TEN YEARS AFTER THE AGREEMENTS ON A FIRM AND LASTING PEACE

National Dialogues on Democracy in Latin America
A Project of the Inter-American Dialogue and the Organization of American States

May 2008
GUATEMALA

Ten Years After the Agreements on a Firm and Lasting Peace

Gustavo Porras Castejón

National Dialogues on Democracy in Latin America

A Project of the Inter-American Dialogue and the Organization of American States

MAY 2008
# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acronyms</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prologue</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dante Caputo, Peter Hakim and Marifeli Pérez-Stable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guatemala: Ten Years After the Agreements on a Firm and Lasting Peace</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gustavo Porras Castejón</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accomplishments and Obstacles Ten Years After the Peace Accords</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Institutions</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen Security</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion and Inequality</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Parties</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Society</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Next Decade</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Benchmarks 2012</strong></td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biographical Notes</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agenda for the Dialogue in Antigua</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profiles of Inter-American Dialogue, OAS and ASIES</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADICA</td>
<td>Association for the Integral Development of Central America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGEXPORT</td>
<td>Guatemalan Association of Exporters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIDPI</td>
<td>Agreement on the Identity and Rights of Indigenous Populations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARENA</td>
<td>Nationalist Republican Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASIES</td>
<td>Association for Research and Social Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BANRURAL</td>
<td>Bank for Rural Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CABEI</td>
<td>Central American Bank for Economic Integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CACIF</td>
<td>Coordinating Committee of Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial and Financial Associations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAS</td>
<td>Security Advisory Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASA</td>
<td>Center of Social Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEDIM</td>
<td>Center for Maya Documentation and Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CICIG</td>
<td>International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNAP</td>
<td>National Council of the Peace Accords</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CODISRA</td>
<td>Presidential Commission Against Discrimination and Racism Against the Indigenous Peoples of Guatemala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COPAZ</td>
<td>Presidential Peace Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil society organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DC</td>
<td>Christian Democratic Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DR–CAFTA</td>
<td>Dominican Republic–Central America Free Trade Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG</td>
<td>Encounter for Guatemala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENCOVI</td>
<td>National Survey of Living Conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDNG</td>
<td>New Guatemala Democratic Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRG</td>
<td>Guatemalan Republican Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GANA</td>
<td>Great National Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNP</td>
<td>Gross National Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IACHR</td>
<td>Inter-American Commission on Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDB</td>
<td>Inter-American Development Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INCEP</td>
<td>Central American Institute of Political Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDIES</td>
<td>Institute for Economic and Social Investigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOM</td>
<td>International Organization for Migration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNA</td>
<td>National Food Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOLOJ</td>
<td>Political Association of Maya Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nIMD</td>
<td>Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAS</td>
<td>Organization of American States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIC</td>
<td>International Coffee Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAN</td>
<td>National Advancement Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARLACEN</td>
<td>Central American Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNC</td>
<td>National Civil Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td>Patriot Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PU</td>
<td>Unionist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT</td>
<td>Superintendence of Tax Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSE</td>
<td>Supreme Electoral Tribunal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNE</td>
<td>National Union for Hope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNRG</td>
<td>Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URL</td>
<td>Rafael Landívar University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ViVa</td>
<td>Vision with Values</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Prologue

Guatemala is often referred to as the country of the eternal spring. The defining elements of its political history, however, have been darkness, violence and exclusion.

Democracy must generate civic coexistence. Some of its basic elements are citizen equality before the law, civil liberties, electoral transparency, peaceful transfers of power between alternating parties and separation of powers. In the 20th century, Guatemalans lived under democratic rule —albeit imperfect and incomplete— only under the administrations of Juan José Arévalo Bermejo (1944-1950) and Jacobo Árbenz Guzmán (1950-1954), and from 1986 on. The recent watershed, however, was not reached until the signing of the peace accords in 1996, when the civil war finally ended. During 36 years, more than 200,000 Guatemalans, a significant number of them indigenous, perished as a result of violence.

*Guatemala: Ten Years After the Agreements on a Firm and Lasting Peace* recounts the meeting held in Antigua on March 22-24, 2007, the first of a project called *National Dialogues on Democracy in Latin America* sponsored by the Inter-American Dialogue and the Organization of American States. The project calls for eight national dialogues. The one in the Dominican Republic, *Democracy for Better Lives*, was held on October 5-7, 2007, in Juan Dolio; the one in Chile is being readied. We feel confident that we will also hold workshops in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia and Mexico.

The core objective of these national dialogues is to summon analysts, politicians, private sector leaders and civil society actors to reflect on the quality of democracy in their countries.
In conjunction with a local partner, the Inter-American Dialogue and the OAS anticipate that the participants in these meetings will define benchmarks to measure democratic progress five years from now. The Association for Research and Social Studies (ASIES) was our partner in Guatemala. In Antigua, 36 Guatemalans from a variety of sectors brought differing political perspectives to the conversation.

In each country, one of the participants will assume the role of rapporteur—in this case, Dr. Gustavo Porras Castejón—with the task of producing a report that would prompt a public debate about governance and democratic consolidation. In every case, the reports will reflect exclusively the views of national participants regarding the state of democracy in their countries. These participants sign the reports in their individual capacities. Although not all the signatories—in this case, the 36 Guatemalans—actually subscribe to each phrase contained in the document, all of them—with the exceptions made in their individual comments—support the content and the overall tone of the report.

The publication of *Guatemala: Ten Years After the Agreements on a Firm and Lasting Peace* coincides with the inauguration of President Álvaro Colom Caballeros. Every new administration opens new possibilities, and we wish President Colom success for the common good of all Guatemalans.

In Antigua, the participants performed a thorough analysis of the main achievements in the years since the peace accords and of the pending challenges. Given the political history of Guatemala, what they report is not insignificant: the decade of peace has represented progress in terms of freedom and political democracy, as well as in the identity and rights of the indigenous peoples. Nevertheless, Guatemala is still very much in the initial stages of becoming a consolidated and inclusive democracy.
“Guatemala,” says the report, “suffers from a weak government that stands in the way of its modernization and impedes the abatement of its grave social problems.” While this affirmation represents the feelings of the participants, the Antigua dialogue did not attempt to prescribe a course of action. It is precisely in this discussion where differences arose. That said, the key is finding the way to combine market and state interests in a process of modernization that, if successful, would lead to increased social welfare.

Politics should settle the right mix of state and market. The outlook offered by Guatemala: Ten Years After the Agreements on a Firm and Lasting Peace is not too promising. The ease with which politicians change party affiliation —known as transfuguismo in Guatemala— threatens political parties which, in turn, tend to have a short existence. It remains to be seen whether the tendency toward a certain stability of political parties observed in the 2007 electoral cycle takes hold in the upcoming years. The penetration of organized crime into the parties and the parties’ alarming disconnect from the citizenry are likewise serious problems.

Politics should engender passion, the report reminds us. And this is a fact, although it is worth clarifying that such passion should be exercised for the good of the people, not for the enrichment of a few at the expense of the many and the rule of law. The great transformation awaiting Guatemala should be cause for passion: to achieve citizen equality under a democratic rule of law, to guarantee citizen security against organized and petty crime, to bolster the credibility of institutions, to broaden the reach of the social safety net. In sum, to strengthen democracy.

Accomplishing this requires political will, imagination and persistence. If, for instance, the Guatemala of 2012 reaches a significant number of the benchmarks on pages 36 and 37, the
lives of all Guatemalans—not just of the most destitute—would improve. The country would move a few steps toward a full-fledged democracy, clearing away some of the dark clouds of the present.

We are grateful to all who made the dialogue in Antigua possible. First of all, to the Guatemalans who participated in it and, in particular, to then Vice President Eduardo Stein for his inaugural presentation, and to Gustavo Porras Castejón, Ricardo Stein Heinemann and Raquel Zelaya Rosales. Marco Antonio Barahona Muñoz (ASIES), Pablo Zúñiga (OAS) and Christian Gómez (Inter-American Dialogue) coordinated the logistics of the meeting. At the Inter-American Dialogue, Christian, Fabián Borges-Herrero and Nathan Doyel assisted Marifeli Pérez-Stable throughout the Guatemala dialogue and the publication of this report.

National Dialogues on Democracy in Latin America continues immediately in the Dominican Republic and Chile. The other countries will follow. At the inauguration of the Antigua dialogue, Secretary Dante Caputo spoke of the republican ideal that should always be front and center: res publica, the idea that public affairs concern us all—even though we are not all politicians—and that returning politics to its rightful place in public life is indispensable to democracy.

Dante Caputo
Secretary for Political Affairs
Organization of American States

Peter Hakim
President
Inter-American Dialogue

Marifeli Pérez-Stable
Vice President for
Democratic Governance
Inter-American Dialogue
The dialogue on democracy in Guatemala took place in the context of the assassination, on February 19, 2007, of three Salvadoran congressmen and their driver on their way to Guatemala City for the meeting of the Central American Parliament. Soon thereafter, the four police officers accused of the crime were, in turn, assassinated while imprisoned. These events had broad internal and external repercussions, especially regarding relations between Guatemala and El Salvador. One of the assassinated congressmen, Eduardo D’Aubuisson Munguía, was the son of Roberto D’Aubuisson Arrieta, founder of the Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA), the party that has governed El Salvador since 1989.

Yet the most profound repercussions were felt internally in Guatemala. Anders Kompas, representative of the United Nations
High Commissioner for Human Rights, acutely referred to Guatemala as a “failed state,” as evidenced by the government’s inability to fight impunity, by the participation of government agents in extrajudicial executions, and by the suspicion that the assassinations of the congressmen were part of a larger attempt at “social cleansing” by the National Civil Police (PNC). It should be mentioned that one of the police officers captured and later killed was the chief of the PNC’s organized crime division. Although the attorney general declared on July 11, 2007, that the case was “cleared and solved,” the intellectual authors of this crime have yet to be identified and brought to trial.1

The dialogue was strongly influenced by these developments. In his inaugural speech, Eduardo Stein Barillas —then the country’s vice president in the administration of Óscar Berger Perdomo (2004–2008)— said:

“The integrity of the government’s efforts is being judged by a serious act that does not, however, annul the overall situation. What has occurred is an expression of structural problems that the society and the various administrations have not been able to solve. It is part of a web that includes the National Civil Police, the Public Ministry, the judicial branch, the nation’s Justice Department and the penal system. The fundamental question remains: How can we reach farther and deeper to destroy the clandestine organizations? All the entities mentioned have been penetrated by organized crime. The International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala is a step in the right direction.”

On August 1, 2007, Congress finally approved the creation of the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) by a wide margin (115–24). The leading presidential candidates had already expressed their support. In September, Ban Ki-moon, the U.N. secretary general, named the Spanish
judge Carlos Castresana director of the CICIG. Furthermore, the Public Ministry appointed 35 prosecutors and 20 investigators to serve on the commission, which will begin functioning in January 2008.²

To commemorate the 10th anniversary of the signing of the peace accords, a number of activities were held that engaged various representatives of Guatemalan society, with the purpose of assessing what had transpired. Perhaps the most significant outcome of these exercises was the recognition, in varying degrees though practically unanimously, that the peace accords and ensuing decade had brought about favorable changes to the country, particularly in the strengthening of democracy and civil liberties. This contrasts with the predominantly critical view that has prevailed within civil society.

Likewise, during 2006 there was significant economic growth, about 5 percent, the highest rate since 1977. Furthermore, the government insisted on the importance of a significant improvement in the country risk rating, which, in addition to economic indicators, takes into consideration political and social factors.³ Estimates for 2007 predict similar growth, partly as a consequence of the implementation of the Dominican Republic–Central America Free Trade Agreement (DR–CAFTA) with the United States. On the fiscal issue, where there had been no progress since the administration of Álvaro Arzú Irigoyen (1996–2000), tax revenues have increased due to an improved collection system, penalties imposed by the Superintendence of Tax Administration (SAT) and increased economic dynamism.⁴

The fundamental indicators such as education and health care have improved, although there are still deficiencies and limitations; social conflict —basically from peasant movements and government workers— has not reached levels of confrontation that might threaten governance.⁵ Even on security
issues—undoubtedly the weakest link in the chain—there were decreases in crimes such as kidnapping, automobile theft and bank robberies, though not so on homicides and drug seizures.

The dialogue also took place in a context strongly influenced by the 2007 presidential campaign and elections, characterized by uncertainty at different levels. Perhaps least important was the speculation on the possible winner. The deeper concern was the widespread perception that the election in itself would not represent a solution, particularly in terms of the government’s weakness against organized crime.

Furthermore, there was fear that the new regulations of the electoral law regarding the placement of voting tables in villages with more than 500 voters could complicate the voting. These new rules were agreed upon in order to give greater representation to rural areas, especially to indigenous communities. This was, nonetheless, a great logistical challenge for the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE), which would supervise some 7,000 additional voting tables placed in 687 new districts in the most remote areas of the country. Were the TSE not able to implement the complex new regulations, the election might lose legitimacy. Fortunately, the election transpired without major incidents in the accuracy of the electoral rolls, the updates of registered voters and the newly created electoral boards, and thus the results were not disputed.

**Accomplishments and Obstacles**

**Ten Years After the Peace Accords**

The analysis of accomplishments and obstacles was done simultaneously. There was consensus—with some nuances and reservations—that the decade of peace had brought progress, especially regarding political democracy and also on specific issues of great importance, such as the identity and
rights of indigenous peoples. But progress has been lagging in socioeconomic issues, the product of an unjust system that does not offer sufficient opportunities for all. Without question, the weakness of the state affects these matters.

Although acknowledging democratic progress, the consensus was that a functional and participatory democracy —in the state, its institutions, political parties and civil society— has yet to be achieved as envisioned by the peace accords. The obstacles to achieving full-fledged democracy begin in the fiscal sphere, where the tax rate agreed on in 1996 for the year 2000—12 percent of GNP— has not yet been reached. The fiscal agreement referenced was reached in the year 2000. Neither President Alfonso Portillo Cabrera (2000-2004) nor President Berger, however, obtained enough support to put in place the agreement’s principal elements, although both did accomplish some modest reforms. In 2006, a broad consulting process was launched under the leadership of the National Council of the Peace Accords (CNAP) that, to date, has not yielded results.

Consensus and dialogue tend to get complicated or broken on the tax issue. However, during the Antigua meeting there
There was general agreement on the need for a strengthened public sector and for a government capable of complying with its constitutional obligations with solvency. This implies the strengthening of the tax system and state reform. The issue of tax rates was not addressed, but there was significant support for legal changes that could qualitatively improve the collecting process, such as issuing nominal stocks and giving SAT access to financial information. The idea of having notaries report real estate transactions to SAT was mentioned, although this had already been rejected by Congress.6

Two issues that have had a great impact on politics, public opinion, and academic life were raised as being obstacles to a working and participatory democracy. First is the concept of a state whose functions should be confined to security and justice. Second, the argument that a tax on capital gains is unnecessary, given the fact that private corporations and the market could, by themselves, respond to social needs.

Guatemala, however, suffers from a weak state that impedes its modernization and the alleviation of its serious social problems. It was also mentioned that the media’s excessive criticism of political institutions, particularly Congress and the political parties, trivializes their work in the eyes of the public and leads to a permanent devaluation of their accomplishments. This is linked to a sense of rejection of the state, except when it benefits certain segments of society.

The weakness of the political party system was identified as another great obstacle to reaching a full-fledged democracy. It was noted that, in general, the political parties are institutionally weak in terms of their structure, their work with the base and their internal functioning. They have basically become parties that exist only to win elections. This was blamed, among other causes, on the disproportionate weight of private funding in
contrast to scarce public financing, which allows the parties to have owners and opens the door to corruption and the infiltration of organized crime.

For all these reasons, there was praise for the reforms to the Electoral and Political Parties Law, which restored the fee of $2 (Q15) per vote as a way for the government to fund political parties that have obtained more than 5 percent of the total number of valid votes in presidential elections. This measure went into effect in the 2007 elections. It was also stressed that internal democracy is crucial to a party’s political life and its representative and mediating functions. Currently, political parties formally comply with legal requirements—for example, they hold conventions for the selection of candidates—but in practice, those selections don’t necessarily reflect the will of the party militants but rather other factors, such as the economic imperatives or the rigid and centralized hierarchies of some parties.

The negative effects of the “privatization” of the political system are accentuated because the entrepreneurial elite lack a defined and coherent long-term project, so that its short-term interests prevail instead. In the fiscal sphere, the government has developed the ability to collect from the middle class but not from the big corporations and their owners. In general, the weakness of the public sector opens the door to the powerful and to the attitude on the part of the powerful—private sector, unions, political parties—that they can exercise their strength without restraint.

Since the return of democracy in 1986, no party has been able to win re-election in Guatemala. This is a result of the lack of institutional roots on the part of the political parties, the weakness of government teams, the scarcity of state resources, the permanent anti-government bias of the media and the
political mistakes, as well as other facts and circumstances. The consequence is a growing awareness of the lack of continuity in fundamental public policies, such as public safety.

Added to the volatility of the governments is a civil service regime that assigns a high percentage of jobs and public functions—17.5 percent, according to a recent study by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)—based on political considerations which, for example, prevents the professionalization of government workers. To compare, Brazil was second with 8.6 percent, and Bolivia third with 8.1 percent. When these three countries are excluded, the average for Latin America is below 1 percent. Civil-service reform is supported across the political spectrum; should it happen, it could lessen the politicization of this sector and abet state modernization. The National Union for Hope (UNE) and President-elect Álvaro Colom Caballeros have expressed interest in approving this reform. The participants in the dialogue also noted the lack of strategic thought: individuals fight for their own survival, a characteristic that also extends to social organizations. There is no vision regarding the interests of the state.

Nevertheless, things have changed. Citizens visualize democracy differently, with new expectations and values, but today’s problems cannot be resolved with yesterday’s institutions. There was consensus on the need for state reform by strengthening public administration, the legal framework and the system of controls. There was also consensus on a very timely and pressing issue: the need for clear thinking in all sectors, particularly to address crime.

Peace has been achieved and with it the possibility that people with very different ideological and political visions might understand each other. Progress is being made toward democracy, social and participatory dialogue, and freedom of
expression. While 20 years ago the main concern was abuses by the state, now the focus is on strengthening the state. There have also been very important developments: poverty has been reduced, education has increased, and there is a visible and intense economic dynamic that engages at least half of the population. Economic growth has been significant in important sectors of the indigenous population, but more important than the size of this growth is its upward trend.7

Yet the Achilles heel remains the imbalance between the public and the private. Most of the developments mentioned previously are not the result of public policy, but of the efforts of a population that has been left to fend for itself. Remittances play a huge role in the economy, reaching more than $4 billion (Q30.4 billion) in 2007, according to the IDB. That is close to the total national budget of $4.8 billion (Q36.4 billion). The net effect of remittances is equivalent to about $20 billion (Q152 billion) in exports, but the social impact is very different because of the social sectors that receive them.

Some peasants, for example, have modernized production through their own effort, especially in the area of new export crops. The problem is that this is not integral development. Furthermore, the crisis of the public sector remains a threat to the private sector, diminishing its capacity to expand. In addition, regarding issues such as insecurity and impunity, the deterioration of the public sector implies a serious decline of quality of life for the entire population. Poverty is not the only generator of conflict; the lack of basic services, such as health care and education, also contribute. When these are in place, opportunities arise and the population sees possibilities for a future.

Indigenous participants in the dialogue said that there had been progress within the indigenous communities, but that
the progress had not been enough. For example, indigenous participation in government has increased, but largely in areas relating to cultural affairs, and not in critical areas such as finance and security. A sign of progress is the recognition by the state of the existence of discrimination and exclusion. Racism and colonialism are, simply, incompatible with the values of democracy.8

Political Institutions

The discussion focused on the changes needed, and previously raised fundamental issues were reviewed. Furthermore, the question was raised of why these issues are not part of the electoral discussion and what this means for the representativeness of the political system.

Candidates do not address fiscal issues because they are unpopular among voters, although the candidates in the 2007 campaign were aware that they would have to address them once in office.9 It was also noted that in Guatemala there is pressure toward “groupthink,” where everyone is expected to say what is “politically correct” and not bring up controversial topics, however relevant they may be. The political debate does not take into consideration the critical capacity of the citizenry.

In order to have an efficient state, institutions must be built up and, in that sense, the creation of SAT, the tax superintendence, was praised, since its existence indicates that progress can be made on the fiscal issue. There must be a representative rather than a corporate dialogue; in other words, a dialogue in which the various sectors of the population are represented as opposed to negotiations on the basis of vested interests. A strategic political dialogue is needed. One of the problems, however, is that the political parties, once they reach power, begin to languish and, at that point, it is not possible to have a dialogue about a vision for
the state. The inability to address certain issues—for example, the fiscal issue—comes from the fact that public authorities do not have sufficient autonomy from the de-facto powers, and that is another manifestation of the weakness of the state. Likewise, while it makes multiple demands, civil society fails to support agreements that would increase state resources.

Despite insufficiencies and limitations, the existence of a pluralistic Congress in which the official party is not in the majority has facilitated the political dialogue. Yet it cannot be casuistic, but must define objectives and strategies, and open itself to the entire political spectrum. The best way to strengthen the political party system is to lure the parties into a serious dialogue. There has been dialogue among sectors, but not with political parties. Politics has been underestimated and demonized; however, it is necessary to address this issue and educate the political class in Guatemala, because political savoir-faire is not an inborn talent. Behind successful accords and dialogues there are always trained militants.

In reference to that, it was pointed out that the role of some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has been overvalued.
The initiative against hunger, conceived as government policy with input from civil society, was offered as an example of how consensus on public policy might be reached.

and distorted, partly because of the role of international cooperation, but also because of government policies. The Berger administration, for example, communicated exhaustively with the NGOs, with few results, while it placed less emphasis on dialogue with the political parties, which is fundamental. While there has been social dialogue, it has lost currency, mainly because it does not demand firm commitments and because there is no effective representation or legitimacy.

Politics must be brought back to its rightful place. In order for social consensus to become government policy, there must be more than just political will. There must be knowledge of and respect for procedures, for example, initiatives must be submitted through the proper channels. The function of civil society is not to replace legislators but to support or oppose them. Well managed, civil support can be an important facilitator of political decisions. This means that everyone must play his or her proper role without distorting anyone’s responsibilities; that there should be a respectful attitude toward the government, even if it is flawed; and that there must be political actors who can perform adequately.

It was stated that the institutions of the indigenous peoples, such as indigenous municipalities, popular referendums and common law, have long existed parallel to the state.¹⁰ These institutions function and are legitimate, but the government does not grant them sufficient space nor does it involve them in the administration’s agenda, particularly in the area of security.

The initiative against hunger, conceived as government policy with input from civil society, was offered as an example of how consensus on public policy might be reached. A variety of groups came together to create the initiative, which was conceived as an institution that would help integrate and organize the work in order to achieve the best possible results. The Law of the Food
and Nutritional Safety System passed unanimously; 33 percent of the program’s governing body is composed of elected members of civil society.¹¹

**Citizen Security**

There are different proposals for citizen security; the question is how to implement them. What are the challenges for the government, civil society, private enterprise and other sectors? Are organized crime and gangs a cause or an effect?¹² What has to happen for the media to work toward a common goal, albeit with their inherent differences?

A general sketch was made of what it takes to address the security issue: for example, investment in human resources to meet the need for highly qualified personnel, investment in information and communication technology and in infrastructure and equipment. There is a growing tendency toward the privatization of security, with as many as 150,000 private security guards in comparison to the government’s 20,000 policemen. The security and justice systems must work well together.

First, the concept of security must be defined. Second, it is necessary to make an inventory of the available resources and to determine their quality. Then the role that each segment of the security system will play must be clear. Finally, a decision must be made on whom to confront, which is where the capacity is weakest, because intelligence resources are scarce. In Central America, each country is focusing its efforts internally, when security is a regional problem. There must be to be a shift from a security sector to a security system. The Framework Law for the National Security System is about to be passed by Congress: What needs to be done to implement it?¹³

There is political support for the law, which is a step in the right direction. There are also social organizations that have
developed a good level of expertise on the subject. The recently inaugurated administration of Álvaro Colom must act but, on this issue more than on any other, it is essential to build on the positive initiatives from previous administrations. Consensus on the fundamentals is necessary, as opposed to the old habit of everyone wanting things their way. That is not the way to reach agreements. In the recent past, structures were dismantled without having the necessary replacements, as it occurred with the demobilization of the civil patrols and certain army deployments when there were not enough members of the PNC to replace them. There is a lack of civilian personnel in the area of security.

Building on this last point —the lack of civilian personnel—it was suggested that in order to analyze the available assets, including the military, the civil war mentality must be abandoned. In many countries, police forces have military training. The hundreds of military officers who have been discharged should not be excluded from the restructuring of the PNC, should they have knowledge, experience and a clean record.

The issue of military participation in security generated controversy. It was mentioned that this violated the peace
The scourge of common crime that afflicts the population and the impotence of law-enforcement and judicial authorities have led to vigilante justice. For example, there have been popularly supported “social cleansing” groups, and even cases in which drug traffickers gain public sympathy by repressing gang activity. In the case of organized crime, one of the fundamental problems is that the population does not question them, since its members are creating ways for people to make a living, albeit illegally, and this, besides their “contributions,” has generated support within the communities.

Security is an integral concept that not only refers to crime but also encompasses social, labor and environmental issues. It includes also road security, which, particularly in rural areas, has serious deficiencies that cause numerous fatal accidents. If this group of elements is not taken into consideration, a false dilemma —whether governance is compatible with democracy—
How can inclusion be increased, which is still not at the level needed to improve the collective well-being? Will a nation be built, in addition to a modern state?

Inclusion and Inequality

After World War II, almost every country experienced an expansion of the middle class and an increase in social mobility. While this expansion also occurred in Guatemala, the middle class remains in the minority. The economic gap is quite large and affects not only the poor but also economic development as a whole. Although there has been progress in certain aspects—for example, a greater access to education—exclusion and the concentration of wealth go hand in hand, preventing full inclusion. Social development is indispensable to economic growth. In wealthy countries, social development was based on the welfare state, but now anorexic states are in fashion. If this is so, how can inclusion be increased, which is still not at the level needed to improve the collective well-being? Will a nation be built, in addition to a modern state?

Development in the country has had a relatively positive impact on the welfare of the marginalized sectors. According to the World Bank’s poverty report (2003), between 1995 and 2000, 55 percent of the indigenous communities in Guatemala said they had seen progress, though only 3 percent detected improvements in the family economy. In 2000, the National Survey of Living Conditions (ENCORI) attributed the progress to the supply of clean water, the cleaning of the environment, a greater access to electricity, telephone and education, as well as to improvements in infrastructure. Progress, therefore, arrived through public services though without a corresponding development of the private economy. Despite these limitations,
the cited data illustrate what can be achieved through an adequate provision of services, even with insufficient tax income relative even to the rest of Central America.

What is stated above also illustrates the existing disproportion between investment in infrastructure on the one hand, and the absence of programs and investment to boost the popular economy on the other. The popular economy is on the rise through its own efforts, particularly because of new resources gained through remittances. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), remittances in 2006 financed more than 300,000 micro-enterprises. However, the government, which has in the past supported the coffee, cotton, sugar and industrial sectors, has not had the will to support the popular economy, a step that would not only expand the national economy with benefits for all, but that could also create the stability Guatemala requires to achieve solid progress.

Regarding the inclusion of indigenous peoples, some fear that the indigenous might reach positions of power, which reflects that Guatemalans still don’t know each other. The parity round tables—which derived from the peace accords— gave

Valentín Gramajo
On the question of how to make the issues of inclusion and inequality as compelling as that of security, it was noted that the media has made progress. Way to a level of communication that is already irreversible, if insufficient. In 2007, the ratio of indigenous mayors increased slightly compared to 2003: 39 percent as opposed to 36 percent. Rigoberta Menchú Tum —whose presidential candidacy initially sparked great interest— received a meager 3 percent of the vote. Her scarce support was due to a combination of factors, among them the tendency of indigenous cultures to gravitate toward paternalism, the scarcity of economic resources, and the opposition from the radical left. The most important factor, however, may have been the fact that in Guatemala there are 19 indigenous groups, each with its own culture and language, and that Menchú —because of her long stay in Mexico during the civil war—is perceived as somewhat distant from the indigenous communities.

The Constitutional Court on three occasions ruled in support of resolutions by indigenous authorities. The Agreement on Identity and Rights of Indigenous Populations (AIDPI) had only one indigenous signatory. But that does not diminish its value because, consequently, bilingual education has made significant progress. Former Vice President Stein devoted 60 percent of his time to the indigenous issue. There is also the Presidential Commission Against Discrimination and Racism Against the Indigenous Peoples of Guatemala (CODISRA), the categorization of the crime of discrimination through a reform to the Penal Code in 2002, and, finally, the Political Association of Maya Women (MOLOJ), which vindicates ethnic loyalty and promotes solidarity among indigenous peoples.

On the question of how to make the issues of inclusion and inequality as compelling as that of security, it was noted that the media has made progress. Its agenda includes topics previously excluded and women and indigenous people are used as sources, though the media could do much more to help build citizenship.
The concept that diversity is an obstacle rather than a value is still prevalent. More than a few community radio stations have been prosecuted. Stations like Los Amates, Vida Súper Stereo and Bienestar Nazareno, located in the department of Izabal, have been shut down by the Special Prosecutor of Crimes Against Journalists, which is, ironically, the entity that oversees the protection of journalists and of freedom of expression.16 How then to become a society respectful of diversity and of differences?

In the last 20 years there has been more inclusion than in the previous 200. But despite this progress, the pace at which deficiencies mount is disturbing. Infant malnutrition, for example, is irreversible. There has been progress in tax collection but not in the distribution of resources. There have been attempts to increase public investment but not public spending. Profits are still privatized and losses are still socialized, as is the case with the banking sector. Both Bancafé and Banco de Comercio suspended their operations in 2006, resulting in losses for clients and a lack of liquidity in ATMs.

The issues of exclusion and inequality, which once divided the country, could unify it today if the fight against exclusion and inequality were to become a shared cause, focused not only on government agencies but also on society as a whole.

**Political Parties**

There is a strong dissatisfaction with political parties and Congress: they have little credibility. There is little party loyalty, which results in people switching easily from one party to the next, a phenomenon known in Guatemala as *transfuguismo*. There is the peril of drug mafias infiltrating the parties. And there is the fact that the majority of the parties are short-lived. Are political parties in Guatemala a *partidocracia*, party bureaucrats...
Under the current hegemony of global capitalism, marginal states such as Guatemala cannot be economic actors, so they have no option but to adjust to changes worldwide in a subordinate fashion.

out of touch with their constituents and interested only in talking among themselves? How transparent are the internal processes? Do citizens feel represented by the party system?

The phenomenon of the decline of political parties is a global issue and, therefore, one should begin by analyzing global causes in order to better understand what is happening in the nation. The perception of the people is that they live in a world without options, where the best that can be done is to manage the system well without ever considering a deeper transformation. This takes the drama out of politics. Before, when politics was polarized by communism and anticommunism, there were parties with social roots. Politics was part of everyday life and an ideological struggle, not just an electoral campaign. Under the current hegemony of global capitalism, marginal states such as Guatemala cannot be economic actors, so they have no option but to adjust to changes worldwide in a subordinate fashion. Indeed, because the decline of politics is a global phenomenon, international entities such as the IDB and the World Bank, as well as the main sources of foreign aid, are placing greater emphasis on politics and the state.
Fundamental to a strong political system is a sense of citizenship, which in Guatemala is developing positively. But the citizens’ demand for better political choices clashes with the political oligopoly, which is a private system, with owners. The current parties are not like those of old, such as the Christian Democrats, which had social roots, ideology, programs and leadership. The poor quality of most legislators has to do with the fact that the candidates with money to fund their campaigns are not necessarily the best equipped for office. There is no loyalty toward the party, which is little more than a list of candidates and thus, people change parties frequently.17 If the parties don’t offer what citizens need, there should be a way to change the parties or to create new ones. In fact, however, there is a lot of talking from beyond the fence and not enough jumping into the ring to grab the bull by the horns.

Parties do not attract the youth who prefer a lighter approach. Politics must elicit emotion, and it should be attractive. Although she failed to get many votes, Rigoberta Menchú’s candidacy sparked expectations among the youth, and there is a noticeable increase in the number of indigenous people on party lists. Even without changes to the electoral law, parties could take advantage of the national lists to promote inclusion. This would lead to greater participation by underrepresented ethnic and gender groups, as well as by immigrants, all of whom deserve a space in the national debate.

One of the deficiencies is the low participation and representation of indigenous women. Of 432 positions in the executive committees of 15 parties, only 11 are filled by indigenous women and 32 by indigenous men. The electoral law should be reformed to establish quotas related to the ethnic composition of electoral districts or departments, and it should include other forms of participation in line with the political
traditions of the indigenous peoples. The electoral districts are not structured to generate candidates representing ethnic groups. There should be regional parties and different legislation for civic committees.¹⁸

The media has helped to discredit politics and to inhibit participation. Anyone who enters the political arena is immediately exposed to censure that is not always justified. Congress is a favorite target. One criticism, for example, is the fact that opposition congressmen negotiate the location of work projects with the government when one of their jobs is precisely to seek work contracts for their constituencies. What should be criticized are the anomalies committed in the adjudication, implementation and other aspects of these projects, and the fact that no distinction is made between normal political negotiations and the irregularities that might occur. The press practically sets the agenda. If a legislator wants media coverage, he must accept the demands of the journalists. It is true, however, that the media are an easy target for blame. The press has become an increasingly important voter of sorts and, therefore, the monopolies that control the media should be subject to public scrutiny.

Parties have been losing ground to a neocorporativism emerging from the civil society organizations (CSO). An example of this is the fiscal pact, in which the CSO participated, but not the political parties. The parties lose strength while other sectors gain more than they should. But the parties are too weak to reverse the situation. The Coordinating Committee of Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial and Financial Associations (CACIF), which represents the Guatemalan entrepreneurial sector, should not have the power it has, and neither should the NGOs and the civil society organizations, but to change that, parties would need more heft. The custom has been to make pacts within civil society, not with political parties. Representation has
come from sectoral leaders, not from political parties. There are no parties with long-standing histories, as there are in Honduras, nor parties that win re-election, as in El Salvador.

It is often assumed that there can be no progress regarding political parties, but there has been some. Such progress stems from initiatives launched, among others, by the Association for Research and Social Studies (ASIES), the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (nIMD) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The parties themselves are trying to strengthen their institutions by, for example, presenting their own political projects and training their leaders. The Shared National Agenda—a series of bills deemed of great importance to the country, including the Framework Law of the National System of Security—has had little success. Because the parties are dysfunctional, the population does not understand the work of Congress and complains that it is all talk and no action. It is necessary to let go of the clichés and re-engage in debate, but in Guatemala controversy is not well seen.

There is also the issue of de-facto powers. During the counterinsurgency, the army pressured the parties to reflect its interests, and if they refused, they would be persecuted. But the withdrawal of the army from politics has leveled the field. In the case of economic power, there was an unfortunate confrontation over the fiscal issue during the presidency of Marco Vinicio Cerezo Arévalo (1986–1991), a member of the Christian Democratic (DC) party, which had to do, in part, with the opposition from private enterprise. This, in turn, affected the implementation of many public policies.

Two years after his election, Jorge Antonio Serrano Elias (1991–1993) attempted a forceful shake-up of the political system. Under the mantle of fighting corruption, the president suspended the Constitution, dissolved Congress, imposed media
Despite their weaknesses, political parties are necessary because without them there is no democracy. Censorship and restricted freedoms. The self-coup, however, lasted only a few days due to the resounding opposition from nearly all sectors of society. The president and his vice president resigned and Ramiro de León Carpio (1993–1996) served out the rest of Serrano’s term.

The fiscal issue has not been addressed because all hope to receive the economic support of the entrepreneurial elite or, at least, avoid its open opposition. Public financing of parties is necessary because parties are a public asset. The parties must also have equal access to the media. The lord of the channels gives time on the low-intensity bands to the small parties and on the high-intensity bands to his favorites. Prior to the 1999 elections, for example, the Association of Managers did not give space in its forum to the New Guatemala Democratic Front (FDNG) because the association determined that the FDNG did not have a chance of winning and, thus, its platform was of no interest to the population. However, Catalina Soberanis Reyes, the FDNG candidate, came out in sixth place with 3 percent of the valid votes.

It is necessary to face the facts. Despite their weaknesses, political parties are necessary because without them there is no democracy. A concerted effort is needed to reinvigorate politics. The Permanent Forum of Political Parties is, in itself, progress and it is necessary to persevere. The de-facto powers of the past have been replaced. Today, it is not the army but organized crime and foreign petrodollars that seek to intervene in Guatemalan politics. It is urgent to launch a reform of the state and of the political party system that would lead to a truly democratic framework.
Civil Society

The peace accords identified exclusion as a fundamental cause of the confrontation and argued that representative democracy should also be participative. There is thus an almost automatic link, in that participation becomes easier under a robust and vigorous civil society. And if something can be drawn from the political processes of the last 20 years, it is the explosion of civil society organizations and their participation in public policy. Under the Berger administration alone, 416 meetings were held between CSO and government representatives.

This proliferation has been interpreted in different ways. One of these is that a civil society fragmented into a large number of organizations is weaker, not stronger, in its capacity to advocate. Beyond the fragmentation is the complaint that many CSO are not representative, lack a social base and should combine forces instead of clinging to their individual interests. On the other hand, there has been great progress in recent years, both in government and in civil society in seeing each other as valid participants in the dialogue.

This discussion highlights the difference between reclaiming and strengthening republican values and strengthening democracy. Is the strengthening of civil society a way of reclaiming republican values? What role should civil society play in public policy? If political parties could fully carry out their mediating role, what would then be the role of civil society? What relationship exists today between civil society and political parties? What should this relationship be? How effective are the CSO? Is there some convergence on the fundamental issues? Are there civil society actors who seek solutions outside of representative democracy?

The organizational phenomenon in Guatemala is a product of historical exclusion and, therefore, the reaction is to seek
One of the most serious mistakes of the past was the fiscal pact, which resulted in high levels of agreement but failed to find the necessary equilibrium in order to know where to go and how to get there.

Raquel Zelaya and Ricardo Stein

participation, without paying attention to boundaries or limitations. Some things are positive and others are not. Among the negatives, there is the social phenomenon of discrediting recovery organizations. The other thing is that, since there isn’t a culture of democracy and participation, a clear distinction has not been made between the role of interest groups and the individuals who make decisions. One of the most serious mistakes of the past was the fiscal pact, which resulted in high levels of agreement but failed to find the necessary equilibrium in order to know where to go and how to get there. The sense of reality was lost; a fiscal proposal was crafted, but it was not based on reality, and Congress failed to pass it.

Among the accomplishments of the CSO is having developed specializations, for example, in agricultural development, security and the justice system. As the individual groups come to understand the roles they are supposed to play, they will be able to forge positive relations with the political parties in Congress.

Civil society should feel represented by political parties, but that is not the case because of the current characteristics of those parties. Although there are dialogues, its demands do not
find a receptive ear in government or in the parties. This leads to frustration and to street demonstrations. Civil society has the capacity to make proposals, but does not like to see political parties take ownership of them, which prompts disputes over who will take center stage.

The role of the CSO should be reviewed in this new stage in the country’s life. Besides presenting proposals, CSO should promote their implementation, which implies lobbying. Then comes the following stage, approval of public policy, during which Congress cannot afford to be a mere rubber stamp nor demand that the government follow the dictates of a certain group. Another phase is implementation. It is dangerous for the CSO to execute policy, since they could be co-opted in the process. The final phase is the evaluation of the results and all social audits should be welcome. Another element is the funding of the CSO, which should be as transparent as government or political parties are asked to be. And last is the issue of representation.

The confusion over the nature and the role of the CSO comes, in large measure, from international cooperation. It was in that sphere where they came to be seen as representatives of civil society. Now it is said that they are “representative,” which introduces an important nuance. It is essential, however, to define what the concept of civil society actually covers: whether it includes community organizations or development councils, for example, or if it only applies to NGOs.

What comes into question is the type of NGO that is nothing but an undercover political party, involved in politics but assuming neither responsibilities nor risks. An organization that has no real constituency presents a practical problem, because leaders who do not have the pressure to produce concrete results cling to ideology or declarations, and it is almost impossible to reach any kind of agreement with them. While the efforts of
the Berger administration to tend to the NGOs and civil society organizations deserved praise, his relations with political parties in Congress was weak, sporadic and casuistic, despite the fact that it is in Congress where decisions are made to facilitate or prevent government action.

On the topic of international financing, it would be ideal if issues related to the national agenda received support, but in practice a lot of financial resources went to frivolous issues or theoretical trends. Regarding government dialogues with the CSO, it must be taken into account that some of them were held due to governance problems related to crisis situations. Therefore, the demand that the dialogues be binding violates the idea that the government derives its power from the popular vote. Binding dialogue and co-government are one and the same. However, it must also be taken into account that—as is the case in predominantly indigenous areas—the government is neither present nor fulfills its functions and, therefore, the NGOs, civil society organizations, and the churches assume those functions.

It is legitimate for two or three people to constitute an NGO, but it is not legitimate for them to write proposals from their own perspective without consulting anyone. This has led to what is known as “NGOization” in place of social organizations that emerge naturally within the communities. Organizations that had been around for 30 years were displaced by well-funded NGOs. NGOization has become a business that has gone against volunteer efforts in communities.

The Next Decade

The dialogue concluded by identifying the main areas of consensus throughout the dialogue, as well as some benchmarks to measure, in the future, whether Guatemala advances in the strengthening of its democracy.
Although the how and how much was not addressed, there was ample agreement in the need for a fair fiscal system able to finance a state so it can respond to the challenges of education, health care, security and competitiveness. Likewise, there was consensus concerning the need to strengthen tax collection and to fight against evasion through measures such as requiring that only nominal stocks be issued and giving SAT access to financial information.

There was full agreement in the need to ensure the continuity of successful public policies, reached through multiparty consensus reflected in the passing of budgets by Congress. Another priority was making sure that administrative and technical government officials had stability in their jobs. As long as jobs and tasks are assigned mainly using political criteria, the human capital necessary to modernize the Guatemalan state will not develop. The 2008 budget—approved on November 27, 2007—had the support of the majority of the parties, except for the Patriot Party (PP) and the Unionist Party (PU). It was considered a good sign that the new government would be inaugurated with a budget already in place.21

A national consensus is required in security more than in any other area. Present circumstances call for a dose of realism. The existing crisis—far from being commonplace—is of great proportions and endangers democratic governance and institutions. The nationwide rumor that almost drove one of the main banks to bankruptcy demonstrated the existence of clandestine organizations with a long reach. Although there is no hard proof, those organizations most likely grew out of the counterinsurgency war and the creation of secret structures by the Guatemalan army, which operated under ample impunity and which, at some point—or perhaps since the beginning—became linked to organized crime.
At least a partial government reform must be launched since it is evident that certain institutional structures are exhausted.

It is necessary to strengthen the power of the government, which must be understood as the power emanating from the Constitution and the electoral vote. It must be strengthened in two ways: it must have sufficient autonomy to work towards its fundamental goal, the public good; along with that, it should have institutions that truly function and to which the population has access.

For the government to be stronger and sufficiently autonomous, political parties should not depend exclusively on private funding; therefore, it would be convenient to have public funding. Likewise, all efforts in the work with and for the political parties must be coordinated and complementary.

At least a partial government reform must be launched since it is evident that certain institutional structures are exhausted. The political divisions of the national territory should be modified based on linguistic and sociocultural criteria. This would give way to new electoral districts. It is necessary to have a vision for the development of the rural areas that goes beyond land ownership and natural resources. The social groups that are the engine of development —the youth, the indigenous peoples...
and women—should benefit from affirmative action by the state. Likewise, the government should boost entrepreneurship with an emphasis on regions and communities. Finally, the judicial branch, which should be one of the strongest powers, as it facilitates governance and coexistence, remains one of the most battered.

All Guatemalans should make a personal commitment to fight exclusion, discrimination and racism. There should be a change in attitude for all to get to know and understand each other as a country of diversity. This is the responsibility of everyone, not of one sector or another.

Throughout these two days a more mature vision emerged; there was an effort toward balance, toward recognition of progress and not just of what is still to be done. This attitude should radiate to other spheres. In the history of Guatemala, many opportunities have been missed by trying to leap ahead without first laying the necessary groundwork.

There should be an attitude that favors governance and democracy. While Guatemalans have learned to discuss and tolerate, there has not yet been agreement as to how to proceed, and that how must be the fruit of a compromise between the government, the political parties, the society and the entrepreneurial sector.

Beyond the ideological, the international context is leading toward a situation in which the country lacks autonomy to do as it wishes and, if it does not work to gain its own footing, the desired destination will never be reached.
Endnotes

1 Former PNC agents and officers are in prison for allegedly having carried out the assassinations. The masterminds have yet to be identified, though some former lawmakers linked to the National Union for Hope (UNE) and to the National Advancement Party (PAN) are under suspicion. During a meeting with Salvadoran President Elías Antonio Saca González, then President-elect Álvaro Colom said: “I would hope that progress made in the investigation would lead to its conclusion; if not, I am committed to reach it.” If the case is not solved before Colom’s inauguration on January 14, 2008, a swift resolution on his part after taking office could provide him with the opportunity to demonstrate a firm commitment to the fight against crime and impunity.

2 CICIG was proposed in 2006 by then Vice President Eduardo Stein and Ibrahim Gambari, then United Nations undersecretary general. The commission will have a two-year mandate to investigate possible links between organized crime and Guatemala’s institutions. However, CICIG is not authorized to begin judicial procedures, which can only be initiated by the Public Ministry.

3 Each country, according to its economic, social, political and even natural and geographic conditions, generates a level of risk for investment. This risk is specific as it relates to that group of conditions and it is known as country risk, which is assessed in accordance with the knowledge each investor has of these conditions.

4 Established in 1998, SAT is a decentralized government entity with exclusive jurisdiction over the entire national territory to carry out the tasks related to tax administration. It has functional, economic, financial, technical and administrative autonomy, as well as legal status, patrimony and independent resources.

5 Between 2004 and 2007, the administration of Óscar Berger faced multiple protests organized by government peasants and workers who opposed Guatemala’s entry into DR–CAFTA.

6 The ability of SAT to access financial information, as well as the requirement that notaries inform SAT of real estate transactions, were included by the Public Finance Ministry and SAT in the original proposal of the anti-evasion bill. However, Congress dismissed both measures. In June 2006, Congress passed the Law to Strengthen Tax Administration.

7 The proportion of Guatemalans living in extreme poverty decreased from 15.7 percent in 2000 to 15.2 percent in 2006. The number of Guatemalans living in general poverty decreased from 56 percent in 2000 to 51 percent in 2006. The percentage of young students of relevant age enrolled in primary school increased from 82 percent in 1999 to 94 percent in 2005. The percentage of young students of relevant age enrolled in secondary school went up from 24 percent in 1993 to 35 percent in 2005.

9 During the presidential campaign, the UNE—the party of Álvaro Colom who took office as president on January 14, 2008—proposed the following concerning the fiscal pact: 1) to improve the effectiveness of collection, administration and the fight against contraband; 2) greater transparency in terms of government spending; and 3) to improve the efficiency of government spending and investment. Afterward, Colom assured that the tax issue would not be addressed in the first year of his term pending the fiscal guidelines emanating from the conciliation pact. After the electoral run-off, Colom called for this space for dialogue among all the political, social and entrepreneurial sectors in order to collectively draft a national agenda.

10 Common law is based on customs and habits, i.e., legal norms based on deeds that have been repeated in time within a defined territory.

11 The law was made possible by the consensus reached by the National Food Board composed of civil society organizations (CSO), various non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international cooperation agencies and various public institutions. The effort presented the “Cs” (in Spanish) of the Front against Hunger: knowledge, communication, trust, commitment, cohesion and coordination. The Guatemalan experience—led at the time by the secretary of food security in the Berger administration, Andrés Botrán Briz—has been studied by international organizations and various countries are interested in replicating it.

12 The Law Against Organized Crime, Terrorism and Related Activities, which allows eavesdropping and the use of undercover agents, went into effect in mid-June 2006. However, doubts remain as to whether the government has the financial and technological resources to adequately implement it. Guatemala has yet to implement specific legislation to fight gangs, such as those implemented by El Salvador and Honduras, which were labeled as “*mano dura*” (hard-line) measures.

13 The Framework Law of the National Security System aims to create an entity in charge of coordinating all policies and actions in the area of security. The proposal was approved in April 2007 during the first of three readings. However, Congress has lacked the necessary consensus to advance this discussion and it remains to be seen whether the Colom administration can bring about the two pending readings. Both the Patriot Party (PP) and the Great National Alliance (GANA) support the framework law and they could reach a majority in its favor if they are able to bring in 12 congressmen from other parties.
Recent economic research has demonstrated that the fight against poverty and the reduction of inequality foster economic growth, which in itself is the most effective way to fight poverty. In other words, the fact that Latin America has high levels of poverty diminishes economic growth in the region. Poverty in Latin America is in itself one of the causes of its disappointing levels of growth. World Bank. *World Development Report 2006: Equity and Development*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

The parity round tables or commissions emanated from the Agreement on the Identity and Rights of Indigenous Populations (AIDPI), an agreement between the government of Guatemala and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) signed on March 31, 1995, in Mexico City. The parity commissions addressed five topics: reform and participation, education reform, land rights, issues regarding official languages and spirituality and sacred sites. The AIDPI acknowledges that the indigenous peoples have been discriminated against and exploited, and that the “issue of identity and rights of indigenous peoples constitutes a fundamental pillar of historic transcendence for the present and future of Guatemala.” The government committed to promote the revision of laws, make changes to them, and facilitate broad indigenous participation in all instances.

The stations were shut down for not paying the sum of $28,000 (Q212,500) for the use of the country’s electromagnetic space. The response of the stations is that the sum is unaffordable for the volunteers who produce news and entertainment programs for rural indigenous communities, programs that recognize the linguistic and cultural characteristics of the audiences. In addition, it has been argued that the big media corporations pressured the government to shut them down.

Transfuguismo is the term used in Guatemala to describe the action of changing party affiliation. In the 1999 presidential elections, eight candidates were nominated from eight parties. Of these, only two nominated candidates for the 2003 elections. Therefore, nine of the 11 competing parties in 2003 made their debut that year. In 2007, however, eight of the parties from 2003 nominated candidates.

Civic committees are temporary political organizations that nominate candidates for elected office (mayors, trustees and councilmen) to be part of municipal administrations. Their actions are limited to the municipality in which the candidates are nominated.

The Shared National Agenda was a multiparty effort aimed at building the capacity for governance. Although representatives of 20 parties met throughout 2002 and 2003, they did not reach the necessary agreements to strengthen the state and civil society through a new legislative agenda.
The Forum was established in October 2002 with the participation of all political parties duly registered in the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) and with support of the OAS. Some of its accomplishments include the Shared National Agenda, the proposed Framework Law of the National Security System, and the Multiparty Ethics Code.

The 2007 budget was never approved and, therefore, the 2006 budget remained in effect. The Constitution establishes that, if Congress does not pass a new budget, the last one approved will remain in effect. If the 2008 budget had not been approved, Colom would have had to operate under the 2006 budget.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Sub-category</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Role of</td>
<td>1. a)</td>
<td>• Raise the percentage of young people enrolled in secondary education to 45%(^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Development</td>
<td>• Reduce infant mortality rate and chronic malnutrition during childhood by 25%(^b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>promotion</td>
<td>• Pass a law for Rural Integral Development(^c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Create strong institutions, or strengthen the existing ones, to implement the rural development law after it has been passed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. b)</td>
<td>• Raise fiscal revenue to 12% of GNP(^d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fiscal issues</td>
<td>• Implement the Law for Strengthening Fiscal Administration (2006) as an instrument against evasion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. c)</td>
<td>• Reduce rate of homicide and impunity by 25%(^e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Citizen</td>
<td>• Approve and implement the Framework Law for a National Security System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>security</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Support the operation of the CICIG and its oversight by the Attorney General(^f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. d)</td>
<td>• Expand the National Competitiveness Program and others that would promote the popular economy and small and mid-size enterprises(^g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Competitiveness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. e)</td>
<td>• Improve Guatemala's position in the categories of Rule of Law, Control of Corruption, Voice and Accountability, and Government Effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>according to good governance indicators developed by the World Bank(^h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Inclusion</td>
<td>2. a)</td>
<td>• Increase by 25% the proportion of indigenous representation in Congress(^i)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>• Strengthen legal resources against racism and discrimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. b)</td>
<td>• Increase by 25% female representation in Congress(^j)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. c)</td>
<td>• Reduce the rate of extreme poverty to 12%(^k)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>• Reduce general poverty rate at least five points(^l)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) In 2005, 35 percent of young people of relevant age were enrolled in secondary schools.

\(^b\) Of every thousand children born alive, 43 die before age 1. It is estimated that half of the children suffer from chronic malnutrition.

\(^c\) Although this law has not been presented to Congress, a proposal has been put together by a group of civil society organizations committed to its enactment. 72 percent of the poor live in rural areas.

\(^d\) In 2006, the government tax revenue represented 10.2 percent of GNP. In 1996, a taxation of 12 percent of GNP was agreed for 2000.

\(^e\) The homicide rate in Guatemala is estimated at 42 for every 100,000 population. Depending on the crime, impunity could reach up to 98 percent.

\(^f\) The International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala will investigate how organized crime operates in public institutions and private enterprises, and will forward the detected cases to the attorney general.

\(^g\) The firm Emprende Empresario, for instance, provides technical and financial assistance to small and mid-size enterprises. The government, however, does not provide systematic help to farmers nor does it have an integrated vision for rural development.

\(^h\) In 2006, Guatemala's ranking in World Bank categories with respect to the 18 Latin American countries included in the study were as follows: Rule of Law (17), Control of Corruption (13), Voice and Accountability (14) and Government Effectiveness (13).

\(^i\) The indigenous population accounted for 11 percent of representatives elected to Congress (18 of 158) in 2007.

\(^j\) Women accounted for 13 percent (20 of 158) of elected representatives to Congress in 2007.

\(^k\) According to the ENCOVI of 2006, 15.2 percent of the population lived in extreme poverty.

\(^l\) According to the ENCOVI of 2006, 51 percent of the population lived in general poverty.

\(^m\) The reforms of the Electoral Law and that of Political Parties in 2006 grant $2 (Q15) for each vote obtained by the parties. The funding is estimated on the basis of the maximum obtained either in the first election or in the run-off.
In August 2007, the Electoral Supreme Tribunal published, for the first time, a list of political parties and their sources of income. Without a doubt, it was a step toward democracy, although some of the data was questioned and four parties did not submit anything. The fine imposed to those four parties was $131 (Q994).

In 2007, those parties were: National Union for Hope, Patriot Party, Great National Alliance, Center of Social Action and Guatemalan Republican Front. Party stability is reflected, in part, by the continuous presence from one election to the next.

In 2007, for the first time in Guatemala there was a dialogue between an outgoing and an incoming administration. The precedent set by Óscar Berger and Álvaro Colom must become the norm to be followed to ease future transitions.

Less than 4 percent of homicides—the annual rate is 42 for every 100,000 population—reach judicial sentence.

For example, given the need for more police officers, army officers discharged in good standing should be allowed to enter the PNC. Also, the cooperation of indigenous institutions should be sought, and common law should be taken into account.

For example, ease money transfers through a bank in order to reduce the cash flow and design products for recipients of remittances, including educational and health services.

It is estimated that about 150,000 kilograms of cocaine pass through Guatemala every year; in 2006, 281 kilograms were seized.

---

### Guatemala Benchmarks 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Sub-category</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 3. Institutions | 3. a) Political parties | • Increase public funding to parties by 20%<sup>n</sup>  
• Increase financial transparency of parties and impose penalties to parties that do not comply<sup>n</sup>  
• Measure voter turnout in 2011 elections for the five parties that won the most votes in 2007<sup>p</sup> |
|              | 3. b) Presidency and Congress | • Ease the transition from one administration to the next to establish or give continuity to government policies<sup>p</sup> |
|              | 3) c) Judicial system | • Increase by 10% the number of homicide cases taken to court<sup>q</sup> |
|              | 3) d) National Civil Police | • Make progress in restructuring the PNC<sup>q</sup> |
|              | 4. a) Migration | • Complete an electoral reform that would allow Guatemalans living abroad to vote in the 2011 elections  
• Reinstate dialogue with Mexico on migration issues |
|              | 4. b) Remittances | • Create a committee to include the government, financial institutions, private sector, the community of international donors, and the diasporas to facilitate the use of remittances for development<sup>r</sup> |
|              | 4. c) Crime | • Strengthen Central American inter-government commissions against gangs  
• Increase drug seizures by 20%<sup>t</sup> |

---

<sup>n</sup> In August 2007, the Electoral Supreme Tribunal published, for the first time, a list of political parties and their sources of income. Without a doubt, it was a step toward democracy; although some of the data was questioned and four parties did not submit anything. The fine imposed to those four parties was $131 (Q994).

<sup>p</sup> In 2007, those parties were: National Union for Hope, Patriot Party, Great National Alliance, Center of Social Action and Guatemalan Republican Front. Party stability is reflected, in part, by the continuous presence from one election to the next.

<sup>q</sup> In 2007, for the first time in Guatemala there was a dialogue between an outgoing and an incoming administration. The precedent set by Óscar Berger and Álvaro Colom must become the norm to be followed to ease future transitions.

<sup>r</sup> Less than 4 percent of homicides—the annual rate is 42 for every 100,000 population—reach judicial sentence.

<sup>t</sup> For example, given the need for more police officers, army officers discharged in good standing should be allowed to enter the PNC. Also, the cooperation of indigenous institutions should be sought, and common law should be taken into account.

<sup>s</sup> For example, ease money transfers through a bank in order to reduce the cash flow and design products for recipients of remittances, including educational and health services.

<sup>t</sup> It is estimated that about 150,000 kilograms of cocaine pass through Guatemala every year; in 2006, 281 kilograms were seized.
The report reflects the criticism toward the media but does not introduce the significant element of the media’s denunciation of human-rights violations and other acts that thwart the progress toward a republican democracy.

Although road safety is mentioned, it is presented out of context. There is a substantial difference between the insecurity that stems from premeditated acts against the rights of others and the “anarchic” acts that, in their imprudence, affect third parties. I believe the latter should not be part of the report. Many other comments made during the proceedings were left out.

*Marta Altolaguirre*

The lack of continuity in fundamental public policies is not limited to citizen security. Some of us as participants insisted that there is a need to launch a profound reform of the political party system, oriented toward strengthening the institutionality and internal democracy of the parties and their representativeness.

I agree that there is a tendency toward privatization of security, but the figure of 150,000 private guards seems exaggerated. The estimates —the exact number can’t be known because many firms work without legal authorization— range from 60,000 to 100,000.

While globalization reduces the margin of autonomy, particularly in small countries, to say that we are “subordinated” seems to me too absolute a statement. There are small spaces for political decisions, especially in the protection and handling of natural resources and in the negotiation of treaties, in which national rights can be defended.
Finally, the parties were indeed invited to the dialogue that led to the fiscal agreement; however, the majority of those that participated did so only in the final phase.

*Enrique Álvarez*

It is neither the strategy nor the objective of the media to discredit politicians. Due to the censorship and self-censorship that prevailed during the war, it can be said that the pendulum moved to the other extreme after the transition, and that sometimes we overdid it, especially in the early nineties.

It is true that with the intensification of the reporting as well as of the actual mistakes and abuses committed by politicians, we have seen a discrediting of political activity in and of itself. The media must learn to be more sophisticated in their criticism so that people begin demanding better legislators instead of trying to abolish Congress with the stroke of a pen.

It is an exaggeration to say that the media impose the agenda and that a legislator who wishes to appear in the media must subject himself to the tyrannical whims of reporters. There are congressmen with excellent political and technical skills who raise issues and impose a political agenda. Nineth Montenegro and her constant oversight of the army is an example. However, there are many useless members of Congress who either do nothing or come up with bills that seem to have been written by first-grade students and, of course, do not appear in the media. But, again, who is to blame, the media or the lack of training of the leadership at all levels within the political parties?

It is easy to blame the media for the weaknesses of the political parties. We must acknowledge that the media has played a crucial role in the democratic transition and has shone a light on some of the main prerequisites for the development of the country: the transformation of the army in the context of a democratic nation in a time of peace, the urgency of an authentic
rule of law that can end impunity, the need for transparency and accountability, and the fight against poverty and exclusion.

The “monopoly” issue is not strictly true in all cases. Indeed, monopoly can be mentioned in the case of broadcast television (a monopoly, by the way, which the parties in power and the opposition have never cared to challenge), but it is not true in the case of radio or print media.

Dina Fernández
Biographical Notes

Richard Aitkenhead Castillo was the presidential commissioner for the implementation of the program agenda for the administration of President Óscar Berger (2004–2008). He was minister of public finance (1991–1993) and a member of the Presidential Peace Commission (COPAZ).

Marta Altolaguirre Larraondo was the vice-minister of foreign relations (2004–2008) and a member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) (2000–2003).

Enrique Álvarez is the director of the Centro de Incidencia Democrática and was a member of the President’s Security Advisory Council (CAS).

Fernando Andrade Díaz-Durán is the director of the Association for the Integral Development of Central America (ADICA) and was minister of foreign relations (1983–1986).

Roberto Ardón Landivar is the executive director of the Coordinating Committee of the Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial and Financial Associations (CACIF).


Julio Balconi Turcios is a professor at URL. He was a member of CAS, defense minister (1996–1997) and a member of COPAZ (1996–1997).

Marco Antonio Barahona Muñoz is a consultant in the department of socio-politics of the Association for Research and Social Studies (ASIES).

Felipe Bosch Gutiérrez is the president of the strategy committee of Corporación Multinversiones. He was president of CACIF (2001).

Andrés Botrán Briz was secretary of food and nutritional security (2005–2007).

Ana Margarita Castillo Chacón is the director of the Research Institute of the School of Political Science at San Carlos University and deputy director of the penitentiary system.

Medarda Castro Ajcot is a consultant to the Democratic Values and Political Management Program of the Organization of American States (OAS) in Guatemala.
Magdalena Cholotío is the general coordinator of the Political Association of Maya Women (MOLOJ).

Demetrio Cojtí Cuxil is a researcher at the Center for Maya Documentation and Research. He was minister of education (2000–2004).

Doris Cruz is the director of the Guatemala program of the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (nIMD).

Miguel de León Ceto is coordinator of the technical secretariat of the National Council of the Peace Accords (CNAP). He is a former secretary of indigenous affairs of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG).

Dina Fernández García is an opinion columnist for the newspaper Prensa Libre and the editor of the magazine Domingo.

Valentín Gramajo Maldonado is adjunct secretary general of the Patriot Party (PP).

René Lam España is vice president of the technical committee of the political movement Vision with Values (ViVa).

José Ángel López Camposeco is the president of the Bank for Rural Development (BANRURAL), a board member of the International Coffee Organization and a member of the facilitating group of the Nation’s Vision Plan. He was president of the National Coffee Association (2004–2006).

Helen Mack Chang is director of the Myrna Mack Foundation and president of the National Justice Commission.

Karin de Maldonado is vice president of ASIES. She was the director of the Central American Institute of Political Studies (INCEP) (1986–1996).

Nineth Montenegro Cottom is a member of Congress and secretary general of the party Encounter for Guatemala (EG).

Marielos Monzón Paredes is a journalist and opinion columnist for the newspaper Prensa Libre. She is a former director of Radio Universidad.

Juan Carlos Paiz is a board member of the Guatemalan Association of Exporters. He is a former president of CACIF.

Gustavo Porras Castejón is a consultant to the Guatemala program of nIMD. He was the private secretary of President Álvaro Arzú Yrigoyen (1996–2000) and coordinator of COPAZ (1996–2000).

Álvaro Ramazzini Imeri is the bishop of the St. Marcos diocese and was president of the Guatemala Episcopal Conference (2006–2008).
Ariel Rivera Irías is the dean of the School of Political and Social Sciences of URL. He is a former vice minister of public finance and of foreign relations, and was Guatemala’s ambassador to the United States.

Wilson Romero Alvarado is a researcher at the Economic and Social Research Institute of URL. He is a former associate secretary general of URNG.

Ortencia Simón is project coordinator at MOLOJ.


Ricardo Stein Heinemann is a consultant for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). He was director of the Soros Foundation in Guatemala and technical secretary of the peace ministry (1997–1998).

Hugo Us Álvarez is a consultant for the Guatemala office of the World Bank.

Francisco Villagrán de León is Guatemala’s ambassador to the United States.

Raquel Zelaya Rosales is the executive secretary of ASIES. She was minister of public finance (1991), secretary of peace (2000–2006) and a member of COPAZ (1996–2000).
March 22

3:00–4:00 pm  Registration and welcome

4:00–6:00 pm  Session I  Ten Years after the Peace Accords
What are the fundamental issues—for instance, economic policy, fiscal reform, government reform, poverty, the government’s role in social development, institutional stability and citizen equality before the law, citizen security, political culture, relations with the United States and other countries in the region—on which there is consensus among the elites and within the society, and what are the issues on which there is not? What are the two or three core issues affecting the consolidation of democracy in Guatemala?
Moderator: Marifeli Pérez-Stable, Inter-American Dialogue

6:00–6:15 pm  Break

6:15–8:30 pm  Session II  Political Institutions
In practical terms, how are relations between the executive and the legislative powers? Have the president and Congress been able to work together effectively? Is it possible for the government and the opposition to find room for negotiation and agreement? If not, is there gridlock or paralysis? How are the interests of the various segments of civil society—particularly those that have been historically excluded—expressed and incorporated in the decision-making process?
Moderator: Dante Caputo, OAS

8:30–10:00 pm  Dinner

National Dialogues on Democracy
Guatemala: Ten Years After the Agreements on a Firm and Lasting Peace
Antigua, Guatemala
March 22–24, 2007
March 23

8:00–8:30 am  Breakfast

8:30–11:00 am  Session III  Citizen Security
Various proposals on the topic of citizen security are at different stages of development, including initiatives now in legislative committees. How do we go from the proposal stage to implementation in a sustainable way? What are the main challenges to the powers of the state, the private sector and the general population? What institutions are responsible for citizen security? Are they effective? Gangs, drug trafficking and organized crime: are they a cause or an effect?
Moderator: Raquel Zelaya, ASIES

11:00–11:15 am  Break

11:15–1:45 pm  Session IV  Inclusion and Inequality
Since the peace accords, what have been the improvements and setbacks concerning the government’s capacity to influence political, economic and social inclusion? How is success measured in this process? Could it be said that current conditions are an improvement over five years ago? What has been the impact on the political culture?
Moderator: Marifeli Pérez-Stable, Inter-American Dialogue

1:45–3:00 pm  Lunch

3:00–5:00 pm  Session V  Political Parties
Could the political party system be branded as a *partidocracia*, that is, are political parties acting only among themselves, out of touch with the public? Or are there citizen controls over the system’s operations? How transparent are the internal processes of the political parties and the government? Do citizens feel represented by the political parties?
Moderator: Karin de Maldonado, ASIES

5:00–5:15 pm  Break
5:15–7:30 pm  **Session VI  Civil Society**
How efficient are civil society organizations? Is there agreement on fundamental issues? Are there established civil society actors who are seeking alternatives or solutions outside the framework of representative democracy?
Moderator:  **Ricardo Stein**, UNDP

7:30–9:00 pm  **Dinner**

**March 24**

8:00–8:30 am  **Breakfast**

8:30–11:00 am  **Session VII The Next Decade**
What are the main benchmarks —and the strategies necessary to reach them— that would allow the evaluation of democratic achievement in the Guatemala of 2012?
Moderator:  **Raquel Zelaya**, ASIES

11:00–11:30 am  **Close**
Bibliography


The Inter-American Dialogue is the leading U.S. center for policy analysis, exchange and communication on issues related to the Western Hemisphere. The Dialogue brings together public and private leaders from across the Americas to address hemispheric problems and opportunities. Together they seek to build cooperation among Western Hemisphere nations and advance a regional agenda of democratic governance, social equity and economic growth.

The Dialogue’s select membership of 100 distinguished citizens from throughout the Americas includes political, business, academic, media and other nongovernmental leaders. Twelve Dialogue members served as presidents of their countries and more than two dozen have served at the Cabinet level.

Dialogue activities are directed to generating new policy ideas and practical proposals for action and to getting these ideas and proposals to government and private decision makers. The Dialogue also offers representatives from Latin America and the Caribbean access to U.S. policy debates and discussions. Based in Washington, the Dialogue conducts its work throughout the hemisphere. A majority of our Board of Directors are from Latin American and Caribbean nations, as are more than half of the Dialogue’s members and participants in our other leadership networks and task forces.

Since 1982 —through successive Republican and Democratic administrations and many changes of leadership elsewhere in the hemisphere—the Dialogue has helped shape the agenda of issues and choices in inter-American relations.

The Organization of American States (OAS) brings together the nations of the Western Hemisphere to strengthen cooperation on democratic values, defend common interests and debate the major issues facing the region and the world. The OAS is the region’s principal
multilateral forum for strengthening democracy, promoting human rights and confronting shared problems such as poverty, terrorism, illegal drugs and corruption. It plays a leading role in carrying out mandates established by the hemisphere’s leaders through the Summits of the Americas.

The member countries set major policies and goals through the General Assembly, which gathers the hemisphere’s ministers of foreign affairs once a year in regular session. Ongoing actions are guided by the Permanent Council, made up of ambassadors appointed by the member states. The Secretariat for Political Affairs directs efforts to promote democracy, strengthen democratic governance and prevent democratic crises.

**Association for Research and Social Studies**

Founded in 1982, the Association for Research and Social Studies (ASIES) is a private non-profit organization dedicated to the study, research and analysis of the Guatemalan and Central American reality. Through citizen participation, ASIES seeks to stimulate the search for and implementation of concrete solutions to national and regional development challenges.

Among its functions, ASIES carries out studies and analyses of the political, socioeconomic and cultural situation of Guatemala and the region, while at the same time promoting discussion and debate on national and regional problems. ASIES contributes to the education of the Guatemalan citizenry through the publication and dissemination of the results of its research and analysis, and it constitutes an ongoing national forum for debate.
INTER-AMERICAN DIALOGUE
1211 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Suite 510
Washington, DC 20036
1-202-822-9002
http://www.thedialogue.org

ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES
1889 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006
1-202-458-3000
http://www.oas.org

ASSOCIATION FOR RESEARCH AND SOCIAL STUDIES
10ª Calle 7-48, zona 9
Apartado Postal: 1005 A
Guatemala, Central America
502-2332-2002
http://www.asies.org.gt