



THE CENTRAL AMERICAN PARLIAMENT – PARLACEN

PARLACEN exists since 1991 with elected representatives from Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama. The Dominican Republic is deputised by appointed representatives.

This regional parliamentary institution has its head office in Guatemala and subsidiaries in the capital of each member state.

One of the tasks of PARLACEN as a regional political forum is the analysis of basic conditions for democracy, peace and the integration of Central America as well as working out initiatives for its realization. Furthermore it shall support acceptance of human rights and validity of international law.

HISTORY

The historic “Declaration of Esquipulas I” which was adopted by the presidents of the Central American states in the city of Esquipulas (Guatemala) on 25 May 1986 included the following declaration: “It is necessary to establish and complement activities that support understanding and cooperation with institutional structures. They shall make possible to strengthen the dialogue, the common development, democracy and pluralism as fundamental elements for peace in the region and for the integration of Central America. Therefore the foundation of PARLACEN is necessary. Its members are elected freely by universal and direct elections through which the principle of political and participative pluralism is followed.”

With that the agreement of PARLACEN and other political authorities was signed in October (8th, 15th and 16th) 1987 by Guatemala, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Honduras. In the beginning it was an instrument which came into force for only three states (Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras) on 1st May 1990. PARLACEN was formed on 28th October 1991 and has its head office in Guatemala City, Republic of Guatemala.

PARLACEN as the political organ of this region is part of the Central American Integration System (SICA). This was admitted into the Charta of the Organisation of the Central American States (ODECA) by the Protocol of Tegucigalpa which was signed on 13th December 1999. The basic aim of SICA is the realisation of the integration of Central America in order to make it a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development.

MISSION

PARLACEN is the organ for democratic and political representation of the people of Central America and the Dominican Republic. Therefore it takes the parliamentary functions of the common system of the regional integration in order to achieve solidarity between our people.

OBJECTIVES

PARLACEN shall be an effective and democratic leader of the different regional actors and shall help to a gradually progressing establishment of the Central American- Dominican union within the framework of sustainable development. At the same time it shall form a modern, suitable and solidarity- showing society, in which peace and respect for Human Rights are guaranteed.

LEGAL STATUS

PARLACEN is the regional assembly of SICA and acts as a permanent political organ to represent opinions and to carry out analyses and discussions about political, economic and cultural affairs of common interest. It is to achieve a peaceful coexistence within the framework of security and social welfare, which is well-founded in representative and participative democracy, in pluralism and in respect for national legislation and international law.

PARLACEN has the status of a legal entity according to international law.



FORMATION

PARLACEN consists of 20 representatives of each member state. Each member is elected together with a deputy, who stands in for him in case of absence. They are elected for a period of 5 years by universal, direct and secret election. The possibility of re-election is given.

Furthermore it is formed by the former presidents and vice-presidents of the states of Central America after the end of their period of office, whose duration is laid down in the constitutions of each individual country.

Each member state elects its representatives and deputies in correspondence to the national electoral law. A varied political and ideological representation in a democratic and pluralistic system has to be taken into consideration. It shall guarantee free elections under the condition of equality of chances for all political parties.

ATTRIBUTIONS

The tasks of the PARLACEN are the following:

- It works as a consultative panel for the analysis of the common political, economic, social and cultural affairs and security in the region of Central America.
- It gives impulses for the processes of integration and is the best possible cooperation between the states of Central America.
- It proposes drafts of contracts and agreements, which are to be negotiated between the Central American states and which shall contribute to the satisfaction of the needs in the region.
- It shall ensure peaceful coexistence and the security of Central America.
- It supports the consolidation of the democratic, pluralistic and participative system in the states of Central America with strict respect for international law.
- It contributes to the consolidation of complete validity of international law.

BODIES OF PARLACEN

PARLACEN`s organisational structure is as follows:

1. THE PLENUM

The plenum is the highest body of PARLACEN and is formed by all representatives. Furthermore the committees and parliamentary parties are involved with its tasks.

The responsibilities of the plenum are the following:

- It gives advice to the presidents´ assembly concerning affairs of peace, security of Central America and development of the region.
- Annual election of the board of parliament.
- Approval of the budget of PARLACEN.
- Assessment and decision concerning the reports of the board of parliament.
- Composition and approval of internal decrees of PARLACEN and other necessary regulations.
- Formation of working commissions being regarded as necessary by the plenum.
- Proposal of drafts of contracts and agreements that are to be negotiated between the states of Central America and that are supposed to contribute to the satisfaction of the needs in the region.
- Annual discharge of the boards of the parliamentary standing committees.
- Additionally: other tasks which are assigned to it by this contract or its additional instruments.



The Parliamentary Committees

They are parliamentary authorities who – in order to draw up a corresponding report – are supposed to conduct studies and examinations which are either within their sphere of competence or are directed to them by the board or the plenum.

The working committees of PARLACEN can be structured as follows:

Permanent commissions are established in the internal rules to work on affairs of the commission with unlimited duration. The permanent commissions are formed of at most two representatives per state and not exceeding twelve members in total.



At the moment there are the following twelve permanent commissions:

- Commission of politics and party affairs
- Commission of peace, security, human rights and ethnic groups
- Commission of monetary and financial affairs
- Commission of education, culture, sports, science and technology
- Commission of integration, trade and economic development
- Commission of agriculture, farming, fishing, environment and natural resources
- Commission of women, children, youth and family
- Commission of urban development and public participation

- Commission of health, social security, population, labour and corporations
- Commission of legal affairs, integration law and regional institutions
- Commission of international relations
- Commission of tourism

Extraordinary commissions are established by the plenum for affairs that are of special importance and institutional significance for PARLACEN as well as for the process of integration.

Special commissions are established by the board of parliament to handle special affairs.

Parliamentary Groups

They monitor the political trend of the Central American representatives and are organised according to the political orientation of their groups.

The parliamentary groups are founded through the adoption of an internal statute that is presented in the plenary assembly. The board of parliament registers each parliamentary group. The statute is published and consists of the group's ideological principles, the political objectives and the regulations.

2. THE BOARD OF PARLIAMENT

It is the executive body for decisions that come out of the plenum and therefore is the administrative body of PARLACEN. It is expendable according to its internal rules.

The board of parliament is elected out of the members. For the period of one year it is a permanent organ and is made up as follows:

- one president
- four vice-presidents
- five secretaries



The board makes its decisions with approval of seven of its members. In the event of a tie the votes of the presidency count as qualified majority. The presidency is filled by rota system corresponding to the alphabetical order of the member states, starting with the state, which holds the head office.

It is possible to appeal against all resolutions at the plenum. Owing to the special observer's status of the Dominican Republic, one vice-president and one secretary act on their behalf at the plenary.

The tasks of the board are the following:

- Consideration and handling of all requests for which PARLACEN is in charge.
- Conveying of the invitations for the ordinary and extraordinary meetings of the plenum of PARLACEN.
- Draft of the budget – designated in Central American Pesos – for the work routine of PARLACEN.
- Provision with information about respectively relevant results for each member state.
- Realizing the resolutions of PARLACEN.
- Handing in the annual report about the execution of its duties and the result of its administration to the plenary as well as the report about the budget.
- Management and controlling of the secretary office and appointment of necessary personnel. Here the equal treatment of all Central American states has to be taken into consideration.
- Handling of the economic and organisational affairs which affect PARLACEN.
- Proposal to the plenum of regulating instruments which are required by the internal order.
- Creation of special commissions to carry out a task or realize a special function.
- Proper filling in of vacancies that occur in absence of a representative.
- Calling of the deputy representative in case of vacancies.
- Proposal of a suitable list of candidates for the appointment of the internal and external accountants of PARLACEN to the plenary.
- Formation of delegations for official missions. This has to be done in accordance to the regulating norms for the integration of special missions of PARLACEN.
- Working out and approval of its own internal rules and task division among its members.
- As well as other tasks which are assigned to the board by the constitutive contract or by additional instruments.

3. THE SECRETARY OFFICE

The secretary office is the technical-administrative organ of PARLACEN and is divided into three sections, which basically have the following functions and responsibilities:

The secretary office for parliamentary affairs handles and obeys the decisions of PARLACEN. It reports to the plenum on a regular basis and is of technical assistance to the plenum as well as to the commissions in all of their activities. In the same way it coordinates and manages the advice of the commissions and has to assist the extended board with the working out of the agenda for the meetings of the plenum when necessary.

The secretary office for administration and finance has to administer all branches, manager's offices, departments and administrative units as well as the personnel of PARLACEN and has to control the proper administration of its resources.

The secretary office of the board offers technical help to the board in questions relating to the responsibilities of and the topics worked out by the board.



THE OBSERVERS

PARLACEN can confer an observer's status to states and national and regional parliaments, which goals and principles are in accordance with PARLACEN as well as to international organisations which apply for it.

The observers take part in the activities in accordance to the laws and the obligations established in the internal rules. Furthermore participation is due to the conditions which are established in detail in a special agreement.

The observers can be classified as follows:

Special observers are those states in the region that have not been able yet to elect their representatives into PARLACEN in a direct and democratic way. Special observers have the right to participate in the meetings of PARLACEN and its commissions. They shall be involved under the same conditions as the representatives elected by plebiscite in their fields of work, unless there are prohibitions particularly established in the internal rules. At the moment only the Dominican Republic owns this status due to being an associated member of SICA.

Permanent observers are parliaments of other extra regional states as well as other international organisations whose goals and principles correspond with those of PARLACEN. Currently this status is held by Mexico, Puerto Rico and the Republic of China in Taiwan.

Original observers are the parliaments that own this status because of their contributions and help for the installation and consolidation of PARLACEN. These parliaments are the following: The European Parliament, the Parliament of Latin America and the Parliament of the Andean Community.



THE REFORMS OF PARLACEN

By reforming its constitutive treaty PARLACEN strives for its decisions to become obligatory for its member states. This shall make possible the exceedingly decisive role of PARLACEN – being an organ of political representation with democratic authorization – concerning the extension of integration. This way it may take on tasks for the public good, with competences like legislation on the field of integration, parliamentary control of the institutions of integration, participation at the election of its management and approval of the budget.

THE COMPREHENSIVE CONCEPTION OF DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRATION

PARLACEN supports a comprehensive conception of Central American integration and refuses to realise this through an intergovernmental process.

PARLACEN stands in for a complete concept of development and integration of Central America for prosperity of the peoples on political, economic, social and cultural level. It does on the other hand not agree with the idea of reducing integration onto a solely economic dimension and free trade.

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