

# NEWS LETTER

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X Anniversary

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### CNDH HOSTS SECOND ANNUAL MEETING OF NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS FOR THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE AMERICAS AND FIFTH ANNUAL CONGRESS OF THE IBEROAMERICAN OMBUDSMAN FEDERATION.

Note: Given the importance of promotion and protection of Human Rights in the celebration of the Second Annual Meeting of National Institutions of the Americas, and in the Fifth Annual Congress of the Iberoamerican Ombudsman Federation (FIO), carried out simultaneously from November 19 to 24, 2000, it has been decided to publish the information regarding the Second Annual Meeting of National Institutions of the Americas in the present issue, and material on the FIO's Fifth Annual Congress in our December issue.

### SECOND ANNUAL MEETING OF NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS FOR THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE AMERICAS.

From November 19 to 21, 2000, Dr. José Luis Soberanes Fernández, President of the Mexican National Commission for Human Rights and Mrs. Michelle Falardeau-Ramsay, Commissioner-in-chief of the Canadian Human Rights Commission, convoked the Second Annual Meeting of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Americas.

This meeting was attended by representatives of ten National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Americas (Argentina, Bolivia, Canada, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, México, Perú, Santa Lucía --the latter in representation of the Caribbean countries--, and Venezuela), as well as representatives of the Human Rights Consulting Board in the Kingdom of Morocco, the Human Rights and Equality of Opportunity Commission of Australia, the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Asia-Pacific Forum of National Institutions, the Dominican Republic Congress, the Inter-American Indigenous Institute, and representatives from the lower and upper chambers of Mexican Congress. All in all, 37 participants attended and the following subjects were covered: Creation of a Network of National Institutions in the Americas, participation of National Institutions in the following World Conference on Racism and Xenophobia, and indigenous problem matters in the Americas.

Below are the texts of the final declarations of the Second Annual Regional Meeting of National Institutions in the Americas:

Statement to Create a Network of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights of the Americas.

Representatives of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights of the Americas, representatives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and observers representing other interested organizations met in Mexico City, México, November 19-21, 2000.

The representatives of National Institutions:

Reaffirming their commitment to the universal and indivisible rights declared in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other International Human Rights instruments which recognized that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and are entitled to equal protection against any form of discrimination and abuse of power.

Encouraging all states in the Americas to ratify all relevant United Nations and regional human rights instruments to which they are not yet a party and to ensure the full implementation of all instruments which they have already ratified.

Welcoming growing interest shown worldwide in the establishment and strengthening of independent and pluralistic National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights.

Recognizing the need of such human rights institutions to strengthen and promote the process of democratisation and guarantee the Rule of Law.

Reaffirming the important role that National Institutions play in the promotion and protection of human rights, the prevention of their violation and the assurance of effective redress when those rights are violated.

Recognizing the importance of full conformity with the Principles Relating to the Status and Functioning of National Institutions for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights (the Paris Principles)

Agreeing that, at the international level cooperation is essential to ensure the effective promotion and protection of human rights, and

Recognizing the benefits of regional cooperation, including through such mechanisms as a Network of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Americas, including the Caribbean, that conform with the Paris Principles:

Therefore, the representatives of National Institutions of the Americas, hereby:

1. Approve the establishment of a Network of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (NI's) of the Americas, which is here meant to include the Caribbean.

2. Agree that such a Network of NI's of the Americas, with the end result of establishing and maintaining a culture of human rights in the region and encouraging greater respect for implementation of human rights by governments, would further and expand their mutual support co-operation and joint activity through:

information exchanges

training and development for institution members and staff

development of joint positions on issues of common interest

undertaking joint projects

sharing expertise

periodical regional meetings

regional seminars on common themes and needs

mutually assisting and cooperating promptly and effectively with respect to requests from other National Institutions regarding violations of human rights of their nationals present in a country that has a National Institution.

3. Agree that the network of NI's of Americas will work in close cooperation with existing governmental and non-governmental organizations, particularly with those already established in the Americas and involved in the promotion and protection of human rights in the region.

4. Agree to prepare, over the course of the next 6 to 12 months, a draft proposal of the statutes of the Network of NI's of Americas that will include the responsibilities, functions and organizational forum that a Network of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights of the Americas will assume.

5. Further agree on the need to have a permanent secretariat to the Network and accept with gratitude the proposal that, on an interim basis, the National Commission of Human Rights of Mexico will provide this secretariat function.

6. Agree that the Network of NI's of Americas develop a close cooperation and where possible partnership with the Organization of American States (OAS), taking particular advantage of the current reform process of the inter-American system, and the April 2001 Summit of the Americas which will be held in Quebec City, Canada.

7. Call upon governments, UN and non UN related international organizations and other appropriate institutions to provide the appropriate assistance and financial support necessary to firmly establish and contribute to the future work of the Network of National Institutions of the Americas.

8. Welcome the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights emphasis on the importance of creating and strengthening of independent National Institutions as one of her major priorities in the Americas and agree to work closely with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and request the High Commissioner to facilitate close cooperation between National Institutions of the Americas region, including by ensuring that necessary resources and funds are available for work relating to these National Institutions in keeping with ECOSOC decision of July 1998; and recent decisions of the Commission of Human Rights.

9. Call for a memorandum of understanding between the Network of NI's of Americas and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights as a basis for their future cooperation.

In recognition of the National Institutions of the Americas agreement to all of the above, their representatives hereby attach their signatures this 21 day of November, 2000 in Mexico City, México.

Defensor del Pueblo de la República de Argentina; ;Defensor del Pueblo de la República de Bolivia; Comisión Canadiense de Derechos Humanos; Defensor del Pueblo de la República de Ecuador; Comisionado Nacional de los Derechos Humanos de Honduras; Comisión Nacional de los Derechos Humanos de México, y Defensoría del Pueblo de la República de Perú

Participation of National Institutions in the World Conference on Racism and Xenophobia and indigenous problem matters in the Americas.

The National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights of the Americas:

Highlighting that they are important mechanisms in encouraging internal transition towards democratic systems, and developing effective protection schemes and appropriate regulatory frameworks;

Recognizing that they must promote within their countries, the adoption of national legislation in compliance with the international instruments on human rights;

Emphasizing that these functions can only be carried out effectively if National Institutions are autonomous and adequately resourced;

Recognizing that among the most widespread human rights violations are those related to intolerance, especially racism and xenophobia, frequently accompanied by discrimination and exclusion, problems manifested in all the regions of the world in various ways;

Taking note that the UN have called upon States to participate in the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which will be held in Durban, South Africa, from August 31st to September 7th, 2001;

Considering that effective participation of the independent National Institutions is important for the success of the World Conference, including in particular in identifying practical strategies to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance to eradicate these practices;

Recognizing the need to listen to indigenous peoples own expression of their human rights and needs;

Noting that globalization has not benefited indigenous people, and generally prompted an increase in the number of people in extreme poverty and as a result further isolated them;

Noting further that the restructuring of the Inter-American system for the protection and promotion of human rights must consider all the factors that impact on the promotion and protection of the individual's fundamental liberties and rights in America, such as the presence of the National Institutions of human rights existing in the continent;

Recalling the Organization of American States General Assembly's resolutions (1), relative to Ombudsmen, People Defenders, Human Rights Commissioners of America, which recognize the important work of National Institutions in the region for the promotion and protection of human rights;

Taking note of the Organization of American States General Assembly's resolution AG/RES. 1701 (XXX-0/00), paragraph three, which recommends to the Permanent Council that, within the framework of the Inter-American system, the participation of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights should be encouraged.

RESOLVE TO:

FIRST.- Request the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to enable the effective participation of the National Institutions of Human Rights in the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, as well as in all relevant meetings of the United Nations dealing with human rights issues on their own right.

SECOND.- Participate in the Conference's Preparatory Regional Meeting which will be held in Santiago de Chile from December 5-7, 2000, with the purpose of developing commonly shared objectives and strategies towards the World Conference.

THIRD.- Request all participants in the World Conference to promote and circulate the results and recommendations adopted, in order to begin building a new culture in favor of the recognition and acceptance of racial, culture, ethnic, religious and gender diversity.

FOURTH.- Commit to organize wherever possible annual consultations with indigenous communities to elaborate together, programs and strategies in favor of the promotion and defense of their collective human rights.

FIFTH.- Commit within the Network of National Institutions of Americas to exchange information and identify criteria concerning the most prevalent human rights violations of indigenous people and study new forms of attention to those violations taking appropriate account of indigenous cultures and traditions;

SIXTH.- Reaffirm the commitment to respect and protect the rights of indigenous women and other particularly vulnerable or disadvantaged groups and recognize the extraordinary contribution of indigenous people to society in accordance with the Vienna Declaration and its Action Program (1993) and the Fourth U. N. Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995)

SEVENTH.- To ensure the active participation of National Institutions in discussions relating to the reform of the Inter-American System, especially on issues regarding the promotion and protection of human rights.

EIGHT.- Agree to actively explore the holding of a workshop early in 2001 to continue the analysis and discussion of the issue of indigenous people and develop targeted strategies and practical ways to reduce all forms of racially based discrimination, with particular focus on indigenous peoples of the Americas.

NINTH.- Further agree to take advantage of the meetings that will be held, such as the Fifth Annual Congress of the Federation of Iberoamerican Ombudsman, the Regional Preparatory Meeting in Chile, the meeting of the International Coordinating Committee in Geneva, the Preparatory Committee at its Second Sessions to be held in Geneva, the Network of National Institutions of the Americas next annual meeting, the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance to reduce all forms of racially based discrimination and increase the access by all vulnerable groups to their full human rights.

(1) AG/RES: 1505 (XXVII-0/97)

AG/RES: 1505 (XXVIII-0/98)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation No. 27/2000

November 24, 2000

Case: Refutation Measure brought by Mrs. Mildred Herrador Suárez and others.

Authorities Addressed: Town Hall of Catemaco, State of Veracruz.

Recommendation No. 28/2000

November 24, 2000

Case: Refutation Measure brought by Mr. Roberto Valero Cazares.

Authorities Addressed: Mayor of Tampico, State of Tamaulipas.

Recommendation No. 29/2000

November 24, 2000

Case: Refutation Measure brought by Mr. Rene Aurelio Melo Aguilar.  
Authorities Addressed: Town Hall of the Municipality of Pachuca, State of Hidalgo.

Recommendation No. 30/2000  
November 28, 2000

Case: Inhabitants of Tower Blocks Jardines de San Pablo, Tultitlan, State of Mexico.  
Authorities Addressed: General Director's Office of the Institute of Security and Social Services for State Workers.

Recommendation No. 31/2000  
November 30, 2000

Case: Mr. David Moises Sortibrán Serrano and others.  
Authorities Addressed: Minister of Public Education.

Recommendation No. 32/2000  
November 30, 2000

Case: Mr. Fausto Saucedo Bear and Mr. Edmundo Vazquez Hernandez.  
Authorities Addressed: General Director of the National Mexican Railway.

## DOMESTIC RELATIONS

Cycle of Conferences and Round Tables: "Human Rights of Religious Minorities".

During the month of November 2000, the cycle of conferences and round tables "The Prevention of Violence, Attention to Vulnerable Groups and Human Rights" was devoted to "The Human Rights of Religious Minorities".

The speakers who took part in this event included Dr. Roberto Blancarte from the Colegio de Mexico and Elio Masferrer from the National School for Anthropology and History in the round table "The Human Rights of Religious Minorities"; Daniel Nuñez Avalos from non governmental organization Light of the World Church, with the subject "Religious Minorities and Discrimination"; Sergio Pagaza Castillo from the History of Mormonism in Mexico Museum, A.C., with a presentation on "The Origin and Development of Mormonism and their Rights as a Minority in Mexico"; Gilberto Gutierrez Lucero from the Baptist church with the topic "Human Rights: Non-negotiable Biblical Principles Held by Baptists throughout History", and Dr. Raul Gonzalez Schmal from the Iberoamerican University with the conference "The Human Right to Religious Freedom".

## Training Courses

The National Commission for Human Rights, following the spirit promoted by the institution of the Ombudsman to disseminate the study, teaching and diffusion of Human Rights, during the month of November, undertook 23 activities related to Human Rights.

The subjects of the training activities were varied, the most important being: Civic and Ethic Formation, Education in Values, Children's Human Rights, Child Mistreatment, Incorporation of International Humanitarian Law, Women's Rights and Domestic Violence, the Rights of HIV-AIDS Patients, Human Rights and Police Duties, the Right to Information, Human Rights Promoters, International Instruments against Torture, the Universal Declaration and Vulnerable Groups, Introduction to Human Rights Studies, in addition to the Cycle of Conferences to Strengthen Respect for Human Rights in the Army and presenting the Minimum Agenda for Education in Human Rights before several State authorities in the States of San Luis Potosi and Tamaulipas.

## RADIO AND TELEVISION

During the month of November, 2000, the General Director's Office for Social Communication belonging to the Mexican National Commission transmitted on Radio Universidad's broadcast Argumentos, five programs on the following topics: "CNDH Diploma and Training Courses for Different Institutions", "The Human Rights of Religious Minorities", "The Fifth Annual Congress of the Iberoamerican Ombudsman Federation", "Social Integration of the Disabled", and "CNDH Program for the Chiapas Highlands and Jungle".

## PUBLICATIONS

Gaceta, the National Commission for Human Rights' official monthly publication, No. 122, corresponding to the month of September, 2000.

"Agarra la onda" [Getting the Hang of It], (brochure), Mexican National Commission for Human Rights, November, 2000.

"Quinto Congreso Anual de la Federación Iberoamericana de Ombudsman" [Fifth Annual Congress of the Iberoamerican Ombudsman Federation ], (brochure), Mexican National Commission for Human Rights, November, 2000.

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