



THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS IN CONFRONTING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Regional meeting for Latin American countries hosted by the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica and organized by the IPU and UNICEF

San José, Costa Rica, 26-28 August 2009

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.