# PERMANENT COUNCIL OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES

OEA/Ser.G CP/CISC-192/05 rev. 1 14 February 2006 Original: English

# COMMITTEE ON INTER-AMERICAN SUMMITS MANAGEMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION IN OAS ACTIVITIES

APPLICATION TO PARTICIPATE PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 6 OF THE GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPATION BY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN OAS ACTIVITIES [CP/RES. 759 (1217/99)]

[CASA of Maryland (CASA)]

# ANALYSIS OF THE ELEMENTS RELATED TO THE PARTICIPATION OF CASA OF MARYLAND (CASA) IN THE REGISTRATION PROCESS OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN OAS ACTIVITIES

This document was prepared by the Summits of the Americas Secretariat to provide Member States with information on *CASA of Maryland (CASA)* pursuant to resolution CP/RES. 759 (1217/99), "Guidelines for the Participation of Civil Society Organizations in OAS Activities". The document contains the basic data and a list of supporting documentation presented by *CASA of Maryland (CASA)*, in accordance with the aforementioned guidelines.

#### 1. **Background**

CASA of Maryland (CASA) is a not-for-profit organization based in the United States of America in Takoma Park, Maryland. CASA was founded in 1985 by Central American refugees and North American citizens in response to the needs of the thousands of Central Americans arriving to the Washington, D.C. area after fleeing wars and civil strife in their countries of origin.

CASA's primary area of activity is meeting the needs of immigrants, primarily from Latin America, and providing services that enable these immigrants and their communities to improve their lives in the United States. To this end, CASA provides education, employment, health, legal, and social services, and promotes community advocacy. This includes assisting refugees and immigrants complete their legal paperwork, assisting in finding employment, providing legal representation in certain employment disputes, delivering public health awareness education, providing training and classes in English language skills and United States citizenship and housing counseling.

CASA has identified the protection and defense of human rights and women's rights and combating the crime of human trafficking as those areas in which they can be of most use in the support of OAS activities.

CASA funds its activities through financial resources provided by the Montgomery and Prince George counties of the State of Maryland, various foundations, congregations, organizations, businesses and corporations, and individuals.

The principal administrative office of *CASA* is located in Takoma Park, Maryland, where the Latin American community has a significant presence. Additional *CASA* offices and centers are located throughout the State of Maryland in Silver Spring, Wheaton, Baltimore, and Germantown.

CASA submitted its application to the OAS on August 26, 2005.

#### 2. Name, address, and date of establishment

Name: CASA of Maryland, Inc. (Central American Solidarity and

Assistance of Maryland)

Address: 301 Tulip Avenue

Takoma Park, MD 20912

**United States** 

Telephone: (301) 431 4185

Fax: (301) 270 8659

Website: <u>www.casademaryland.org</u>

E-mail: yotagri@casamd.org

Executive Director: Gustavo Torres

Date established: February 28, 1985

## 3. Primary areas of activity of the CSO and their relationship to OAS activities

CASA's main objective is to promote and protect the rights of the Latin American community through the provision of education, employment, health, legal, and social services. CASA programs and activities seek to alleviate poverty, human trafficking, and the violation women's and immigrant's rights. CASA carries out activities that are related to those of the OAS in the following areas:

- Direct attention toward and disseminate information on the rights of immigrants, with a special focus on immigrant women, workers, and tenants;
- Support initiatives that seek to improve the social and economic living standards of
  immigrants and promote the design and implementation of public policies that guarantee
  respect for the rights of immigrants;
- Facilitate educational efforts to ensure the full and equal participation of immigrants in society, improve their access to resources and information, and inform them of their legal and human rights;
- Promote and support initiatives and policies that fight all forms of discrimination and intolerance, especially due to gender, ethnicity, race, and citizenship status;
- Encourage the creation of equitable employment opportunities among immigrants and support the rights of these workers; and
- Strengthen and support the design and implementation of policies and initiatives that seek to fight human rights violations and trafficking in persons.

## 4. <u>CSO contributions that could be of interest to the OAS</u>

CASA designs and implements programs and initiatives that support it goal of promoting the rights of immigrants through three departments: Direct Services Department, Education and

Leadership Department, and Community Organizing and Action Department. In this sense, the activities carried out by *CASA* that can contribute to the OAS include the following:

- Provide career development and job-placement services to immigrants in order to improve their employability and enable access to decent, well-paid jobs;
- Promote equitable access to health care and information for immigrants by delivering public health initiatives including HIV/AIDS prevention, screening, and treatment services, and community health education on cancer, diabetes, and tobacco use prevention;
- Provide employment rights services through education and legal representation to immigrant
  workers who have experienced employment abuses such as non-payment of wages, unlawful
  wage deductions, health and safety violations, and discrimination;
- Promote financial independence and improved living standards among immigrants through delivering training and education in literacy and the English language, and citizenship;
- Strengthen civil society by delivering training in organizing, self-advocacy and leadership skills development, fostering engagement with policy-makers, and developing strategic alliances in order to engage in public policy debates;
- Coordinate and carry out advocacy initiatives in promoting the rights of immigrant workers, tenants, and women and develop partnerships and networks among other civil society organizations to carry out these initiatives; and
- Research and write reports on immigrant issues and legislation, such as employment, access to health services, and policy.

#### 5. OAS work areas to which the CSO can provide support

CASA offers to collaborate with the OAS on specific programs to strengthen and defend the rights of immigrants. The following areas have been identified as those in which CASA can cooperate with the OAS:

- Support the work of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) to promote and protect the rights of immigrants and to implement mechanisms that combat human trafficking;
- Facilitate individual access to hemispheric mechanisms for the protection of human rights, including the rights of women, children, and immigrant workers and their families;
- Disseminate information and promote follow up on OAS resolutions, mandates, and conventions that refer to the protection of immigrant rights and the fight against trafficking in persons, in particular, the American Convention on Human Rights;

- Support the efforts of the Joint Working Group of the Permanent Council and CEPCIDI on the Draft Social Charter of the Americas by disseminating information and promoting the eventual implementation of the Charter and its Plan of Action;
- Participate in special meetings, contribute experiences, and disseminate information on the Inter-American Program for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights of Migrants, Including Migrant Workers and their Families;
- Contribute reports and information on immigrant rights violations to the Working Group to Prepare the Inter-American Convention against Racism, Discrimination and all Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance of the Committee on Juridical and Political Affairs (CAJP) of the Permanent Council;
- Contribute experiences and participate in activities related to trafficking in persons through the Trafficking in Persons Section of the Department of International threats to Public Security of the Assistant Secretary for Multidimensional Security;
- Support the work of the Summits of the Americas Secretariat and participate in its various activities to foster communication and sharing of experience among civil society organizations; and
- Promote and disseminate the work of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) and contribute to programs and activities that address the needs of immigrant women.

#### 6. <u>Documents submitted by the CSO</u>

- Letter addressed to the Secretary General dated August 26, 2005
- Articles of Incorporation
- Statutes
- 2004 Annual Report
- Financial report for 2004 (audited by Walker & Company, LLP)
- 2004 Income and Expense statement
- Names of Board of Directors