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**EFFECTIVE FUNCTIONING OF HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS:
NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND REGIONAL ARRANGEMENTS**

Information submitted by the Ibero-American Ombudsman Federation

Note by the secretariat

The secretariat has received the following communication* which is reproduced below in accordance with the decision adopted by the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-seventh session that, if requested, information or reports received from national institutions on their regional meetings might be circulated as documents of the Commission (E/2001/23-E/CN.4/2001/167, para. 22).

* Reproduced as received, in the original language and English.

Annex

2004: SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

IBERO-AMERICAN OMBUDSMAN FEDERATION

The Ibero-American Ombudsman Federation (FIO) is an exclusive grouping of people's advocates, procurators, purveyors of justice, members and presidents of public human rights commissions in Latin America. Our purpose is to serve as a forum for cooperation, the exchange of experience and the advancement, promotion and strengthening of national institutions for the protection of human rights in the region.

This summary has been prepared as an indication of our interest in publicizing and sharing the activities carried out by the Federation during 2004.

Our strategic objective, laid down for the purpose of permitting the pursuit of its vision, mission and objectives, in relation to the promotion and protection of human rights and institution-building, is *"to establish and maintain relations of cooperation with international and intergovernmental institutions and agencies and non-governmental organizations which are working for the promotion and protection of human rights"*.

On this basis, work was begun towards a number of specific objectives which also needed attention and development, including the strengthening of existing ombudsmen's offices and of the culture of human rights in the region.

The achievement of these objectives was reflected in the working relations and cooperation established with our partners, including the Organization of American States, the United Nations, the European System of Protection, the secretariat of the Ibero-American Summit Meeting of Heads of State and Government and the Andean Community.

Participation by FIO in international forums has been vital in gaining awareness of the major problems affecting the countries of the region, such as poverty, migration, violence and terrorism, to name but a few. In these forums it was important to set out, from the standpoint of the ombudsmen's work, observations, suggestions and recommendations which will help to improve the performance of States in the field of human rights.

During this period we made a contribution through the improved performance of our offices in the form of training of our staff in the field of human rights; research on specific topics; the preparation of regional reports; the exchange of best practices, experience and information among the agencies making up our Federation; and maintaining and updating the content of the FIO portal.

We take this opportunity to reiterate our commitment to work for the realization of human rights and the strengthening of institutions, and to make FIO a model institution in Latin America.

Participation by FIO in various international forums related to the promotion and protection of human rights

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

In March, FIO organized a working visit in Washington, where various activities were carried out to establish inter-agency cooperation for the advancement of human rights in the continent. An FIO delegation attended a meeting of the Commission, and the possibility was raised of drawing up a cooperation agreement which would cover promotion, publicity, research and training in human rights, as well as institution-building among the members of the Federation.

Inter-American Court of Human Rights

The Federation met Sergio García Ramírez, President of the Court, as well as Alirio Abreu Burelli and Pablo Saavedra Alessandri, Vice-President and Executive Secretary of the Court respectively, and highlighted the need to establish cooperative relations aimed at strengthening national human rights institutions in Latin America. To this end it suggested the conclusion of a cooperation agreement. As a result of this initiative, the *Agreement for Inter-agency Cooperation between FIO and the Court* was signed. The most important activities it covers include:

- Development of legal research and study projects;
- Holding of conferences, symposia, workshops, courses, pre-professional training and similar activities;
- Efforts to facilitate the exchange of and/or access to systematic information and the consultation of bibliographical information;
- Provision of advisory services for the establishment or upgrading of computer systems;
- Provision of access to the Court's documentation centre for FIO researchers, so that they can obtain more information for purposes of studies, analyses and projects designed to promote human development.

Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)

As a part of the visit to Washington, the Federation organized a meeting with Enrique Iglesias, the President of the Bank, at which he was briefed on the Federation's objectives and plans. Agreements were concluded on the following topics:

- Inclusion of officials of national human rights institutions which are FIO members and those of other State agencies, such as prosecutors' offices and audit offices, in the IDB State modernization project, by means of training courses;

- IDB support for activities designed to promote the human rights of women. This commitment led to participation by Christina Biebesheimer, IDB senior specialist in modernization of the State, as a presenter in an international seminar on “Human rights of women - challenges and perspectives” held in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia. Similarly, Gabriela Vega, the head of the Women in Development Unit, was a member of the advisory committee for the second FIO report on human rights (women’s rights);
- Promotion of a project for promotion and training in the area of indigenous people’s rights;
- Exchange of information between the web pages of FIO and IDB.

General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS)

In June the Federation was a special guest at the thirty-fourth regular session of the OAS General Assembly, held in Quito, Ecuador. Its participation testifies to the progress made towards the consolidation of joint efforts by FIO and OAS.

At the above-mentioned session, FIO presented a statement in which it affirmed its commitment to human rights and urged OAS to forge closer links with the Federation, and to allocate funds for the implementation of inter-American plans and programmes in the field of human rights.

In resolutions AG/RES.2030 (XXXIV-O/04), “Strengthening of human rights systems pursuant to the Plan of Action of the Third Summit of the Americas”, and AG/RES.2027 (XXXIV-O/04), “The human rights of all migrant workers and their families”, adopted at the fourth plenary meeting, held on 8 June 2004, OAS acknowledged the work of FIO in the following terms:

“To promote the strengthening of national systems for the protection and promotion of human rights in member States and, to that end, to request the pertinent organs, agencies, and entities of the Organization to develop cooperative relations and information exchange with, inter alia, the Network of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights of the Americas and the Ibero-American Federation of Ombudsmen” (AG/RES.2030, para. 7).

“TAKING NOTE of the offer by the Ibero-American Federation of Ombudsmen to collaborate with the Working Group on its activities;” (AG/RES.2027).

Working group on migrant workers and their families

FIO participated in the special session of the working group responsible for drawing up an inter-American programme for the promotion and protection of the human rights of migrants, including migrant workers and their families, which was held between 30 September

and 1 October in Washington. In his statement, the FIO Chair highlighted the recommendations to States contained in FIO's first report on human rights (migration). At the request of the Chair of this working group, FIO will continue to provide advisory services in this area, thus boosting its participation in the Inter-American System.

Inter-American Commission of Women

The Federation met Carmen Lomellin, Executive Secretary of the Inter-American Commission of Women, and informed her of FIO's activities in the area of women's rights. As a result of this meeting, the Commission expressed support for the second FIO report on human rights (women's rights), in addition to participating in a thematic meeting, as part of the Federation's ninth congress.

United Nations Commission on Human Rights

The Federation attended the meetings of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights at its sixtieth session, as well as those of the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, which focused on the human rights of disabled persons and human rights education.

At the Commission meeting, FIO spoke on item 18 (b), "Effective functioning of human rights mechanisms, national institutions and regional arrangements", outlining the objectives of the Federation, highlighting the poverty in which Latin American countries live and making the following appeal to the Universal System:

"Consequently, the commitment of the universal system is to exert its influence, not only to demand that governments respect international treaties, but also to offer its help, its experience, in the search for solutions to the economic situation which is the fundamental reason why our countries have plunged into despair and fail to respect human rights instruments."

The Commission was then presented with the Declaration made by the Ibero-American Network of Women's Advocates to the Eighth FIO Assembly and the Panama Declaration adopted by the eighth annual congress of FIO, respectively dated 19 and 20 November 2003, these being the only documents presented at the above-mentioned meeting which are officially circulating in the United Nations under symbols E/CN.4/2004/NI/1 and E/CN.4/2004/NI/2, both dated 8 April 2004, and available in English and Spanish.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The visit to Geneva during the sixtieth session of the Commission on Human Rights provided Bertrand Ramcharan, the acting United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, with an opportunity to receive an FIO delegation, which handed him the FIO first report on human rights (migration), as well as the communiqués and declarations from the Federation. At the same time, mention was made of the need for and importance of coordinated efforts to strengthen and promote human rights in Latin America.

Ibero-American Summit Meeting of Heads of State and Government

In April, an FIO delegation attended a meeting in Madrid with Jorge Alberto Lozoya Legorreta, the summit's Ibero-American Secretary for Cooperation, held in order to make known the Federation's wish to institute cooperative relations with the organization. As a result of this meeting, there is a possibility of establishing cooperative links in the field of human rights education, as well as exchanging information via the two portals.

Network of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights of the American Continent

The Federation participated in a workshop on "National institutions - leaders in the prevention of torture" organized by the Ombudsman of Argentina, as part of the third General Assembly of the Network of National Institutions of the American Continent.

Torture is a fundamental violation of human rights, condemned by the international community as an offence against human dignity. The topic was examined in depth in this workshop, with the aim of creating forums and machinery for the prevention of torture, in which national institutions are playing a major role. The cooperative relations between the two institutions, which are the most important bodies grouping together the Continent's ombudsmen, were also enhanced.

Andean Community

The Federation participated in the ninth meeting of the Andean Council of Ombudsmen, which was held in Peru in February.

During this event, and bearing in mind the commitment made by the Presidents of the Andean Community of Nations in the Andean Charter for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, FIO handed the Secretary-General of the Andean Community, Allan Wagner Tizón, the Federation's first report on human rights (migration). Mention was also made of the possibility that the Andean Council of Ombudsmen, in view of its nature, might play the role of advisory body to the Andean Community, and this was agreed.

University of Chile

A delegation from the Federation visited Chile between 18 and 21 July 2004 at the invitation of the Law Faculty of the University of Chile and the Library of the Senate, under the auspices of the Ombudsman (Chilean Chapter), in order to participate in a forum and round table entitled "A people's advocate for Chile" organized by the above-mentioned faculty. These meetings highlighted the importance of and need for the establishment of the office of people's advocate. A televised discussion was also held with the President of the Senate, representatives of the Ombudsman (Chilean Chapter) and professors, on the desirability of establishing the office of people's advocate in Chile.

Italian Chamber of Deputies Bicameral Committee on Children

At the invitation of the Italian Chamber of Deputies Bicameral Committee on Children, FIO attended the World Conference of Women Parliamentarians for the protection of children and young persons with a view to extending and strengthening the culture of human rights.

The aim of this initiative was to review the progress made in fulfilling State obligations in the area of children's rights, compare national experience and revitalize legislative and parliamentary work in this field.

Francophone Association of Ombudsmen and Mediators

FIO made contact with the Francophone Association of Ombudsmen and Mediators with a view to establishing permanent ties of cooperation. This initiative culminated, at the ninth Annual Congress of the Ibero-American Ombudsman Federation, in the signing of a protocol of cooperation, in which the two institutions agreed to establish and enhance ties of cooperation and which specifies a number of actions in the pursuit of their common objectives in areas such as the defence of human rights and efforts to spread and strengthen the institution of ombudsmen.

Human rights seminars and workshops

International seminar on “Women’s rights in Latin America: challenges and perspectives”

This seminar was held in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, from 15 to 16 June 2004, with the support of the University of Alcalá de Henares and the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation. FIO entrusted coordination of the seminar to Ligia Martín, representative of the FIO network of Ibero-American women; Enrique Martínez, Guillermo Escobar and Camilo Gómez of the University of Alcalá de Henares; and Raizabel Díaz Acero, secretary to the Chair of FIO.

The aim of the seminar was to provide forums for meetings and discussions on the development and strengthening of national human rights institutions in the area of women's rights, and to develop instruments incorporating a global view of the issue that will facilitate effective action to promote, defend and monitor women's human rights.

There were a number of distinguished speakers at the seminar, including Sergio García Ramírez, President of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights; Christina Biebesheimer, IDB senior specialist in modernization of the State; Morelba Jiménez, Advocacy Coordinator, United Nations Population Fund; and Professor Guillermo Escobar of the University of Alcalá de Henares.

Ninth National Conference of Ombudsmen

An FIO delegation presented papers at the ninth National Conference of Ombudsmen, held in João Pessoa, Brazil, from 21 to 23 June. This event provided an excellent opportunity to raise awareness of how important the incorporation of the institution of ombudsmen into the Brazilian legal and political order is for the protection of human rights.

Ninth Annual Congress of FIO; seminar on “International human rights promotion and protection mechanisms”

FIO held its ninth annual congress in Quito, Ecuador, from 9 to 12 November. Open debate was encouraged on the priority themes related to international machinery for the protection of human rights in Latin America - universal, inter-American and European.

The aim of the ninth congress was to broaden the understanding of members of national human rights institutions in Latin America of the universal, European and inter-American systems for the promotion and protection of human rights and the importance of these mechanisms for the development of joint strategies to strengthen institutions, which in turn facilitates the establishment of cooperative ties with international systems for the promotion and protection of human rights.

A number of distinguished speakers from the United Nations system and the OAS system, including Roberto Garretón, adviser on Latin America to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Alberto Borea, Permanent Representative of Peru and Chair of the OAS Committee on Juridical and Political Affairs. Representatives of national human rights institutions belonging to the Federation also attended.

International seminar on “Ombudsmen and reform of the State in Latin America”

This seminar, organized by the University of Alcalá de Henares, with the support of the FIO Chair, was held in Antigua, Guatemala, from 15 to 18 November.

FIO's aim in this seminar was to examine action taken by ombudsmen on basic issues of State reform in Latin America as they relate to human rights, and to prepare an analysis of the situation, including a critical assessment and perspectives for the future.

It also wished to encourage an exchange of experience between legal experts and political scientists on the one hand, and officials of national institutions on the other, with the ultimate aim of producing instruments for the protection of human rights.

Second FIO report on human rights: women's rights

The FIO's second human rights report, on women's rights, was prepared with the support of the University of Alcalá de Henares, under the academic supervision of Professor Guillermo Escobar. The report, to which national members of the Federation contributed, is intended as an instrument to promote policies designed to improve the human rights situation of women.

To that end, an advisory committee was set up with the following membership: Mara Bustelo, Gender Coordinator, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; Sergio García Ramírez, President of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights; Morelba Jiménez, Advocacy Coordinator of the United Nations Population Fund; Gabriela Vega,

Chief of the Women in Development Unit of the Inter-American Development Bank; Elena Valenciano, Member of the European Parliament with responsibility for the situation of women from minorities in the European Union; and Mercedes Kremenetsky, Gender Specialist, Inter-American Commission of Women.

Promotion and dissemination of FIO documents

As a contribution to the strengthening of the human rights culture, FIO distributed the following documents at its meetings with other organizations:

- Panama Declaration, adopted at the eighth Annual Congress of the Ibero-American Ombudsman Federation, 20 November 2003;
- Declaration by the Ibero-American Network of Women's Advocates to the eighth Annual Congress of the Ibero-American Ombudsman Federation, 19 November 2003;
- Statement by the Ibero-American Ombudsman Federation to the Special Summit of the Americas, 12-13 January 2004;
- Communiqués issued by the Ibero-American Ombudsman Federation in response to the conflict in Haiti (9 and 19 January and 23 March 2004);
- First human rights report of the Ibero-American Ombudsman Federation, on migration;
- Statement by the Ibero-American Ombudsman Federation at the thirty-fourth regular session of the OAS General Assembly, 6-8 June 2004.

Urgent actions: declarations and communiqués

Communiqués on the situation in Haiti

Haiti went through a period of instability from January to March, which resulted in loss of life and threatened the continuity of the democratic system, culminating in the departure of the President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide. This situation, which represented a violation of the people's human rights, prompted FIO to issue three communiqués, on 9 and 19 January and 2 March, expressing its solidarity and comradeship with Haiti, urging the parties to seek peaceful solutions that would respect human rights and the democratic system, and expressing its concern for the office of the Ombudsman in Haiti and the physical safety of the incumbent.

Statement to the Special Summit of the Americas

FIO made a statement to the Special Summit of the Americas, held in Monterrey, Mexico, from 12 to 13 January 2004, expressing its interest in working together on human rights issues in Latin America and its wish to place at the Summit's disposal FIO's energy and its

commitment to working together to reinforce, improve and monitor the discharge of the Summit's mandate in areas relating to the strengthening of democracy, the elimination of poverty and respect for human rights, particularly the rights of the most vulnerable groups such as women, indigenous people, migrants and people with disabilities.

Support for the Ombudsman of Costa Rica

During the presentation of his annual report to the FIO Congress, FIO expressed its solidarity with and support for José Manuel Echandi, Ombudsman of the Republic of Costa Rica, for his work in upholding human rights in that country.

Communiqué on the events in Spain

Following the terrorist attacks that plunged the people of Spain into mourning on 11 March, FIO associated itself with the international community's expressions of solidarity with Spain and reiterated its rejection of terrorist acts, which violate the right to life and disrupt peaceful coexistence among peoples.

Message to the Ambassador of Russia

FIO sent a message of solidarity to the Russian Federation's Ambassador to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Alexei Ermakov, regarding September's tragic events in North Ossetia. It categorically rejected this assault, which cost the lives of many people, mainly children, and reiterated the importance of promoting respect for human rights and fostering a culture of peace. It also reaffirmed the organization's commitment to continuing to work for human rights and its advocacy of peaceful conflict resolution.

Support for the Office of the Ombudsman in Bolivia and the Office of the Procurator for the Protection of Human Rights of El Salvador

FIO maintained contact with the Office of the Ombudsman in Bolivia, expressing support for the Office at a time of social and political crisis in the country. It also expressed its support for the request made by El Salvador's Procurator for the Protection of Human Rights that the Legislative Assembly should withdraw Salvadoran troops from Iraq, on the grounds that peace is the most precious asset of all peoples.

Discussion on the International Day of Peace

On the occasion of the International Day of Peace, FIO organized a discussion on the significance of the Day for those working to promote human rights, reaffirming once again the need for peace to be achieved and emphasizing that it is important for individuals to apply the principles of peace in the various areas of their lives - in their personal and family life, in education, in their jobs, and in politics.

Agreement between the University of Alcalá de Henares, the Ibero-American regional support programme for ombudsmen, the Centre for Cooperation to Development Initiatives and FIO

Ibero-American regional support programme for ombudsmen (PRADPI)

Online course: Introduction to Human Rights

During the current session of the programme, the third to seventh editions of the online Introduction to Human Rights course were offered. Participation in the course has increased with each edition, thanks to the publicity campaign conducted through the FIO web portal (www.portalfio.org) and the mailing list. The courses have now been taken by 396 ombudsmen's office officials.

FIO web portal

The FIO web portal (www.portalfio.org) is a forum for people working in the area of human rights throughout Latin America. The portal's success is reflected in the year-on-year increase in visits: more than 10,000 in 2002-2003, and more than 50,000 in 2003-2004, i.e., more than 3,200 visitors to the portal every month.

The portal is not only a powerful platform for promoting and publicizing human rights but also provides services such as chat rooms, forums, web mail, documents manager, related links, news and publications.

Publications

PRADPI has issued a series of documents to publicize the institution of ombudsmen and human rights issues:

- PRADPI information bulletins Nos. 3 and 4;
- Introduction to Human Rights: course book;
- Study: "Ombudsmen and the protection of human rights: a comparative study of the institution of Ombudsmen in Spain and Paraguay";
- "E-workbooks on democracy and human rights";
- First human rights report of the Ibero-American Ombudsman Federation: migration;
- Handbook of good institutional practice among Ombudsmen's Offices in Latin America;
- University of Alcalá de Henares Ibero-American review "Quórum", issue No. 7 (sponsored);
- Online call for entries for the first Human Rights Essay Competition.

Election observer missions

FIO was a member of the international observer mission to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for the presidential recall referendum of 15 August, along with various other organizations, including OAS, the Carter Center and the Centre for Electoral Assistance and Promotion. FIO was also an observer at Venezuela's regional elections on 31 October.

An FIO delegation was sent to the general elections in Panama, with the aim of ensuring citizens' right to choose their Government freely and democratically. In the course of the day, the pre-election process was assessed in meetings and visits to the Panamanian election authority.

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President of the Oaxaca State Human Rights Commission, Mexico

Annex

QUITO DECLARATION

The People's Advocates, Procurators, Purveyors of Justice, members and presidents of public human rights commissions meeting at the ninth Annual Congress of the Ibero-American Ombudsman Federation (FIO) in Quito, Ecuador, from 8 to 11 November 2004,

CONSIDERING:

That the important role played by ombudsmen in guaranteeing that human rights are upheld and respected is essential for consolidating democracy and the rule of law;

That one of the mandates of the Federation is to promote the creation of the post of ombudsman in countries where this institution does not yet exist, with a view to ensuring respect for human rights throughout the region;

That the Office of the Human Rights Procurator in Nicaragua has been established on the basis of the Constitution, and that its mandate is to promote and guarantee respect for human rights;

That the post of Ombudsman of San Luis, Argentina, is established by the Constitution of San Luis province, and that the legislature of the province has amended the Ombudsman Act, reducing his mandate to one year with the possibility of being re-elected for one further term;

That all human rights derive from the dignity of the human person, over and above the particular interests of political, economic, social and ideological factions. They thus constitute the ideal framework for building a democratic, egalitarian and equitable society based on solidarity, through civic participation, and the State's provision of the legal instruments and mechanisms for its implementation, as well as for their effective justiciability;

That economic, social and cultural rights establish minimum standards that the State must meet in the economic and social fields in order to guarantee the proper functioning of just societies and to legitimize its own existence;

That various forms of inequality and discrimination against women persist in social and institutional practices, which limit the full exercise of their human rights and do not help to bridge the gap between formal equality and real equality;

That, in accordance with the Inter-American Democratic Charter, democracy is a human right and the ombudsmen of the region must therefore, in accordance with their mandates, play an active role in safeguarding the rights of the citizens of their respective countries;

That all kinds of terrorist acts, methods, practices or manifestations are contrary to human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy, and pose a threat to the territorial integrity and security of States and legitimately constituted Governments;

That, as members of the Federation, and in accordance with our mandates, our objective is to establish and maintain relations with the bodies and institutions that endeavour to promote human rights, democracy and peace;

That ombudsmen have a vital role to play in the promotion and protection of human rights through their cooperation with the international mechanisms for promoting and protecting human rights;

That migration throughout Ibero-America has in recent years become a priority on the agendas of States, international organizations and civil society, which are faced with the challenge of striking a balance between the adequate protection of the human rights of migrant populations and the need to control the migration flows that are taking place in the region;

That one of the most important functions of the ombudsman is to protect and promote the human rights of indigenous peoples and people of African descent, with a view to ensuring that States in the region respect their traditions and customs;

That, in order to improve the quality of life of the region's inhabitants, States must invest their resources, as a matter of priority, in social programmes in the fields of education, health, housing and the environment in order to reduce poverty, eliminate social exclusion and ensure full respect for human rights;

That irresponsible surface mining threatens the development and environment of indigenous communities;

DECLARE THAT:

1. They *reiterate* their commitment to fulfil their constitutional and legal mandate to promote, protect and defend human rights, thereby contributing to the consolidation of democracy and the rule of law.
2. They *reaffirm* the equality of women and the need to prevent discrimination against them, and support actions that strengthen the promotion and protection of their human rights, in conformity with the principle of mainstreaming women's rights in their institutions, as well as through specialized bodies dealing with that issue.
3. They *express* their commitment to circulating the *second FIO report on human rights*, on the subject of women's rights, among the international, intergovernmental and non-governmental institutions and organizations responsible for safeguarding human rights.
4. They *urge* States to implement measures with a view to fulfilling their commitments under international agreements concerning women's rights, and to demonstrate their readiness to monitor compliance with such agreements.
5. They *reiterate* their willingness to ensure that States implement and adequately develop the international commitments that they assumed under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention,

Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, and *urge* States that have not yet done so to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

6. They *request* States, Governments and civil society to respect and promote the procedures, methods and results of democratic electoral systems as the expression of the exercise of political rights and the desire of citizens to participate in the fate of their countries.
7. They *urge* the Governments of the region to devise comprehensive policies to combat corruption, impunity, illicit drug trafficking and drug consumption, and money-laundering in order to avoid the consequences of social deterioration and remove organized crime from the State structures it has infiltrated.
8. They *reiterate* the right of free access to public information, which is necessary for promoting transparency, combating corruption and ensuring that citizens are able to hold their governments responsible for the decisions that they take on their behalf, and that inhabitants can take informed decisions and thereby participate more fully in public life.
9. They *reject* the use of violence as a means of settling conflicts, and promote peaceful settlements in conformity with the principles of international law.
10. They *reaffirm* their commitment to promote peace, the well-being and self-determination of peoples and respect for human rights, and *urge* States and the international community to take measures to ensure that our societies can truly live in peace, free from threats to their security and all attempts to violate their rights.
11. They *invite* States to take measures to strengthen cooperation to prevent and combat terrorism, in strict observance of and respect for international law, international human rights norms and international humanitarian law.
12. They *reiterate* their willingness to continue to develop their cooperation with the international mechanisms for promoting and protecting human rights, with a view to strengthening the institutions that are members of the Federation in their efforts to promote, defend and monitor human rights.
13. They *offer* the Secretary-General, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Commission on Human Rights and its subsidiary bodies, the treaty bodies and other bodies of the United Nations system, the work, experience, knowledge and research of their institutions concerning the human rights situation of the peoples of Ibero-America.
14. They *request* the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and its subsidiary bodies to continue and promote the discussion on the definition of the status of national human rights institutions within those bodies, as well as the most effective ways and means of ensuring the participation of our institutions in the near future.

15. They respectfully *invite* the Organization of American States to establish a working relationship and to cooperate with the Federation, and to create areas and mechanisms for the participation of offices of people's advocates, procurators' offices and human rights commissions in the various bodies of the inter-American system that have mandates to promote and protect human rights.

16. They *offer* the General Assembly of the Organization of American States, the Secretary-General, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, the Inter-American Commission of Women, the Inter-American Children's Institute, the Commission on Legal and Political Affairs and other bodies of the Organization of American States, its reports, recommendations, analyses and research concerning the human rights situation in Ibero-America, as a token of our readiness to cooperate within the common legal framework available to us.

17. They *thank* the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, and particularly its President, Judge Sergio García Ramírez, for its support for activities to strengthen the institutions that are members of the Ibero-American Ombudsman Federation.

18. They *emphasize* the role of the Council of Europe in recognizing the importance of the institution of ombudsman within national human rights protection mechanisms, particularly the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Alvaro Gil-Robles, for its work in the field of cooperation among European ombudsmen and between them and the Council of Europe.

19. They *affirm* that, since mass economic migration is one of the most serious manifestations of poverty in the region, it is necessary to strictly monitor and protect the human rights of migrants, reporting those who are directly responsible for formulating or implementing migration policies that violate fundamental rights of the human person, such as the right to freedom of movement, to work and to free choice of residence.

20. They *underscore* the importance of continuing to carry out research and implement policies, programmes and measures to guarantee the rights of migrants, since they consider that the vulnerability of migrants is one of the most important challenges for human rights in the twenty-first century. They therefore pledge to continue to circulate the *first report on human rights*, which is devoted to the rights of migrants.

21. They *reaffirm* the need to strengthen coordination and communication between ombudsmen's offices and procurators' offices in the region in order to ensure the effective protection of migrants.

22. They *thank* the Organization of American States for its invitation to participate in the working group responsible for drawing up an inter-American programme for the promotion of the human rights of migrants, including migrant workers and their families, and express their readiness to continue to cooperate with the working group.

23. They *reiterate* that the right to a decent standard of living is based on the struggle for a just and morally valid economic system that takes account of harmony at the individual and social level and with nature.

24. They *acknowledge* the deep gap that divides our societies into rich and poor, as well as the gap that exists between the developed and the developing world, which poses a threat to the prosperity, security and stability of our States. In this regard, they *urge* States and the international community to implement measures that effectively reduce poverty and exclusion.
25. They *request* the States of the region to make every effort to monitor irresponsible surface mining, which is not conducive to ensuring a healthy environment for all inhabitants.
26. They *urge* States to step up negotiations on declarations relating to indigenous peoples both in the United Nations and the Organization of American States. And they pledge to request the States that have not yet done so to ratify International Labour Organization Convention No. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, and to promote the necessary domestic measures to ensure its full implementation.
27. They *reiterate*, owing to the Ibero-American status of its associates, their desire to establish close cooperation with the Ibero-American Summit Meeting of Heads of State and Government and its Cooperation Secretariat, which they consider essential in efforts to strengthen democracy and human rights in the region.
28. They *request* the Governments of the region that are negotiating free trade agreements to ensure that such treaties contain guarantees of respect for human rights.
29. They *request* the authorities of the Republic of Chile, the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, the Federative Republic of Brazil and the Dominican Republic to become part of the Ibero-American trend to establish ombudsmen, as the legitimate aspiration of all persons in the region and an essential component of democracy and rule of law.
30. They *highlight* the importance of working together with the Brazilian Ombudsmen Association (ABO) to promote the institution of ombudsmen, in accordance with the Paris Principles, in the Federative Republic of Brazil.
31. They *express* their support for Ecuadorian society in its efforts to find peaceful and democratic solutions based on the rule of law, in the settlement of its political and social conflicts, which is consistent with the intrinsic values of this fraternal country.
32. They respectfully *urge* the Legislative Assembly of the Republic of Nicaragua to appoint, as soon as possible, the human rights procurator, whose mandate expired in July 2004, since his appointment is essential for the full enjoyment of human rights.
33. They *recommend* that the legislature of San Luis province should amend the Ombudsman Act, restoring the period of four years that was applicable in the previous version of the Act.
34. They *repudiate* the harassment and beleaguerment of human rights defenders and the institutions that they represent, which they consider to be attacks on democracy and human rights; such acts hinder and complicate the work of human rights defenders at the national and regional levels.

35. They *condemn* any act intended to hinder the work of the Office of the Human Rights Procurator in Guatemala and the Office of Ombudsman in El Salvador.
36. They *express* their solidarity with the Colombian people and their institutions and their justifiable and profound aspiration to build peace, reduce violence and end domestic armed conflicts, and therefore *recommend* that they give priority to peaceful means of settling disputes, dialogue, democratic principles and respect for human dignity, in a spirit of strict respect for the rule of law, since this is the only way to achieve lasting peace, development and the enjoyment and exercise of human rights.
37. They *urge* Honduras to ensure that its initiatives to establish human rights commissions, offices and units do not diminish the constitutional and legal mandate of the Office of the National Commissioner for Human Rights of the Republic of Honduras.
38. They *urge* the Ibero-American States and the international community to undertake joint efforts that contribute to improving the political, economic and social situation of our sister Republic of Haiti, respecting at all times its national sovereignty, its Constitution and its institutions.
39. They *thank* the University of Alcalá de Henares, the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and the regional support programme for ombudsmen for their important contribution to the strengthening of the Ibero-American Ombudsman Federation in general and its member institutions in particular.
40. They *express* their gratitude to the Andean Development Corporation (CAF) and the Special Fund for Ombudsmen and National Human Rights Institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean for their valuable contribution to the holding of the ninth Congress and Assembly of the Ibero-American Ombudsman Federation.
41. They *express* their thanks to the Ombudsman of the Republic of Ecuador, Claudio Mueckay, for organizing the ninth Congress and Annual Assembly of the Ibero-American Ombudsman Federation, and particularly the members of that institution for their determination, dedication, kindness and attention during the holding of this meeting.

Done at Quito, Ecuador, on 11 November 2004.
