

Organization of American States



Welcome

Dear Delegates,

My name is Lilia Royanova and I am the chair of the Organization of American States for BUSUN 2010. I am currently a senior at Brown concentrating in International Relations and Economics. I was a member of the BUSUN secretariat for two years, and served on the Brown Model UN Executive Board for one year. I have also attended many conferences with the club, including SCSY, HNMUN, WorldMUN, and AIMUN. I have found these to be invaluable experiences and I am happy that you are gaining such an experience through BUSUN. I'm also involved with Buxton International House, the Bulgarian Club, and the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have about Model UN or Brown in general.

This background guide is intended to give you a broad overview of the topics you will be discussing in committee, but it is up to all of you to do the research and have the preparation necessary for a productive session. In addition to understanding the issues, it's important for you to have an understanding of your own country's positions. It will also be helpful to follow the news for any changes in the issues or new political developments that occur before the start of the conference.

The most important thing to remember is that each of you should work cooperatively to achieve common goals. Rather than focusing

on writing the best resolution to win a prize, you should focus on your diplomatic efforts. Collaboration and the achievement of a broad understanding of the issues is the most important goal for you during the conference. And of course, don't forget to have fun!

Sincerely,

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History of the OAS

Some scholars trace the precedent for a union of American nations dates all the way back to Simón Bolívar and the Congress of Panama in 1826. Additional efforts at creating a hemispheric organization continued throughout the seventeenth century and the process of regular meetings began in 1889 with the First International Conference of American States was held in Washington, D.C.. World War II convinced the governments that such an organization was necessary to ensure their territorial integrity and sovereignty. At the Ninth International Conference of American States, 21 countries signed the Charter of the Organization of American States on April 30, 1948. The OAS has grown to include a total of 35 member states, although the current government of Cuba has been suspended from participation since 1962.¹

As stated by Article I of the OAS charter, the purpose of the organization is to "...achieve an order of peace and justice, to promote their solidarity, to strengthen their collaboration, and to defend their sovereignty,

¹ "Our History."

http://www.oas.org/en/about/our_history.asp

their territorial integrity, and their independence.”²

The goals of the OAS, as stated by Article II of the charter are to:

- a) To strengthen the peace and security of the continent;
- b) To promote and consolidate representative democracy, with due respect for the principle of nonintervention;
- c) To prevent possible causes of difficulties and to ensure the pacific settlement of disputes that may arise among the Member States;
- d) To provide for common action on the part of those States in the event of aggression;
- e) To seek the solution of political, juridical, and economic problems that may arise among them;
- f) To promote, by cooperative action, their economic, social, and cultural development;
- g) To eradicate extreme poverty, which constitutes an obstacle to the full democratic development of the peoples of the hemisphere; and
- h) To achieve an effective limitation of conventional weapons that will make it possible to devote the largest amount of resources to the economic and social development of the Member States.

In the present day, the OAS uses a four-pillar approach to achieve its goals – democracy, human rights, security, and development – through political dialogue, inclusiveness, cooperation, and legal and follow-up instruments that provide the OAS with the tools to maximize its work in the Hemisphere.³

² Charter of the Organization of American States.
http://www.oas.org/dil/treaties_A-41_Charter_of_the_Organization_of_American_States.htm

³ “What we Do”.
http://www.oas.org/en/about/what_we_do.asp

Structure of the OAS

Major policies and goals are set by the OAS General Assembly, which meets regularly once a year and consists of the ministers of foreign affairs of all member states. All member states are represented in the General Assembly and have the right to one vote. Day-to-day actions are controlled by the Permanent Council, which is made up of ambassadors appointed by the member states.⁴

The OAS General Secretariat carries out the programs and policies set by the political bodies. Secretary General José Miguel Insulza, who took office in May 2005, restructured the General Secretariat so the priorities of the member states could be addressed more effectively. Four specialized secretariats coordinate OAS efforts in several broad areas:

- Secretariat for Multidimensional Security – Coordinates OAS actions against terrorism, illegal drugs and other threats to public security.
- Secretariat for Political Affairs - Directs efforts to promote democracy, strengthen democratic governance and prevent democratic crises.
- Executive Secretariat for Integral Development – Includes departments that promote social development, sustainable development, trade and tourism, and education, culture, science and technology. Also handles follow-up to the region’s ministerial meetings.
- Secretariat for Administration and Finance – Provides support services to the General Secretariat, in areas that include human resources, information and technology, and budgetary affairs.

⁴“Our Structure.”
http://www.oas.org/en/about/our_structure.asp

- Department of International Legal Affairs – Promotes legal cooperation among the member states by helping to develop and implement international treaties.

Other offices and agencies – such as the Inter-American human rights bodies and the Summits of the Americas Department – report directly to the OAS Secretary-General. The Assistant Secretary-General also oversees various administrative areas and specialized units, including the secretariats of the Inter-American Commission of Women, the Inter-American Children’s Institute, the Inter-American Committee on Ports and the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission.

Topic 1: The War on Illicit Narcotics and Drug Cartels

Illicit narcotics and the battle to eradicate their trade is a prevalent and unfortunate problem in Latin America. The drug trade negatively affects Latin American countries’ stability of law enforcement, crime, and the wellbeing and health of their citizens. The OAS is dedicated to effectively dealing with this problem through CICAD (see below) and by encouraging member states to develop strong anti-drug national policies.⁵

Following a cocaine epidemic in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the first Inter-American Specialized Conference on Traffic in Narcotic Drugs in Rio de Janeiro to discuss the increased use of the drug, and the emergence of drug cartels. Thus in 1986, the General Assembly created the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) CICAD's anti-drug program is divided into six areas of activity: Demand Reduction; Educational Research and Development; Supply Reduction

and Alternative Development; Money Laundering; Institutional Development; the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM), and the Inter-American Observatory on Drugs.⁶ Several sub-commissions and units exist within CICAD to decentralize the coordination of efforts with respect to each of these six areas of activity, and it may be worthwhile for you to explore their methods and approaches when tackling the problem yourself.

In June 1997, the General Assembly adopted the Anti-Drug Strategy in the Hemisphere, to reflect the changes which had occurred in the ten years since the Program of Rio. These include the increased prevalence of synthetic drugs, such as methamphetamines and Ecstasy, and the use of the Internet as a marketplace for prescription drugs and cigarettes, as well as illegal drugs. The increased inter-connectivity of the modern world makes it easier to transfer funds from illegal drug trade transactions and such communications should be especially targeted. The Anti-Drug Strategy recognized that drugs, drug-related crime, and the dire health and social consequences of drug use and abuse are problems that all countries share and to which there must be a shared responsibility and a shared solution.⁷ This is one of the frameworks that countries use as a guideline for creating their own national strategies.

When tackling the problem of narcotics trade, it is important to consider both the demand and the supply side, implementing effective reduction programs for each. Demand reduction involves not only prevention but also treatment of current and previous drug users. In addition, demand is not only domestic; you

⁵“Drugs.” <http://www.oas.org/en/topics/drugs.asp>

⁶ “Other Autonomous and/or Decentralized Organs Agencies Entities and Dependencies.”

http://www.oas.org/en/about/other_organ.asp

⁷ <http://www.cicad.oas.org/en/History.asp>

should consider distribution channels to foreign countries as well. For example, Mexican cartels control the trafficking of drugs from South America to the US, a business that is worth an estimated \$13bn (£9bn) a year. Their power grew as the US stepped up anti-narcotics operations in the Caribbean and Florida. A US state department report estimated that as much as 90% of all cocaine consumed in the US comes via Mexico.⁸

Current Issues

According to recent research, substance abuse is rising in many member countries, for example drugs such as Ecstasy and heroin are appearing in areas previously unaffected.⁹ Additionally, the crime rate related to drug trading and drug gangs has increased substantially. The profits derived from sale of cocaine and other drugs in the United States and Europe have enabled organized drug gangs to greatly increase their capacities, to the point where this can be a threat to national security. How can countries work to reduce this trend? What can be learned from success cases where drug use and drug trade has been effectively decreased?

Helpful Sources

The Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD):
<http://www.cicad.oas.org/en/History.asp>

The Commission on Narcotic Drugs:
<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/commissions/CND/index.html>

⁸“Mexico’s drug-related violence.”

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-10681249>

⁹ “Demand Reduction”

http://www.cicad.oas.org/Reduccion_Demanda/ENG/About.asp

The Treaty of Rio, Principles and Objectives:
<http://www.cicad.oas.org/EN/basicdocuments/Rio.asp>

The Dark Side: The Drug Business is a Blight on Societies
http://www.economist.com/research/articlesBySubject/displaystory.cfm?subjectid=348954&story_id=16964155

Topic 2: Climate Change and its Effects on Latin American and Caribbean Economies

Climate change refers to long-term changes in the weather of a particular region; most recently the term has become synonymous with global warming and all of its effects including ecosystem changes, rising sea levels, etc. The causes of global warming are both natural and human, most prominently the increase of greenhouse gas releasing through various industrial and nonindustrial processes. The effects of climate change will likely heavily impact Latin America and the Caribbean, where there are a number of climate-sensitive and fragile ecosystem regions. The people and animals living in these areas are vulnerable to climate impacts.¹⁰ While the environmental impact of climate change is a very important issue for the Latin American and Caribbean region, we will focus particularly on its economic effects.

¹⁰ World Bank, Climate Change Work in Latin America and the Caribbean

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/LACEXT/EXTLACREGTOPENVIRONMENT/EXTLACREGTOPCLICHA/0,,contentMDK:22512892~pagePK:34004173~piPK:34003707~theSitePK:3119127,00.html>

The economic effects of climate change can generally slow development and impede poverty reduction, especially in countries which have less resources and infrastructural strength to deal with these effects. For example, agricultural output could be very adversely affected by changes in weather conditions. For example, the cost of agricultural damage due to floods is estimated at US\$1.7 million for the Caribbean Region during 2000-2005.¹¹ Additionally, while climate change can be a very long term process, member states must also consider natural disasters such as hurricanes. The economic impact of such natural disasters can be wide reaching, from greater unemployment in the hotel industry to damage to buildings. Infrastructural damage (such as loss of telephone connection or road damage) can also have significant short and long-term economic effects.

The OAS Department of Sustainable Development has an Energy and Climate Change Division working to implement the Sustainable Energy Partnership for the Americas (SEPA) initiative which works to help member countries with the development and implementation of sustainable energy technology and practices.¹² This and other frameworks can be used to complement natural disaster preparedness with technology and infrastructure development to cope with

Current Issues

How can member states improve their preparedness for climate change effects?

How can the link between implementation of climate change policies and

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[http://irispublic.worldbank.org/85257559006C22E9/All+Documents/85257559006C22E9852575D600577B9B/\\$File/SDWP%2032%20June%202009.pdf](http://irispublic.worldbank.org/85257559006C22E9/All+Documents/85257559006C22E9852575D600577B9B/$File/SDWP%2032%20June%202009.pdf)

¹² SEPA. http://www.sepa-americas.net/quienes_somos.php?ID=3

policy-making be strengthened? What is the relationship between climate change in Latin America and sustainable development in the region? How can information about the effects of climate change be used as a tool for preventing detrimental economic effects? What are other methods of preparing for and dealing with such economic effects?

Helpful Sources

Sustainable Energy Partnership for the Americas
http://www.sepa-americas.net/quienes_somos.php?ID=3

Assessing the Potential Consequences of Climate Destabilization in Latin America
[http://irispublic.worldbank.org/85257559006C22E9/All+Documents/85257559006C22E9852575D600577B9B/\\$File/SDWP%2032%20June%202009.pdf](http://irispublic.worldbank.org/85257559006C22E9/All+Documents/85257559006C22E9852575D600577B9B/$File/SDWP%2032%20June%202009.pdf)

Topic 3: Reducing Gang-Related Violence

Gang-related violence is a great threat to law enforcement stability and civil society within Latin American countries. Social inequality, coupled with poor police enforcement is one of the main causes of crime and violence in Latin America. When tackling this issue, it is important to consider not only reducing crime and violence through national security policies, but also tackling the deep causes of gang organization and their financing. A large portion of organized crime units are financed illegally through the drug trade, and conversely much of the drug trade in Latin America is centered on financing the operations of gangs.

Gang violence is an especially prevalent problem in Mexico, where President Felipe Calderon launched a crackdown on drug cartels

in 2006; however since then more than 28,000 people have died in gang-related violence.¹³ Central America is also threatened by increasing gang violence, especially in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. Gangs like Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) are well-organized, heavily armed, and pose a serious threat to local authority and the civilian population. In July of 2004, El Salvador's Congress unanimously approved the Mano Dura (Firm Hand anti-gang reform. The new policy increased the prison sentence for gang membership to five years and instituted a harsher sentence of nine years for gang leadership.¹⁴ While this policy has led to more crackdowns and more gang members in prison, it is not considered to be the most effective method to deal with such highly organized criminal groups.



the most vulnerable to gang violence? How can the prevalence of gang organizations be decreased through social programs and community intervention?

Helpful Sources

Central America's Increasing Gang Problem
<http://www.coha.org/2007/07/31/central-america%E2%80%99s-increasing-gang-problem-a-comforting-handshake-needed-as-much-as-a-tough-fist-to-fight-crime-epidemic/>

Current Issues

What are the most effective ways for countries to deal with gang-related violence? Are tougher policies successful or do they generate more violence? What policies have worked best? What specific regional areas are

¹³"Mexico's drug-related violence."

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-10681249>

¹⁴ Central America's Increasing Gang Problem

<http://www.coha.org/central-america%E2%80%99s-increasing-gang-problem-a-comforting-handshake-needed-as-much-as-a-tough-fist-to-fight-crime-epidemic/>