



The new director of CAPEL, Mr. José Thompson, during a visit to the President of Peru, Valentín Paniagua. He is accompanied by Magistrate Eduardo Valdés, of the Electoral Tribunal of Panama, Mariano Fiallos, a member of IIHR's Executive Council and Orlando Tapia, a consultant at CAPEL.

NEW CAPEL DIRECTOR APPOINTED BY IIHR EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Mr. José Thompson was confirmed as the new Director of CAPEL at an ordinary session of the Executive Council of the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights, IIHR, held in San Jose on March 15-16. His confirmation was proposed by the Executive Director of IIHR, Roberto Cuéllar, and the appointment is valid until November of 2002.

Mr. Thompson has served as the Executive Council's Delegate for CAPEL since March of last year. During this time, he has shown an energetic commitment to efforts to reposition and strengthen CAPEL, a process in which all members of UNIORE have participated. As a result, the process of weakening that had affected this IIHR program for some time, has been successfully reversed. Thus, after a period of hard work and consultations, the year 2000 ended with the celebration of the Fourteenth Conference of the Tikal Protocol and the Fifth Conference of UNIORE, events that served to re-energize our role as Executive Secretariat of the continent's Association of Electoral Bodies and thereby renew and reaffirm IIHR and CAPEL's commitment to all its members.

José Thompson is a distinguished Costa Rican lawyer, a Professor of International Law at the University of Costa Rica and the author of several articles and books on human rights issues and international law. During his time at the Foreign Ministry, he served as Minister Counselor and Consul General at the Costa Rican Embassy in Washington. He has also collaborated with several international institutions, including ILANUD and IDB, among others.

The Executive Director of IIHR, Roberto Cuéllar, is grateful to all members of UNIORE for their collaboration and solidarity during his term as interim Director of CAPEL. In his address to the session of the Executive Council, Mr. Cuéllar expressed his unconditional support to the new Director of CAPEL in meeting the challenges facing the continent's democracies, and ensuring that its efforts as Executive Secretariat of the Associations will benefit its member electoral bodies and, in consequence, benefit all of our countries.



CAPEL

JOSE WOLDENBERG VISITS IIHR

San José, March 2001.

Today we are visited by José Woldenberg Karakowsky, Counselor President of the Federal Electoral Institute, who was also the guest speaker at the inauguration of the academic year of the University of Costa Rica, where he gave a master class on “The Latin American Electoral Processes and the case of Mexico”.

On this occasion, is it important to highlight the splendid example of the Federal Electoral Institute, and of its President, in conducting the Mexican General Elections on July 2 of 2000. For the first time in more than seventy years of political domination by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the opposition triumphed, bringing Mr. Vicente Fox to the Presidency of Mexico.

Certainly, the IFE has been strengthened as a result of the reforms implemented during the ten year period prior to the elections of July 2 of 2000. Its counselors forged a bold, solid and independent institution, sustained to a large extent by the intellectual experience of its members. This was no easy task: they had to move between impassioned debates and opposing political positions. However, guided by Jose Woldenberg, the IFE applied the most rigorous sense of the term “free elections” to Mexico’s changing political environment, responding to its own definition of “trust and transparency”.

The IFE’s theoretical work in the science of “doing politics”, its pioneering task of organizing general elections amid Mexico’s profound traumas, the reflexive criticism with which it responded to partisan intrigues and pettiness, and its attention to the interrelation between electoral models and political creativity, are today a significant part of the legacy of the IFE, which has made history in the Americas after the July 2 elections.

With a very clear program in mind, Woldenberg began by highlighting certain paradoxes of Mexico’s complex political process. A firm proponent of a real vision of electoral matters, he guided the lines of action of his pioneering program in the IFE: he conveyed the transcendence of the general elections and of electoral justice; he generated public confidence, asserting his critical rigor in the face of nationalism, political pressures and the latest intrigues of the electoral campaign. Finally, the IFE and Woldenberg, managed to turn Election Day and the timely announcement of its results, into a vehicle that served to dispel the not so democratic ghosts, prevent any attempt at apportioning blame and surmount the challenges posed by Mexico’s electoral transition.



José Woldenberg with the Director of IIHR, Roberto Cuéllar, and the new Director of CAPEL, José Thompson.

By confronting the secular persistence of those prejudices, which are so usefully employed to justify the domination of one party, the IFE and Woldenberg never considered renouncing the achievements of Mexico’s high political culture. Rather, by freeing it from all the fetters and electoral constraints, they gave full rein to humanist progress without traumas. This process was beneficial for Latin America, and it came at the best moment to close a great phase in the region’s democratization.

José Woldenberg knows that the future is not sealed, that the path is difficult and that there are still enormous obstacles to overcome in order to achieve the full democratization of his country. But he has shown us that free elections are accomplished with ideas and by example, with freedom and transparency, with the bravery that requires us to tell the truth to the powers that be, whatever form they may take, by assuming the risks of cleanly refereeing an electoral contest between one group and another, and respecting the rules of administration of electoral justice.

Today, Woldenberg and his colleagues at the IFE embody and define one of the heroic events of Mexican democracy, as they advance towards the development of a contemporary electoral doctrine and law, with a clear style and with academic rigor. Indeed, during the Mexican electoral process they never concealed their support for Latin American integration and their admiration for the accomplishments of other electoral authorities in the region who had already “beat them to the post” before the July 2 ballot. But, as they say in Mexico, “You don’t need to get there first...you just need to get there!”

Roberto Cuéllar
Executive Director, IIHR

Projects and Activities

DIRECTOR OF CAPEL VISITS GUATEMALA AND EL SALVADOR

On March 29, the new Director of CAPEL, José Thompson, met with the members of **Supreme Electoral Tribunal** of Guatemala, an occasion which he used to thank them for their prompt remittance of the annual membership quota of the Tikal Protocol. (*See attached note*). The following day he held a meeting with the President of the **Supreme Electoral Tribunal** of El Salvador, José Sergio Mena Méndez and with Magistrate Julio Hernández.

The purpose of these visits was to discuss the main activities planned for the year 2001 and define the priorities for CAPEL's work in the region, analyzing actions to be implemented jointly.



The lawyer and political analyst, Line Bareiro

LECTURE ON THE ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF DEMOCRACY

IIHR/CAPEL and the Supreme Tribunal of Electoral Justice of Paraguay, TSJE, organized a lecture in Asunción, Paraguay on March 28 to discuss *The Role of the Political Parties in the Democratization of Democracy*. The lecture was given by the Paraguayan lawyer and political analyst Line Bareiro, the IIHR officer responsible for Women's Human Rights Program.

The distinguished guests at the conference included the President of the TSJE, Manuel Morales, the Minister Alberto Ramírez Zambonini, and the Executive Director of IIHR, Roberto Cuéllar.

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The purpose of this event was to strengthen discussion on the challenges facing the political parties, given the deficiencies of our democratic systems. The participants included electoral officials and magistrates of the TSJE, academics, members of Paraguay's political parties and civil society organizations.

OBSERVATION MISSION TO PERU – PREPARATORY VISIT

IIHR/CAPEL is in the process of organizing an Observation Mission to Peru in preparation for the forthcoming general elections on April 8. The Programs Officer of CAPEL, Sofía Vincenzi, traveled to Lima to finalize the details of the Mission together with the Director of the Electoral Technical Assistance Project to the **National Elections Tribunal of Peru, JNE**, Ricardo Valverde. Both officials held meetings with the Head of the **National Office of Electoral Processes**, Fernando Tuesta Soldevilla, and the President of the JNE, Manuel Sánchez Palacios, to discuss various issues such as the Mission's membership and its working agenda.

ANNUAL QUOTAS PAID TO EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT OF THE ASSOCIATION OF ELECTORAL BODIES OF CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN – TIKAL PROTOCOL

In line with an agreement approved by the Association's members at the Thirteenth Conference of the Tikal Protocol, held in Nicaragua on July 14-16, 1999, to request payment of an annual membership quota of US\$ 5,000 (five thousand dollars), we are pleased to report that we have so far received these contributions from the **Supreme Electoral Tribunal** of Costa Rica, the **Supreme Electoral Tribunal** of Guatemala and the **Central Electoral Board** of the Dominican Republic, respectively.

As you know, the purpose of this contribution is to enable the Secretariat to organize the Association's activities. The quota was ratified at the Fifteenth Conference of the Association in Antigua, Guatemala, where it was decided that payments of the membership quota would be made effective from the first semester of 2001. The Electoral Bodies agreed to notify the Secretariat about the proper procedure for transferring resources.



SUGGESTION BOX

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