



Governing Council  
Item 10

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14 October 2009

**REPORTS ON RECENT IPU SPECIALIZED CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS**

**(d) REGIONAL SEMINAR FOR LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES ON "THE ROLE OF  
PARLIAMENTS IN CONFRONTING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN"**

**(San José, Costa Rica, 26 to 28 August 2009)**

1. Statistics show that each year 40 million children living in the Latin America and Caribbean region suffer severe abuse, including abandonment. Abuse within the family is only one of many examples of this type of violence and accounts for the deaths of 80,000 children under the age of 18. Surveys in 16 countries of the region conclude that a high percentage of adults consider maltreatment of children, including corporal punishment, a normal method of imposing discipline. Child protection legislation is in many instances inadequate: for example only nine per cent of children live under the protection of laws banning corporal punishment in the home.
2. Providing children with adequate protection and developing comprehensive legislation to prevent violence, assist victims and punish perpetrators were the central themes of the regional seminar on *The Role of Parliaments in Confronting Violence against Children* held in San José (Costa Rica) from 26 to 28 August 2009. Parliamentarians from 14 Latin American countries took part in the meeting hosted by the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica and organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).
3. Delegates discussed legislative frameworks, allocation and oversight of resources earmarked for protecting children and adolescents, supervisory mechanisms, appropriate measures to ensure the active participation of children and adolescents in parliamentary processes, and cooperation with counterparts. They also debated ways and mechanisms of developing a protective framework for children, with a special focus on parliamentary mechanisms.
4. A field trip to a UNICEF-supported Child Friendly Counties programme in two of Costa Rica's most violent cities was organized. It enabled parliamentarians to see first-hand how sports and recreational activities involving community police and children living in vulnerable situations and who often are victims of violence can help prevent violence.
5. At the close of the three-day meeting, participants agreed a set of priority recommendations and pledged to follow up on them on returning to their respective legislative assemblies and congresses. These recommendations include: establishing, within parliaments and society, mechanisms to supervise the functioning of institutions responsible for policies of prevention and eradication of violence against children and adolescents; ensuring that there is the requisite investment for implementation of prevention and response policies as well as supervision of the appropriate use of allocated resources, promoting cooperation among parliaments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector (including the media) at the national and regional levels so as to develop policies and programmes that support efforts aimed at eliminating violence against children and adolescents. The full text of adopted recommendations can be found in the [Annex](#).

## **SUMMARY OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS ADOPTED BY THE PARLIAMENTARIANS**

Parliamentarians from Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Chile, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela gathered in San José, Costa Rica from 26 to 28 August 2009, for a meeting hosted by the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica with the support of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to discuss the role of parliaments in tackling violence against children and adolescents.

The meeting took stock of the situation in the region twenty years after the Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted. It provided an opportunity to strengthen the commitment to implement the recommendations of the United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children and to share experiences with a view to making better use of parliamentary mechanisms to eliminate violence against children and adolescents.

Over the course of the three-day event, participants discussed legislative frameworks, allocation and oversight of resources earmarked for protecting children and adolescents, supervisory mechanisms, appropriate measures to ensure the active participation of children and adolescents in parliamentary processes and cooperation with counterparts.

A report of the discussions is currently being prepared and will be circulated to all parliaments in the region.

This document contains seven priority recommendations which the parliamentarians pledged to follow up on returning to their respective legislative assemblies and congresses as follows:

1. Organize a debate in each national parliament to follow-up the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and of the UN Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children and harness the political will to do so among their respective governments.
2. Promote reform of the State's public policy on tackling violence against children so as to prioritize: the prevention of violence against children and adolescents, the promotion of protective environments for children and adolescents, cultural change, whereby individual and collective attitudes and behaviours that have institutionalized violence against children and adolescents are changed, and introduction of the concept of non-violence in school curricula
3. Expressly prohibit in national legislation all forms of violence against children and adolescents, including corporal punishment in the home, and promote protective measures in judicial processes so as to avoid re-victimization.
4. Ensure that there is the requisite investment for implementation of prevention and response policies as well as supervision of the appropriate use of allocated resources. To this end, develop a methodology and capacity within parliaments to enable them to identify and analyse the effectiveness of investments channelled towards children and adolescents in the national budgets of the region, which will facilitate a sharing of experiences in investment to guarantee food, health, education and a life free of violence.

5. Establish within parliaments and society mechanisms to supervise the functioning of institutions responsible for policies of prevention and eradication of violence against children and adolescents, for example requesting information and regular data from the competent authorities on violence. Encourage governments to allow parliament to participate in the preparation of country reports for the Committee on the Rights of the Child in keeping with the relevant Convention.
6. Ensure that children and adolescents have forums for participation and genuine and representative consultation within parliamentary processes, thereby promoting the full enjoyment of their rights as citizens.
7. Promote cooperation among parliaments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector (including the media) at the national and regional levels so as to develop policies and programmes that boost efforts aimed at eliminating violence against children and adolescents.

Cooperation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was sought for the implementation of these recommendations.