



The candidates are shown here with the Magistrates of the National Electoral Council. The winner of the election in Bogota was the city's former Mayor, Antanas Mockus, with a lead of more than ten percentage points over his main rival, the former Foreign Minister and Liberal leader Maria Emma Mejía.

International Conference on "Peace and Human Rights in Colombia"

The IIHR has played an important role in recent political events in Colombia.

At the request of "Paz Colombia", a civil organization composed of 28 NGOs, and of the Colombian Government, the organizers of the event, IIHR, along with other institutions, was entrusted with the task of reporting on the Conference on "Peace and Human Rights in Colombia", held in Costa Rica on October 17-18.

The event was attended by a surprisingly broad spectrum of organizations representing Colombian civil society – 165, including universities, churches and important representatives of business groups, and was endorsed by the Colombian Government, which sent at least 10 delegates. Also present were one of the guerrilla organizations and the international community – more than twenty countries of the Americas, Asia and Europe sought accreditation- along with several UN and international cooperation agencies. This conference is the best initiative that civil society can offer to halt the violence, or at least to consider effective, supervised formulas to safeguard and protect society, in order to humanize the conflict, so that the combatants scrupulously respect the victims of Colombia's war: the civilian population and the truth.



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I. Electoral Processes

Municipal Elections in Colombia

Amid hopes and conflicting expectations aroused by the official proposal of Plan Colombia, Colombians took part in municipal elections in almost every part of the country. The electoral process was convened to elect 30 departmental governors, 502 deputies to the departmental Assemblies, 965 municipal and district mayors, 120,000 town councilors and 6000 members of local administrative boards.

The Colombian people's participation in these elections was exemplary, underscoring their interest and determination to extend and strengthen democracy, respect for human rights and the culture of peace and reconciliation. The voters, the political parties and movements, the candidates, the media and, most particularly, the Colombian electoral authorities, made a great effort to organize and participate in a clean and fairly contested process, where the people's will was expressed through the ballot box.

This was the conclusion reached by the 23 magistrates and electoral officials from 10 Latin American countries who, in compliance with the Accords and Resolutions of the Associations of Electoral Bodies of the Tikal and Quito Protocols and of UNIORE, and along with other specially invited members of the Electoral Organization of Colombia, formed part of the International Observer Mission at these elections.

With the participation of more than 10 million voters throughout the country and a 51% voter abstention rate (significantly lower than the last municipal elections in 1997, where the abstention rate reached 57%), this election was unusual in that it showed a paradoxical trend towards the strengthening of bipartisanship - though the Liberal Party triumphed over its traditional rival, the Conservative Party, currently in control of the Executive Branch – and at the same time numerous independent candidates participated in the election.

Visit to the Electoral Service of Chile

During an institutional visit to several countries in the Southern Cone, the Executive Director of IHR, Roberto Cuéllar, held a meeting in Santiago, on October 26, with the Director of the Electoral Service of Chile, Juan Ignacio Garcia, to discuss the details of the October 29th electoral process to elect Mayors and Councillors.

National Presentations of the Electoral Dictionary

IHR and CAPEL began the national presentations of the Electoral Dictionary. Roberto Cuéllar traveled to Mexico City and Asunción to officially present the new edition of this book. The dictionary enjoys great prestige and recognition because of its high academic standard and because it is a unique work of its kind in this continent.



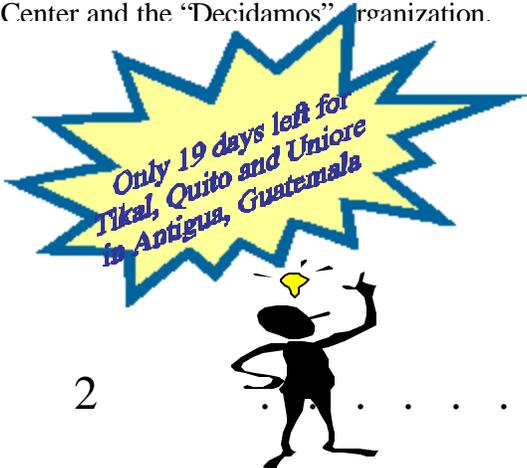
The official presentation of the Dictionary in Mexico City took place at the Electoral Tribunal of the Federation’s Judicial Branch (TEPJF), on October 3. The ceremony was presided by the Chief Magistrate of the TEPJF, Jose Fernando Ojesto Martinez Porcayo, whom we congratulate on his recent appointment.

During this academic ceremony, he was accompanied by the President of the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE), Jose Woldenberg, and Roberto Cuéllar.



In Asunción, the presentation took place in the auditorium of the Superior Tribunal of Electoral Justice (TSJE) on October 24. Presiding the ceremony was the President of the TSJE, Alberto Ramirez Zambonini, who was accompanied by Roberto Cuéllar and the TSJE Magistrates Rafael Dendia and Juan Manuel Morales. The renowned political analyst, Jose Carlos Rodriguez Alcalá, commented on the scope of the Dictionary.

The event was organized jointly with the Document and Study Center and the “Decidamos” organization.



The Political Dimension of Human Rights Education: Twenty Years of Work by IHR

On October 31, on the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of IHR and the first year of the administration of the current Executive Body, a meeting was held with donors and officials of IHR to consider the Institute’s beginnings and discuss its future prospects. In discussing the challenges facing democracy, the Presiding Magistrate of the Electoral Tribunal of Panama, Eduardo Valdés, outlined his ideas and described the process of institutional development and strengthening experienced by Panama’s electoral body as a result of its association with CAPEL.

Organization of the Fourteenth Conference of the Tikal Protocol, the Fifth Conference of UNIORE and the Extraordinary Meeting of Quito

We are now organizing the final details of these conferences and are pleased to announce that, as part of the Work Program, Dr Rodrigo Carazo Odio will be delivering the inaugural lecture on the challenges and prospects facing democracy in the 21st century. The Argentinean lawyer Daniel Sabsay will introduce the subject of electoral reform, which will then be examined in more depth and analyzed by country, focusing on the cases of Mexico, Guatemala, Panama and Uruguay. In addition, the Paraguayan lawyer and political analyst, Line Bareiro, will discuss the role of political parties as mediators between the popular demands and State power, examining the cases of Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Colombia and Bolivia.

As part of the organizational process of these conferences, the CAPEL official, Ileana Aguilar, held work meetings on October 24 and 25 with the Plenary of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal of Guatemala, and with various officials responsible for organizing the event.

SUGGESTION BOX

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Inter-American Institute of Human Rights
P.O.Box 10081-1000. San José, Costa Rica
Tel: (506) 234 04 04

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