

Speech

Organization of American States



**LUIGI R. EINAUDI, ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL OF
THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES
INAUGURATION OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
PERMANENT COUNCIL OF THE ORGANIZATION OF
AMERICAN STATES: "PROMOTION OF A DEMOCRATIC
CULTURE THROUGH EDUCATION"
April 12, 2004 - Washington, DC**

[Print this page](#)
 [Email this page](#)

REFERENCE

[Press Releases](#)
[Latest News](#)
[Speeches](#)
[OAS's website](#)

Ambassador Miguel Ruiz-Cabañas, Permanent Representative of Mexico and Chair of the Permanent Council,

Senator Hazel Manning, Minister of Education of Trinidad and Tobago, and First Vice-President of the Inter-American Committee on Education,

Lorenzo Gómez-Morin, Under-Secretary of Basic Education of Mexico and President of the Inter-American Committee on Education

Rolando Ernesto Marín Coto, Minister of Education of El Salvador and Second Vice-President of the Inter-American Committee on Education

Aristóbulo Isturiz, Minister of Education, Culture, and Sports of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Beatriz Caicedo, Vice-Minister of Education of Ecuador

Juana Inés Díaz Tafur, Vice Minister of Pre-Basic, Basic and Secondary Education of Colombia

Distinguished Permanent Representatives, Members of the General Secretariat, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am pleased to welcome you on the occasion of this Special Meeting of the Permanent Council dedicated to education and democracy.

This is a relationship of particular importance to those of us privileged to be of the Americas. The OAS Charter, unlike the UN Charter, explicitly recognizes democracy as a critical bond among our countries. Since 1991, the governments of the Americas have supported the gradual strengthening of a regional jurisprudence to defend and promote democracy.

The Inter-American Democratic Charter, as Ambassador Ruiz Cabañas has already adopted in 2001, states in Article 16 that "education is key to strengthening democratic institutions, promoting the development of human potential and alleviating poverty and fostering greater understanding among our peoples." Chapter VI of the Charter is entitled "promotion of a democratic culture." Its three articles make clear that the task is as complex as it is inspirational.

Just this year, in January, the Presidents and Heads of Government of the Americas used the Declaration of Nuevo Leon to reaffirm the need to develop and promote a culture and education for democracy, encouraging political training and leadership development for women, youth, indigenous people, members of ethnic groups, and marginalized segments of the population.

Education is acknowledged as a fundamental human right. In societies dedicated to equity but unable to make us all the same, an equal opportunity for education is, perhaps, the single most important mechanism for social mobility,

integration, overcoming poverty, and promoting cultural change.

Recognizing that full implementation of democratic values provides institutional quality to democracy, over the past 10 years, the General Assembly of the OAS and this Permanent Council have been adopting resolutions on the promotion of democratic values and practices, setting out specific mandates for the work of this Organization.

Since 1998, the General Secretariat has designed and implemented national and regional training courses for young leaders. The Unit for the Promotion of Democracy and the Unit for Social Development and Education have developed a program to assist Ministries of Education to analyze policies, curriculum and methodology available for teaching democratic values. This program is currently being successfully implemented in Uruguay, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and the Public Education Administration.

Tomorrow morning, a special panel will review the findings of another key program, a research project entitled "Strengthening Democracy in the Americas through Civic Education." This is an empirical analysis of the knowledge, attitudes and civic activities of 14 and 17 year-old students from Chile, Colombia and the United States.

The General Secretariat is also preparing a portfolio of consolidated programs in civic and democracy education, which provides a database on various formal education programs throughout the hemisphere. The purpose is to facilitate cooperation among the education authorities of the member states.

Article 6 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter begins: "It is the right and responsibility of all citizens to participate in decisions relating to their own development." That is a classic formulation of the egalitarian democratic ethos. Without education, women and men remain invisible and are powerless to influence their societies. But education is not enough. I remember what happened to friends of mine who moved to a rural community in Italy, Fauglia, outside Florence. In Italy in public schools the grading system is one to ten, with ten the highest. Their son brought home an examination on which he had answered every question correctly. But the grade was an eight. Perturbed, they went to see the teacher for an explanation. "Ah," she said, "tens are reserved for the capital. We are in the provinces. The highest grade we can give is an eight." That was in another hemisphere away and some years ago, but I am sure we all still encounter situations that exemplify that education requires a democratic culture to enable everyone's rights to be respected fully, even if they are from the provinces.

I extend Secretary General Gaviria's and my own best wishes for success in your deliberations.
Thank you.

© Copyright 2005. Organization of American States. All Rights Reserved.
Headquarters: 17th Street & Constitution Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006, USA
Tel. (202)458-3000 / Email: multimedia@oas.org

Designed by the Office of Public Information - Multimedia Unit.