

**Conclusions from the Second General Assembly of the Network of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Americas
San José, Costa Rica, 26-27 March 2003**

San José Conclusions

The member institutions of the Network of the Americas' National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, meeting in San José, Costa Rica, on March 26-27, 2003, for the Second General Assembly of the Network:

Recognize the important role of national human rights institutions in the Americas in establishing and promoting a culture of peace and human rights in the region;

Express satisfaction that the Human Rights Prosecutor of Guatemala, the Public Defender of Panama and the Public Defender of Venezuela have joined the Network as full members;

Express satisfaction with the efforts of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to strengthen and consolidate national institutions in the region and **promise** to work vigorously with this office through the International Coordinating Committee and other bodies of the United Nations system to promote and publicize respect for the basic rights of all people in the Americas and in the world;

Undertake to continue to work on developing a strategic plan for the Network of the Americas' National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and on establishing a permanent secretariat to consolidate its institutional development;

Reaffirm, for the occasion of the Tenth anniversary of the *Paris Principles* adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (Resolution 48/134), the importance of ensuring that national institutions are established in accordance with the *Principles* and **recognize** the paramount importance of the Vienna Declaration of 1993, reaffirming the important constructive role of these institutions;

Offer support and cooperation to national institutions that have not yet complied with the *Paris Principles*, so that their autonomy and independence are recognized in their countries, and **exhort** those States that do not have a national institution to strive to create one soon, so that they can work effectively to monitor human rights at all times in the region;

Commit ourselves to work together in an inclusive network, regardless of language, national origin of institutions and cultural differences of individual members of these institutions, considering only the fact that they are national human rights institutions in the Americas;

Welcome the participation and presence of human rights institutions from the Caribbean and **express the wish** that in the near future they can become national institutions and full members of this organization and **gladly welcome** all human rights institutions in this hemisphere that wish to participate in this organization as observers;

Pleased and satisfied with the process carried out in the Dominican Republic for the creation and installation of the Ombudsman, we urge the Dominican Republic authorities to complete this work as soon as possible with an aim to formally becoming a member of this international Network.

Thank the representatives of UNESCO, the United States Ombudsmen's Association (USOA), the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights (IIDH) and the Caribbean Ombudsmen's Association (CAROA) for kindly participating in this event and **recognize** the important work that the Ibero-American Federation of Ombudsmen (FIO) has done to promote and protect human rights, and we undertake to work in close cooperation with all its members;

Recognize with disapproval that in this century there exist adverse conditions for those who pursue the noble task of promoting and defending human rights and **reiterate** our commitment to help national governments give human rights advocates the minimum guarantees of security that they need to carry out their activities;

Reaffirm that building strong human rights institutions or strengthening existing ones is essential in ensuring that human rights are protected and promoted in a sustained manner. By creating partnerships with governments, civil societies and others, national institutions play an important role in creating a space for dialogue and tolerance between people and nations, especially in countries in or emerging from conflict;

Recognize the role that the United Nations should play in maintaining international order, world peace and conflict resolution between and within the States.

Encourage governments to recognize the importance of the work that national institutions carry out in building societies with greater justice, freedom, democracy, solidarity, and respect of human rights, and to guarantee the material and political conditions necessary for national institutions to complying with their responsibility.

Reaffirm the commitment to exhort that governments ratify international human rights agreements accepted within the United Nations system and which have not yet been incorporated in the internal legislation of their country.

Undertake to promote compliance with the obligations entered into by our governments through the international human rights instruments and in the final observations made by the human rights committees of the United Nations system and the Inter-American human rights system.

Agree to hold a Seminar on Safety, Migrant and Human Rights in the city of Cartagena, Colombia, on September 1-4, 2003, according to the availability of resources earmarked for this purpose. We present this initiative to hold this event to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights.

Express our deep gratitude to Mr. José Manuel Echandi, Defensor de los Habitantes of Costa Rica, to Anne Adams, Commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission, to Orest Nowosad, Representative of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and to Dr José Luis Soberanes Fernanded, President of the National Human Rights Commission of Mexico as acting secretariat for their great support and ongoing work done to hold this meeting.

Given in the city of San José, Costa Rica, on the 27th day of March, 2003.