
UNIORE NEWSLETTER

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I. Political Context

Major changes occurred in the Latin American political sphere between 1985 and 2000 and, today, the entire territory of continental America is governed by regimes produced by electoral processes, even though there are deficiencies and setbacks in the respective democracies and the electoral processes can be improved.

Indeed, over the past months, we have been observing political disorders in various countries of the region that remind us of the turbulent times of the 1970s and 1980s. There are tendencies and movements in Latin America that, implicitly or explicitly, seek to redefine some of the basic rules of the democratic regime as it has been functioning. The complex electoral process in Peru, institutional reform in Venezuela, and the vicissitudes of the elected leaders in Ecuador over the last three years are just a few examples of a political situation that poses new challenges to those who study and promote democracy.

In this political context, the IIHR's sixth executive administration commenced in October 1999 and will end in October 2002. During the first six months of this mandate, five international proceedings on complaints have been recorded due to recent abuses in countries of the Southern Cone and in Central America that constitute human rights

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II. Electoral Processes

El Salvador

The legislative and municipal elections held on March 12 signified a challenge to the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE), since the current members of the Tribunal had taken office a few months prior to the elections. Despite this, the new magistrates were able to organize the local elections in a transparent and orderly manner, and this evidently benefited the TSE's image in the eyes of the Salvadoran population.



Salvadoran citizen exercising her political rights

The Dominican Republic

Following massive voting on May 16, which national and international observers, the media and political actors described as free, clean and contested, an exhaustive and lengthy audit

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violations that are not barred by statute of limitations. IIHR's operational departments have expressed particular concern over six outbursts of violence that have resulted in a large number of deaths, injuries and arrests.

However, despite the political and social problems in many countries of the region, the programming of electoral processes has not been affected. Since October 1999, approximately twelve important electoral processes have been held in the region: Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Venezuela, Guatemala, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, Peru and Ecuador; with two rounds in some cases.

A general analysis of the various elections held during the first six months of the year appears in the section on *Electoral Processes*. □

III. Projects and Activities

The principal projects are described below:

Meeting to reposition CAPEL

The meeting to reposition CAPEL was among the most relevant projects and activities during recent months. The aim was to analyze its nature, advantages, purpose and future, with an *ad hoc* group, directed by Mariano Fiallos and led by José Thompson, the person in charge of CAPEL operations and Technical Secretary *pro tempore*. The conclusions of this consultation meeting will be sent out next week.

The consultation process has included contributions, recommendations and suggestions from electoral organizations, political scientists and collaborators in CAPEL projects. It commenced during the IX Inter-American Course on Elections and Democracy, held in Mexico City from November 15 to 19, 1999, and has taken advantage of specific opportunities such as those presented by the International Seminar on Electoral Conflict Resolution held at the end of March, when a questionnaire was distributed on factors such as central elements for future work, the role of the Technical Secretariat, and issues to be developed in CAPEL's work.

The process was completed by the Consultation held at the IIHR offices in San José, on April 26 and 27, with the participation of twenty-one representatives of the different sectors involved.

International Seminar on Electoral Conflict Resolution: Comparative Perspectives for Central America, Mexico and the Dominican Republic

IIHR/CAPEL organized this activity, which was held in San José, Costa Rica, from March 27 to 29, in collaboration with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the Federal Electoral Institute, the Electoral Tribunal of the Judiciary of the Mexican Federation, and the Supreme Tribunal of Elections of Costa Rica.

Senior representatives and experts from electoral organizations, constitutional courts and civil society organizations related to electoral processes took part in the event. Theoretical and legislative elements were analyzed in a comparative perspective, and case studies were presented that revealed the experiences, comparative advantages, strengths, weaknesses, challenges and visions of the different actors with regard to the organic and procedural guarantees that support the structure and operation of contemporary systems for electoral conflict resolution in the countries.

Ibero-American Integrated Information System -SIII-

The information technology project designed to develop the Ibero-American Integrated Information System's web site, with the financial collaboration of the Spanish International Cooperation Agency (AECD), has several components; their implementation can be summarized as the systematization of specialized thought on electoral administration, electoral systems and processes, and political systems and parties.

As the project is in its promotional phase, entry to the site is currently via the address: www.iidh.ed.cr/siii. During the second phase, we plan to restrict access to some of the components by password, so that officials from the electoral organizations of the hemisphere and other similar organizations with which agreements have been signed may use it fully.

The novelty of the SIII is the use of state-of-the-art technology such as discussion groups, forums and direct consultation of the database of the IIHR-Inter-American Court of Human Rights Joint Library, and also electronic access to the new edition of the Electoral Dictionary, programmed for the first week of August.

It is important to remember that, in future, the SIII will be fed by contributions from all the region's electoral organizations in reciprocal collaboration with CAPEL.

Cooperation Agreement between IIHR and the National Electoral Council of Colombia

In order to help strengthen representative democracy and foster mechanisms for promoting civic participation through civic education and human rights campaigns, IIHR and the National Electoral Council of Colombia established a cooperation agreement on May 24. Dr. Mariano Fiallos, member of the IIHR Board of Directors, signed this agreement on behalf of CAPEL during the International Seminar on Electoral and Political Democracy, held in Cartagena de Indias, at which CAPEL made a presentation on “*The Function of Electoral Organizations in the Process to Strengthen Democracies in Latin America*”.

World Forum of Political and Electoral Institutions

At the invitation of the Minister of the Electoral Court of the Republic of Uruguay, Professor Rodolfo González Rissotto, CAPEL took part in the II World Forum of Political and Electoral Institutions held in Florianópolis, Brazil, from April 27 to 29. CAPEL was represented by María Elena Martínez, member of the IIHR Board of Directors, who shared CAPEL’s experiences on electoral issues with representatives of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and International IDEA, as well as with representatives of electoral organizations, political parties and parliaments of Latin American and Portuguese-speaking Africa.

Electoral Dictionary

New procedures, tools and mechanisms are being used in the electoral sphere; consequently, new concepts have been included in the lexicon of electoral administration. The need to incorporate these new concepts into an instrument for professional consultation and update those that exist, motivated IIHR to carry out a research project designed to revise, update and publish a second edition of the *Electoral Dictionary*, which will contain one hundred and forty-four terms.

The formal presentation of this work, which is currently being printed, is one of the activities to commemorate IIHR’s 20th Anniversary, and will take place during the XVIII Interdisciplinary Course on Human Rights.

XVIII Interdisciplinary Course on Human Rights

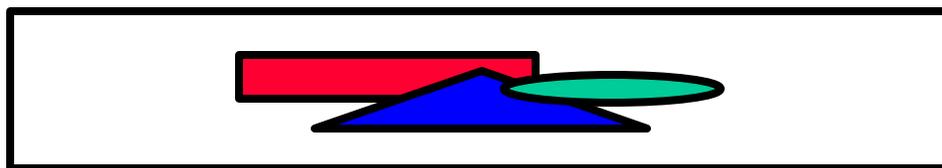
Since its creation in 1983, the Interdisciplinary Course on Human Rights has become an inter-disciplinary event of an academic nature that has allowed the most diverse sectors, including antagonistic ones, to meet for an academic discussion based on the principles of tolerance, non-discrimination, and freedom of expression in a democratic environment.

The eighteenth edition of the Interdisciplinary Course on Human Rights will be held in San José from July 31 to August 12. It coincides with two major events in the institutional history: the twentieth anniversary of IIHR, and the culmination of a process of critical analysis and evaluation of its role in the region with the presentation of new perspectives and trends for its work in the coming years.

The central theme of the Course will be *Access to Justice*, from an integrated perspective.

The process to select participants takes into account their *practical and academic experience* with the central theme. Participants should have a *minimum degree of specialization* in human rights and experience in local justice, constitutional justice or international justice.

In view of the nature of the Course, we hope to have participants from diverse disciplines and career paths, without detriment to their connection to the topic Access to Justice. The final selection will include about one hundred participants from throughout the hemisphere. □





Young volunteers from the civil society organization Dominican Civic Participation during the rapid scrutiny of election results.

This caused the PLD candidates to expressly and formally waive their right to take part in a second round before the Central Electoral Board, which resulted in Hipólito Mejía Domínguez and Milagros Ortiz Bosch being officially declared the winners; they will be President and Vice-President of the Dominican Republic for the period 2000-2004.

Chile

The Chilean electoral system includes the figure of *ballotage* should none of the candidates obtain an absolute majority in the first round. This occurred in the presidential elections of December 12, 1999, when Ricardo Lagos, the National Concertation candidate, obtained 47.96% of the votes and Joaquín Lavín, the Alliance for Chile candidate, 47.52%. It is worth emphasizing the high level of public spirit that reigned during the second round on January 16; this forms part of Chile's traditional democratic political culture and is exemplified by the accession to power of the Socialist Party candidate within the National Concertation.

Venezuela

The process scheduled to end with elections on May 28 was postponed due to the action of two civil society organizations, *Queremos Elegir* and *COFAVIC*, which filed an action for *amparo*, because the technical conditions for holding the election did not exist and the population had insufficient information to exercise their civil and political rights. After meeting with various political and social actors, CAPEL's pre-mission concluded that it was indeed necessary to postpone the elections in order to guarantee transparent and reliable elections to the people of Venezuela. We take advantage of this opportunity to welcome the new members of the National Electoral Council and its President, César Peña, and reiterate our interest in providing them with technical support in relevant areas, within the framework of the Protocols of Quito and Unioire.



From left to right, the Executive Director of IIHR, Roberto Cuéllar, Rodolfo Piza, member of the IIHR Board of Directors, Félix Castillo Milla, President, TSE of Guatemala, Hugo Chávez, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and Rafael Villegas, former President of the TSE of Costa Rica.

Electoral Processes...from page 1.....

The Dominican Republic

of the returns and results allowed the political parties to make an in-depth analysis of their political expectations faced with the possibility of a second round. This eventuality was ruled out once it became known that the steps taken by the Democratic Liberation Party (PLD) to ensure the support of the Social Christian Revolutionary Party (PRSC) in a new round had been unsuccessful.

Spain

At the invitation of the Spanish electoral authorities the Guatemalan magistrate, Gabriel Medrano, attended the elections for the Parliament (*cortes generales*) on March 12, on behalf of CAPEL; the representatives for the Congress of Deputies and Senate were elected and support for the Popular Party and the President, José María Aznar, was renewed for an additional 4-year mandate.

AGREEMENTS ON THE TOPIC OF COMMUNICATION

IV CONFERENCE OF THE INTER-AMERICAN UNION
OF ELECTORAL ORGANIZATIONS
OTTAWA, CANADA
JULY 27 -28, 1998

The undersigned.. members of the Inter-American Union of Electoral Organizations, reaffirm our imperishable faith in democracy as the only system that is capable of allowing the human being to develop under conditions of complete liberty and justice.

Aware that the exchange of information on electoral matters, observation of electoral processes, timely consultations, and recommendations and assistance among electoral organizations are decisive factors to establish and strengthen democracy through elections.

AGREE

1. To increase and improve communication, information and collaboration between the Executive Secretary and the member organizations of the Union, and ratify the desirability of using the mechanism of liaison officer.



SUGGESTION BOX

Please send your comments and suggestions to capel@iidh.ed.cr or to the fax 234 09 55, for the attention of 'UNIORE NEWSLETTER'

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Visit editions of this Newsletter on our web site (under Novedades):

<http://www.iidh.ed.cr/siii/novedades/novedades.asp?categoria=2>

Peru

Following informal consultations with members of Uniore, CAPEL confirmed the impossibility of organizing a mission to observe this election. The particularity of this process was that, as has seldom occurred in the past, it generated an international debate on topics such as the constitutional interpretation of re-election, equal access to the mass media, the use of public resources in electoral campaigns and the general conditions for fairness in a political campaign.

Despite this, IIHR was constantly attentive to the development of this complex process and offered assistance to the Office of the People's Defender, in its capacity as Technical Secretariat of the Ibero-American Ombudsman's Federation.

Ecuador

The importance of the departmental elections of May 21 to elect Mayors, Provincial Councilors and Prefects, Municipal Councilors and Members of Parochial Boards – in rural zones – was that they were the first to be held after the overthrow of President Mahuad in a context of acute economic crisis, social discontent and vigorous mass movements, particularly of the country's indigenous sectors. Despite this, once again the Supreme Electoral Tribunal carried out an orderly and transparent process, which confirms that the electoral system has not been affected by recent events. □