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REPUBLICA DEL ECUADOR
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V Inter-American Meeting of Electoral Authorities

“Strengthening Citizens’ Trust in Electoral Processes: The Role of Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) in Political Financing and Electoral Participation”

April 23-24, 2008

Quito, Ecuador

The General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (OAS), through the Department for Electoral Cooperation and Observation of the Secretariat of Political Affairs, and the Supreme Electoral Tribunal of Ecuador (TSE) have agreed to organize the V Inter-American Meeting of Electoral Authorities which will be held on April 23-24, 2008 in Quito, Ecuador.

OBJECTIVE: As in previous meetings, the purpose of this meeting is to promote the effective exchange of knowledge, experiences and best practices among the electoral management bodies in charge of the administration of electoral processes by promoting horizontal cooperation as a relevant element for the advancement of electoral systems and process in the Americas.

BACKGROUND: There have been four previous meetings of electoral management bodies. In the first meeting that took place in March 2003 in Panama City, Panama, participants discussed the need to give priority to obtaining the necessary consensus among all political actors for the implementation of technological changes and to promote legal reforms needed for these changes to be implemented. At the second meeting also held in Panama City in 2004, the Inter-American Program on Electoral Technology (PITE) was presented and the issue of technological innovation was identified as necessary for the administration of electoral processes. It was established that the introduction of these technologies is not a neutral process but has political consequences. In the third meeting celebrated in 2005 in Bogotá, Colombia, electoral management bodies presented their experiences in terms of the incorporation of new technologies in different aspects of an electoral process. In this third meeting, suppliers of electoral technology components were present. The fourth meeting was held in 2006 in San Salvador, El Salvador, with the aim of sharing best practices regarding the functioning and trustworthiness of the systems used for the transmission of results. The purpose was to also evaluate this aspect of an electoral process not only from a technical perspective, but also from a political and institutional perspective. In this opportunity, a second topic for discussion during the meeting was the issue of international electoral observation, particularly the case of OAS Electoral Observation Missions.

AUDIENCE: Electoral Management Bodies from the Hemisphere.

FORMAT: The event will have a duration of 2 days, starting with welcome and opening remarks by the President of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal of Ecuador, Mr. Jorge Acosta Cisneros, and the Assistant Secretary of Political Affairs, Mr. Dante Caputo. The presentations would be organized into panels with four presentations along two main themes: Political Financing and Electoral Participation as well as a panel on Electoral Technologies. The event will



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include plenary sessions at the end of each panel to exchange experiences among the participants. The closing session will include final remarks from OAS and TSE authorities.

THEMES: The main objective of this meeting will be to discuss how Electoral Management Bodies may strengthen citizens' trust in electoral processes, analyzing two principal issues that have become increasingly important in recent years, namely Political Financing and Electoral Participation.

- Political Financing: The topic would be discussed from the point of view of EMBs. Compliance with and effective enforcement of political financing laws are important to maintain and strengthen trust in electoral institutions and processes. Moreover, recent experiences in Latin America suggest that this is one area that needs to be strengthened. With regard to this theme, this panel may discuss the role of Electoral Management Bodies in the application and enforcement of political financing regulation in political campaigns; new tools for the control of electoral financing (including use of new technologies); ways to facilitate compliance; the importance of promoting reforms of political financing regimes; and the issue of media access during electoral campaigns. An over-arching question that panelists will be asked to consider is whether and how rules, procedures and tools to control political financing can strengthen the trust of both electors and political actors (parties, candidates) in the electoral process.
- Electoral Participation: A recent concern regarding electoral processes has been the decline in voter participation observed in the last few years in the Western Hemisphere. To address this issue, the panel will provide an opportunity to discuss strategies to improve accessibility and better practices to encourage electoral participation. Some tools to achieve these goals that may be discussed include the use of new technologies to facilitate participation and strengthen the engagement of target groups, such as women and youth, as well as key communication and civic education strategies and media campaigns, among others.

Both themes would be enriched by the conclusions and recommendations of the Inter-American Meeting of Experts and Electoral Authorities on Electoral Technologies that will take place in Caracas, Venezuela, in April 4, and 5 2008. Incorporated to the Agenda is a Panel dedicated to this topic.

TENTATIVE AGENDA: See attachment