



U.S. ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMMISSION
1225 New York Ave. NW – Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20005

**Statement of EAC Chair Donetta Davidson
Signing of the Memorandum of Understanding
Between the Election Assistance Commission and
the Organization of American States
January 19, 2010**

Good Afternoon. I would like to thank the Organization of American States and their representatives here today: Assistant Secretary General Albert Randim, Ambassador Carmen Lomellin, and Ambassador Jose Castillo.

With me here today, at this historical signing ceremony, are my colleagues from EAC, my fellow Commissioners Gineen Beach and Gracia Hillman and several of our staff members.

I know many of our distinguished colleagues aren't able to attend this event because they are needed to assist with disaster relief for our friends in Haiti. Our thoughts and prayers are with all of those in need and their families.

It has been very rewarding working with the OAS and the U.S. Permanent Mission to develop this Memorandum of Understanding. It's exciting to see so many of the OAS ambassadors here today, as well as the U.S. Federal Election Commissioners.

I know that they have participated in OAS events that have afforded all of us the opportunity to exchange experiences and ideas for improving election processes.

For instance, last June I had the pleasure of participating in the Inter-American Meeting of Electoral Management Bodies in Ottawa, Canada, where I learned a great deal from OAS nations about their innovations in elections.

We look forward to future opportunities to share expertise and best practices with the OAS Secretariat and Member States.

The OAS has a crucial role to play in sharing experiences and building networks in the field of elections.

We are all faced with large-scale, high-stakes, time-sensitive undertakings in organizing and administering elections.

Elections reflect traditions and realities in each particular country. For instance, here in the United States, each state has its own election laws and policies. There are, however, basic democratic principles that are universal. There are interrelated sets of freedoms and responsibilities.

Regular, free and fair elections that provide a voice for all citizens lies at the heart of democracy. That is why we believe that sharing experiences and practices here can be invaluable in supporting democratic growth.

EAC looks forward to working with Ambassador Lomellin, OAS and Member States to deepen cooperation to strengthen elections.