

PRESS RELEASE

OAS and the United States Sign Cooperation Agreement on Electoral Affairs

January 19, 2010

The Organization of American States (OAS) and the United States Electoral Assistance Commission today signed a Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation on electoral matters. The document was signed by OAS Assistant Secretary General Albert R. Ramdin and United States Commissioner Donetta Davidson.

The objective of this agreement is to voice the aspiration of both parties to cooperate in activities of mutual interest and provide a frame for the exchange of information, technology, and experiences related to electoral administration.

More specifically, the Memorandum specifies as areas for cooperation the development of, among other things: the standardization, testing, auditing and implementation of electronic voting initiatives; systems of quality management for electoral administration; training of electoral administration managers; development of manuals and other documents on electronic voting; and the development of materials and programs for the education of voters.

Ambassador Ramdin said the OAS is "very satisfied" with the opportunity of signing this agreement because "the Organization is very committed to supporting peace and development in countries," further noting that this "cannot happen if there is no electoral process that is functioning freely, fairly, and in an organized manner."

"The OAS is committed to assisting Member States to further strengthen their electoral processes, which will hopefully lead to more peace, more security, and more development for all our Member States," he added.

The Assistant Secretary General expressed his satisfaction because the Memorandum will allow for the exchange of experiences, especially on matters of electronic voting. He also stated his wish for existing collaboration with the United States Electoral Assistance Commission to "grow stronger" in the future.

Commissioner Davidson said it was "very satisfying" to develop the Memorandum jointly with the OAS General Secretariat and the Permanent Representative of the United States to the Organization.

"We are anxious for the opportunities that will come to share practices and experiences with the General Secretariat of the OAS and its Member States. The OAS plays a crucial role in sharing experiences and creating a network in the elections field," she stated. "We face a large scale, high stake, labor with much in play and without a lot of time on the field undertaking the organization and election administration."

The Memorandum of Understanding was signed in the Hall of Heroes at OAS headquarters in Washington, D.C. The ceremony was attended by the President of the Permanent Council and Representative of Costa Rica, José Enrique Castillo, and the Permanent Representative of the United States, Carmen Lomellin, as well as other Permanent Representatives and Permanent Observers to the OAS.