamental rights and freedoms.

She demanded that English-speaking Caribbean countries reject any law that criminalizes consensual relations between same-sex adults; that Member States adopt laws to promote equality between people, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression; promote laws against domestic violence; and reform education policy, especially in primary education, in order to prevent acts of violence due to gender, sexual orientation and identity. With regard to the XL General Assembly, she requested the approval of the draft resolution presented by Brazil, "Human Rights, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression," for which she expressed civil society support, as well as the Draft Resolution "Draft Inter-American Convention against Racism and All Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance." Finally, she mentioned her concern for Member States' inaction and omission in protecting and promoting physical, sexual, psychological and reproductive integrity of the LGBTTTI community and in guaranteeing access to justice and legal security.

Ms. Cecilia Ramirez, representative of Centro de Desarrollo de la Mujer Negra Peruana, and on behalf of the network of Afro-descendant organizations in the region, affirmed the commitment of these organizations to actively contribute to strengthen the work of the OAS with regard to the fight against discrimination, racism and intolerance in the hemisphere. Ms. Ramirez expressed the need for the Member States to make financial contributions to the implementation of United Nations resolution "International Year for People of African Descent" and to advance in the adoption of the Inter-American Convention against Racism and All Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance.

Furthermore, Ms. Ramirez stressed the need for Member States to commit to politically and financially supporting the work of the Rapporteurship on the Rights of Afro-descendants and against Racial Discrimination of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. In this regard, she called for Member States to continue their fight against racism, discrimination and intolerance and to include

Afro-descendants as a central theme because this group has been historically excluded from human prosperity in the Americas, which does not allow for peace, security and cooperation in the societies of the region. She noted that public policies and special programs must be implemented with a gender perspective that allows for the improvement of integral health and education systems in order to reduce poverty. Ms. Ramirez also stated that Member States should fully recognize the economic and social contributions of indigenous and Afro-descendent peoples, and promote the visibility and inclusion of those communities.

Ambassador Graeme Clark, Permanent Representative of Canada to the OAS, explained that the Dialogue represents an opportunity for the Member States to listen. Ambassador Clark affirmed that Canada believes in the importance of the role that civil society has in the activities of the OAS as well as the importance of dialogue, inclusion, alliances, and exchanges of ideas within the framework of mutual respect, especially when there is dissent among them. Moreover, he stated that the role of government is not to judge, but rather to listen to messages of civil society, for which he reiterated that Canada will continue to reject all efforts that aim to restrict civil society participation in OAS activities.

Ambassador Dario Paya, Permanent Representative of Chile to the OAS, said that it is not possible to think about the consolidation of democratic processes and the health and long-term vitality of our democracies without civil society participation. The effective role that civil society had during and after the earthquake and tsunami on February 27, 2010 demonstrates the profound capacity of civil society to organize and take effective action in Chile.

Ambassador Paya also pointed out that Chile believes that there is still room in the OAS to improve and expand the role of civil society and that the best way to do this is by facilitating access to information and taking their recommendations into account. In this regard, he emphasized that the “Draft Strategy for Strengthening Civil Society Participation in the Activities of the Organization of American States” presented last year is a valuable step to systematize ways of deepening a constructive dialogue that facilitates effective contributions, hoping the Draft Strategy would be adopted soon. Ambassador Paya concluded by stating that the OAS is an organization of mature states, which must be capable of hearing and considering all the recommendations of civil society and to do this, the OAS will be setting an example of modernity and democratic inclusion.

Ambassador Ruy de Lima Casaes e Silva, Permanent Representative of Brazil to the OAS, spoke of the importance civil society has on the issues of gender and discrimination. Ambassador Casaes affirmed that Brazil is convinced that strengthening the role of women in our societies and gender equality are challenges directly related with the Millennium Development Goals, and that they are essential conditions for a sustainable democracy, peace, and security. Furthermore, Ambassador Casaes highlighted Brazil’s commitment to the promotion, visibility, and respect for people of different genders, sexual orientation, and social conditions. He underscored that recently, in relation to the fight against discrimination, President Lula da Silva signed a decree, which establishes May 17th as the National Day to Combat Homophobia.

Ambassador Maria del Lujan Flores, Permanent Representative of Uruguay to the OAS, affirmed that the topic of youth forms part of her country’s public and political agenda. In addition, she indicated that civil society participation is linked to the quality of democracy and that the primary responsibility in the design and implementation of public policies lies belongs to the government. She continued stating that it is necessary to establish adequate channels for the citizenry to express itself in an open and transparent dialogue. Along these lines, Ambassador del Lujan Flores stressed that strengthening civil

society participation, in the areas of human rights and promoting democracy, is fundamental and that Uruguay favors the broadest civil society participation in OAS activities.

Finally, Ambassador del Lujan Flores also commented that Uruguay has established public policies in relation to the rights and needs of persons with disabilities, and that Uruguay created the Registry of Persons with Disabilities for this purpose and advancements in education and health have been achieved. She also recalled that her country ratified the Inter-American Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities.

Mr. Gerard Greene, Director of the Division of Bilateral Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago, indicated that his government considers appropriate policies related to civil society as those that incorporate the points of view of a dynamic and active civil society, and whose contributions foster strategic and economic development. He made reference to the recent natural disasters that occurred in Member States of the OAS which demonstrated that development is not a linear progression. The Representative of Trinidad y Tobago concluded by reiterating his country's commitment to deepening the role of civil society in the design of national policies and in the Inter-American System through their direct participation.

Mr. Miguel Díaz Reynoso, Director General of the Links with Civil Society Organizations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mexico expressed his government's commitment to promote and strengthen the interaction between civil society and the State, and affirmed that the participation of civil societies is a fundamental component for advancing in the consolidation of democracy. In this regard, Mexico has promoted continued dialogue on its domestic agenda. Furthermore, the representative mentioned that Mexico will continue to support the strengthening and implementation of concrete actions and effective mechanisms for civil society participation in OAS activities. Recognition of this right should become full participation due to the important role in the public sphere. The Mexican Representative highlighted the "Law to Promote the Activities of Civil Society Organizations," a law that ensures that civil society has a free and autonomous voice.

The representative stressed that the government of Mexico has a special interest in participating in conjunction with civil society of the hemisphere on OAS commitments that have been adopted in the areas of peace, security, and cooperation, particularly with regard to the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons. The participation of organized civil society is both a right and a responsibility to the implementation of States' public policies.

He also highlighted the concern in Mexico with respect to organized crime and its various expressions. He commented that no method of preventing and combating crime and violence will have lasting effect if not accompanied by comprehensive policies in which governments and civil society cooperate. He gave the example of the creation of a Citizens' Observatory on the subject.

Finally, the Representative of Mexico stressed that his government plans to hold the World Youth Conference, the Global Forum on Migration and Development and the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP16) in which it welcomed the participation of civil society in the forum, emphasizing the fundamental role civil society represents.

At the end of Dialogue, Minister Vilchez thanked civil society for their presence in the General Assembly and congratulated the participants for the success of the Dialogue.