

**INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
RESOLUTION TO LIFT PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES 29/2025**

Precautionary Measure No. 1-01

ECOPETROL employees who are also members of the Oil Industry Workers' Union (USO)  
regarding Colombia<sup>1</sup>

March 27, 2025

Original: Spanish

**I. SUMMARY**

1. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) has decided to lift the precautionary measures in favor of ECOPETROL employees in Colombia who are also members of the Oil Industry Workers' Union (*Unión Sindical Obrera de la Industria del Petróleo*, USO). At the time of making the decision, the Commission evaluated the actions taken by the State during implementation as well as the observations of the beneficiaries' representation. Despite several requests for information, the representation has not provided a response since 2021. In this regard, taking into account the nature of the precautionary measures mechanism and in light of the information available, the Commission considered that it does not have the elements to find that the requirements of Article 25 of its Rules of Procedure were met. Consequently, the IACHR decided to lift these measures.

**II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

2. On December 20, 2001, the IACHR adopted precautionary measures in favor of individuals who are part of the company ECOPETROL<sup>2</sup> and the Oil Industry Workers' Union (USO). The Commission noted that on November 30, 2001, the president of the Cartagena branch of the Oil Industry Worker's Union, Aury Sará Marrugo, was kidnapped by armed men. On December 3, 2001, the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, AUC) admitted to having the union leader. On December 5, 2001, the commander of the Cartagena metropolitan police reported that the bodies of Aury Sará Marrugo and his protection agent had been found in the María mountains in the department of Bolívar. Accordingly, the Commission required that Colombia: a) urgently adopt the necessary measures to ensure the life and personal integrity of the members of the ECOPETROL syndicate, affiliated with USO; b) consult and agree upon security measures with the applicants and the protected individuals; and c) conduct an investigation and adopt the necessary measures to end the serious attacks and threats against members of the ECOPETROL syndicate.

3. On February 1, 2013, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights informed the representation that the beneficiaries of the precautionary measures were the employees of ECOPETROL, who are also members of the Oil Industry Workers' Trade Union (USO).

4. The Committee for Solidarity with Political Prisoners (*Comité de Solidaridad con Presos Políticos*, CSPP) exerts representation before the Commission.

**III. INFORMATION PROVIDED DURING THE TIME THESE PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES WERE IN FORCE**

<sup>1</sup> In accordance with Article 17(2) of the Rules of Procedure of the IACHR, Commissioner Carlos Bernal Pulido, a Colombian national, did not participate in the debate and deliberation of this matter.

<sup>2</sup> Initially, it was known as the ECOPETROL union.

**A. Procedure during the time the measures were in force**

5. During the time the precautionary measures were in force, the Commission followed-up on the situation by requesting information from the parties and holding working meetings.<sup>3</sup> In recent years, communications received from the parties and from the IACHR have been registered on the following dates:

	<b>Reports from the State</b>	<b>Communications by the representation</b>	<b>IACHR</b>
2010	May 12, August 24	April 26	September 9
2011	March 24, April 14, May 11 and 19, June 7	January 25, February 28, April 6, July 6, November 9, December 6	March 16, April 20, July 22
2012	February 10, July 31, August 13	June 28, July 23, August 31, September 11, October 8 and 12, December 11	January 12, July 23 and 25, September 19 (census request)
2013	May 17, July 8, September 24, November 12, December 11	January 16; February 4 and 8; March 1 and 11; May 6, 7, 10, and 21; June 17 and 26; July 18; August 12; October 11 and 30; December 5 and 12	February 1 and 13; March 4; June 5; October 18; November 14; December 23
2014	March 6; April 16 and 30; June 17; July 1 and 11; August 8; October 22	January 2; March 20; April 13 and 22; May 19; June 23; July 24; August 20; September 23	January 23, April 9 and 22, May 23, July 31, September 8, December 4
2015	February 26, April 23, October 26, November 20	January 19 and 22, February 6, July 28, August 31	April 10, October 9
2016	October 7	January 20, March 28, October 10, November 25	March 23, November 10
2017	No communications	February 28	No communications
2018	February 20, March 5	April 10, September 25	January 30, April 19
2019	January 17	No communications	April 18
2021	March 30	April 21	No communications
2022	April 21, November 29	No communications	July 4, September 23, December 26
2023	No communications	No communications	July 18, October 23
2024	July 10	No communications	March 5, October 4

6. On July 18, 2023, the Commission requested information from the representation in order to evaluate keeping the precautionary measures in force. The request was reiterated on October 23, 2023 and March 5, 2024. To date, the representation has not provided a response, and all the granted timelines have expired. The last communication from the representation is from 2021.

**B. Information provided by the State**

7. Since 2010, the State has reported that it has implemented protective measures in favor of members of the Oil Industry Workers' Trade Union (USO), particularly for those in leadership positions, due to the threats and risks associated with their union activities. Initially, the State reported that protection agents were assigned, police patrols were conducted, and communication channels were established, along with armored vehicles and media coverage, to protect the leaders during critical moments such as union elections and protests at the ECOPETROL refinery. In 2013, it was revealed that there were nine investigations at the inquiry stage into events against members of the USO, and that the investigation into the murder of Milton Enrique Riveras Porras was at the investigative stage. This investigation was complemented by regular

<sup>3</sup> A working meeting held on December 5, 2016, within the framework of the 159th Period of Sessions; and a Working meeting held on November 3, 2012, within the framework of the 146th Period of Session.

meetings between the National Police, the National Protection Unit (UNP), and union representatives to coordinate and adjust security measures.<sup>4</sup>

8. In July 2014, the State detailed the protection measures in favor of the beneficiaries of the precautionary measures:

*Individual protection measures:*

- i. Ángel Yesid Prieto Cortes, Martín Fernando Ravelo, Rafael Rodríguez Moros, and Jhon Alexander Rodríguez Quintero: each individual has an armored vehicle, two protection agents, a communication channel, and a bulletproof vest.
- ii. Ariel Corzo Díaz: an armored vehicle, three protection agents, a means of communication, and a bulletproof vest.
- iii. Ludwing Francisco Gómez Almeida, Libardo Alonso Hernández, José Marin Moreno, Pedro Jaime Parra, and Darío Sánchez: a standard vehicle, two protection agents, a media outlet and a bulletproof vest each.
- iv. Carlos Ernesto Santamaria: a standard vehicle, two protection agents, a means of communication, a bulletproof vest, and preventive police patrols to his residence.
- v. Abel Antonio Triana: a standard vehicle, four protection agents, a media outlet and a bulletproof vest.
- vi. Ernesto Arias Rodríguez: a standard vehicle and three protection agents.
- vii. Alexander Castro and Iván Guerrero Sánchez: each one has a protection agent, a means of communication, a bulletproof vest, and transportation support worth two current legal monthly minimum wages (SMLMV).
- viii. Fredy Pulecio Pérez: a protection agent, a means of communication, and a transport support worth two SMLMVs.

*Collective protection measures:*

- ix. Eduardo Araujo Ortega, Gersón Guerrero Durán, and Luis Evelio Velandia: four media outlets.
- x. Edinsondt Brandt, Arlex Pérez Gutiérrez, and Gilmar Saiz Rodríguez: a standard vehicle, three security agents, media and bulletproof vests.
- xi. Jesús Alberto Marín and Juan Carlos Mora Sánchez: a standard vehicle, three protection agents, three media outlets, and two bulletproof vests.
- xii. Jacob González Suárez and José Orlando Salazar Perdomo: one standard vehicle, three protection agents, five media outlets, and four bulletproof vests.
- xiii. José Aníbal Bermúdez, Héctor Fabio Correa, Edgar Correa González, Eliécer González Delgado, Wilmer Hernández Cedrón, Henry Jara, Hermes Mejía Quiroz, Omar Mejía Salgado, Jorge Luis Moreno, Saúl Ospino Hernández, Joaquín Padilla Castro, Sergio Páez Mantilla, Freddy Oswaldo Pérez, Enrique Rodríguez Ortega, Luis Albeiro Rojas, Deiber Sanmarin Barrios, Gildardo Tejedor and Jairo Vidal Varón: a standard vehicle, four protection agents, media, and bulletproof vests.
- xiv. Juan Carlos Aguilar, Germán Luis Alvarino, Edinson Cardoza Centeno, Olivo Chaparro Viviescaz, Edwin Palma Egea, and Sergio Alberto Ríos Riatiga: standard vehicles, six protection agents, media, and bulletproof vests.
- xv. William Ariza García, Moisés Barón Cárdenas and Leonardo Muñoz Vélez: four standard vehicles and six protection agents.
- xvi. Nixon Sandro Enríquez and Alexander Viuchi: an armored vehicle, two protection agents, and a means of communication.

<sup>4</sup> The meetings were held on April 10, 2011; May 29, and November 27, 2014; and September 21, 2015.

- xvii. William Andrés Díaz, José Alcides Pepinosa Noguera, and Luis Fernando Rojas: an armored vehicle, three protection agents, three media outlets, and a bulletproof vest.
- xviii. Manuel Jesús Coronado, José Socimo Erazo, and Julio Antonio Vargas: an armored vehicle, four protection agents, two media outlets, and a bulletproof vest.

9. In some cases, such as that of Luz Stella Rodríguez, the proposed protection plans were rejected, and the UNP stated that it was unable to implement protection measures without formal risk assessments, as requested by the representation. In January 2019, the State reported that the Meta Police Department carried out constant searches at Héctor Sánchez Gómez's residence and that the Magdalena Medio Police Department implemented preventive security measures consisting of police patrols and searches of the five sub-offices and USO headquarters. Moreover, the USO leaders were provided with self-protection recommendations. It was stated that Héctor Sánchez Gómez had a protection detail consisting of two protection agents and an armored vehicle, and that Alexander Puerto had a detail consisting of three protection agents and an armored vehicle. In 2018 the State received two complaints for the crime of threats against union leaders of the USO.

10. In 2021, there were 16 reported cases of threats and 22 victims within the USO. Additionally, the ECOPELROL-USO Union had 38 beneficiaries who were receiving material protection measures. These protective measures were 25 means of communication, 46 protection agents, 30 bulletproof vests, 12 standard vehicles, five armored vehicles, and three help buttons.

11. In 2022 and 2024, the State requested the updated censuses of beneficiaries to maintain adequate protection<sup>5</sup> and it was reported that follow-up and coordination meetings between the State and the USO were ongoing.<sup>6</sup> It was specified that Iván Guerrero Sánchez had a protection detail consisting of two protection agents and a vehicle. It was reported that preventive measures were taken in favor of the union leaders.<sup>7</sup> Lastly, it referred to eight active investigations for the crime of threats against leaders of the USO.

### **C. Information provided by the representation**

12. Between 2011 and 2017, members of the Worker's Trade Union and their families reported that they were subjected to threats, attacks, and acts of violence. In 2011, Rodolfo Vecino and Rafael Cabarcas received death threats via telephone calls, and Martín Ravelo and Luis Alberto Galvis Martínez received intimidating messages warning them to leave their territories. During those years, the defense alleged that there was physical intimidation, arbitrary arrests, and direct violence from the police and the Mobile Anti-Riot Squadron (ESMAD), for example, during the arrest of USO members during peaceful protests. In 2012, threats were made through pamphlets from armed groups such as the "Bloque Central Bolívar". Some messages on mobile phones reportedly warned several union leaders to leave their territory. It was reported that Milton Enrique Riveras Parra, a member of the USO, was killed in Puerto Gaitán.

<sup>5</sup> The requests for updated censuses were made through reports dated April 21 and November 29, 2022, and July 10, 2024.

<sup>6</sup> Follow-up and consultation meetings held on March 2 and September 21, 2015; July 13, 2016; March 2, 2017; November 9, 2020; March 8, 2021; February 3; and October 3, 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Jairo Andrés Restrepo Yepes, Sandra Patricia Perilla Mancera, Diego Fernando Cerdas, Jonathan Urbano Iguera, Daniel Piedrahita Cacais, Wilson José Hoyos, Eduardo Orlando Vélez, Germán Acero Fierro, Fabian Adolfo García Rivera, Fredy Acosta Hinestroza, Víctor Manuel Leal Escobar and David Andrés Ramírez Riaño and constant magazines are made to the beneficiaries Jhon Alexander Rodríguez Quintero, Cesar Eduardo Loza Arenas, Manuel Jesús Coronado Enríquez, Ariel Corzo Díaz, José Marín Moreno Villareal, José Manuel Ospina Martínez, Alexis Soto Gómez, Marín Fernando Ravelo Ravelo, Libardo Alonso Hernández, Henry Lara Jara, José Franquis Ibarguen Ibarguen, Ernesto Arias Rodríguez, David Mauricio Gómez Ferreira, José Álvaro Martínez Ruiz, Enrique Rodríguez Ortega, Abelantoni Giraldo Reyes, and Alberto Santana Serrano.

13. In 2013, several union leaders reported threats and being followed. Reports of theft and attacks against leaders of the USO were also filed. The USO indicated that it faced difficulties with the implementation of the protection measures due to administrative problems of the National Protection Unit (UNP). In 2014, it was reported that, in some cases, essential protection details were removed. It was added that threatening pamphlets circulated and several leaders faced physical aggression or assassination attempts. The USO denounced the lack of progress in judicial investigations and the stagnation of acts of violence. In 2015, USO members received death threats via text messages and phone calls from armed groups such as the Black Eagles (*Águilas Negras*). The representation alleged that the UNP withdrew protection measures. In August 2015, a pamphlet from the “Comandos Urbanos de los Rastrojos” threatened several social leaders, including Luis Alberto Galvis Martínez, who did not have protection measures in his favor.

14. In 2016, reports surfaced of conversations discussing contracts to assassinate USO trade unionists, along with pamphlets from armed groups designating union leaders as military targets. In December 2015, Alexander Castro and Jhon Alexander Rodríguez heard that hitmen had been hired to kill them. In March 2016, Cesar Loza heard gunshots near his home. His security detail warned him that two armed individuals had attempted to enter his residential complex. In July 2016, a pamphlet circulated by the “Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia - AGC” that declared several social leaders a military target, and Alexander Castro was mentioned. In August 2016, the AGC sent threatening emails to Rodolfo Vecino. In September 2016, Alexander Castro was reportedly the victim of attempted murder. In 2017, there were reports of intimidating pamphlets being left at the residences of leaders in Sabana de Torres. There were warnings about the withdrawal of Rodolfo Vecino’s security detail in 2020, which increased the USO’s concern.

#### **IV. ANALYSIS OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF SERIOUSNESS, URGENCY, AND IRREPARABLE HARM**

15. The precautionary measures mechanism is part of the Commission’s functions of overseeing compliance with the human rights obligations established in Article 106 of the Charter of the Organization of American States. These general oversight functions are provided for in Article 41 (b) of the American Convention on Human Rights, as well as in Article 18 (b) of the Statute of the IACHR; while the mechanism of precautionary measures is set forth in Article 25 of the Commission’s Rules of Procedure. In accordance with this Article, the IACHR grants precautionary measures in urgent and serious situations in which these measures are necessary to avoid irreparable harm to persons or to the subject matter of a petition or case before the organs of the inter-American system.

16. The Inter-American Commission and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (“the Inter-American Court” or “I/A Court H.R.”) have established repeatedly that precautionary and provisional measures have a dual nature, both protective and precautionary.<sup>8</sup> Regarding the protective nature, these measures seek to avoid irreparable harm and to protect the exercise of human rights.<sup>9</sup> To do this, the IACHR shall assess the problem raised, the effectiveness of state actions to address the situation described, and the vulnerability to

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<sup>8</sup> I/A Court H.R., [Matter of the Yare I and Yare II Capital Region Penitentiary Center](#), Provisional Measures regarding the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Order of March 30, 2006, considerandum 5; *Case of Carpio Nicolle et al. v. Guatemala*, Provisional Measures, Order of July 6, 2009, considerandum 16 (Available only in Spanish).

<sup>9</sup> I/A Court H.R., [Matter of Capital El Rodeo I and El Rodeo II Judicial Confinement Center](#), Provisional Measures regarding Venezuela, Order of February 8, 2008, considerandum 8; [Case of Bámaca Velásquez](#), Provisional measures regarding Guatemala, Order of January 27, 2009, considerandum 45; [Matter of Fernández Ortega et al.](#), Provisional measures regarding Mexico, Order of April 30, 2009, considerandum 5; [Matter of Milagro Sala](#), Provisional measures regarding Argentina, Order of November 23, 2017, considerandum 5. (Available only in Spanish)



which the persons proposed as beneficiaries would be exposed if the measures are not adopted.<sup>10</sup> Regarding their precautionary nature, these measures have the purpose of preserving a legal situation while under study by the organs of the inter-American system. Their precautionary nature aims at safeguarding the rights at risk until the petition pending before the inter-American system is resolved. Their object and purpose are to ensure the integrity and effectiveness of an eventual decision on the merits and, thus, avoid any further infringement of the rights at issue, a situation that may adversely affect the useful effect of the final decision. In this regard, precautionary or provisional measures allow the State concerned to comply with the final decision and, if necessary, to implement the ordered reparations. In the process of reaching a decision, according to Article 25(2) of its Rules of Procedure, the Commission considers that:

- a. “serious situation” refers to a grave impact that an action or omission can have on a protected right or on the eventual effect of a pending decision in a case or petition before the organs of the inter-American system;
- b. “urgent situation” refers to risk or threat that is imminent and can materialize, thus requiring immediate preventive or protective action; and
- c. “irreparable harm” refers to injury to rights which, due to their nature, would not be susceptible to reparation, restoration or adequate compensation.

17. In this sense, Article 25(7) of the Commission’s Rules of Procedure establishes that decisions granting, extending, modifying or lifting precautionary measures shall be adopted through reasoned resolutions. Article 25(9) sets forth that the Commission shall evaluate periodically, at its own initiative or at the request of either party, whether to maintain, modify or lift the precautionary measures in force. In this regard, the Commission shall assess whether the serious and urgent situation and the risk of irreparable harm that caused the adoption of the precautionary measures persist. Furthermore, it shall consider whether there are new situations that may meet the requirements outlined in Article 25 of its Rules of Procedure.

18. Similarly, the Commission recalls that while the assessment of the procedural requirements when adopting precautionary measures is carried out from a *prima facie* standard of review, keeping such measures in force requires a more rigorous evaluation.<sup>11</sup> In this sense, when no imminent risk is identified, the burden of proof and argument increases over time.<sup>12</sup> The Inter-American Court has indicated that the passage of a reasonable period of time without any threats or intimidation, added to the lack of imminent risk, may lead to the lifting of international protection measures.<sup>13</sup>

19. In this matter, the Commission emphasizes that the precautionary measures were granted in December 2001 in favor of individuals who formed part of ECOPETROL and were also members of the Oil Industry Workers’ Union (USO). In 2013, the Commission clarified that the beneficiaries of the precautionary measures were ECOPETROL employees who were also affiliated to USO.

20. Following the granting of the precautionary measures, the Commission identified, among other initiatives, that at least eleven consultation meetings were held in recent years and various investigations were initiated into the events that placed the beneficiaries at risk, as reported by the representation. In addition, the report highlights the adoption of individual and collective protection measures, the assignment of protection agents, the implementation of police patrols, communication channels, the provision of armored

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<sup>10</sup> I/A Court H.R., [Matter of Milagro Sala](#), Provisional Measures regarding Argentina, Order of November 23, 2017, considerandum 5 (Available only in Spanish); [Matter of Capital El Rodeo I and El Rodeo II Judicial Confinement Center](#), Provisional Measures regarding Venezuela, Order of February 8, 2008, considerandum 9; [Matter of the Criminal Institute of Plácido de Sá Carvalho](#), Provisional Measures regarding Brazil, Order of February 13, 2017, considerandum 6 (Available only in Spanish).

<sup>11</sup> I/A Court H.R., [Case of Fernandez Ortega et al.](#), Provisional Measures regarding Mexico, Order of February 7, 2017, considerandums 16 and 17 (Available only in Spanish).

<sup>12</sup> I/A Court H.R., [Case of Fernandez Ortega et al.](#), previously cited, considerandums 16 and 17.

<sup>13</sup> I/A Court H.R., [Case of Fernandez Ortega et al.](#), previously cited, considerandums 16 and 17.

and standard vehicles, bulletproof vests, self-protection recommendations, among other measures. While the representation raised questions about the implementation of the protective measures adopted by the State, the Commission does not have information on the situation of the beneficiaries to date that would allow it to report a situation of imminent risk under the terms of Article 25 of the Rules of Procedure.

21. The Commission emphasizes that this matter has been monitored by the Commission through the mechanism for nearly 23 years, and that the representation has not provided a response since 2021, more than four years since its last response. In fact, in its last communication of 2021, the representation referred to events that occurred in 2020; which implies that the last specific events reported to the IACHR purportedly occurred approximately five years ago. In addition to the above, the Commission emphasizes that there is no available information on ECOPETROL employees currently affiliated with USO, despite having forwarded a state request for a census of the beneficiaries. Upon requiring information from the representation, the Commission has not received a response. The above is relevant for keeping these precautionary measures in force.<sup>14</sup> In this regard, the Commission recalls the provisions of Article 25 (11) of its Rules of Procedure:

“11. In addition to the terms of subparagraph 9, the Commission may lift or review a precautionary measure when the beneficiaries or their representatives, without justification, fail to provide a satisfactory reply to the Commission on the requirements presented by the State for their implementation.”

22. The lack of response from the representation has persisted despite the Commission’s indication that it would conduct an analysis on keeping the precautionary measures in force. In this regard, the Commission recalls that the representatives of the beneficiaries who wish the measures to continue must present proof of reasons for doing so. Consequently, the Commission considers at this time it does not have the necessary information to identify a situation presenting a risk that would meet the requirements of Article 25 of the Rules of Procedure. In view of the all the above, and taking into account the exceptional and temporary nature of precautionary measures,<sup>15</sup> the Commission deems it appropriate to lift these precautionary measures.

23. Lastly, without prejudice to the present decision, the Commission recalls that the State must continue to guarantee and protect individuals to prevent new threatening events under the terms established in the American Convention and applicable standards.

## **V. DECISION**

24. The Commission has decided to lift the precautionary measures granted in favor of ECOPETROL employees in Colombia who are also members of the Oil Industry Workers’ Union (*Unión Sindical Obrera de la Industria del Petróleo*, USO).

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<sup>14</sup> IACHR, [Resolution to Lift, 76/2024](#), Precautionary Measure No. 9-02, Afro-Colombian Families in 49 Caseríos in the Naya River basin regarding Colombia, October 24, 2024. In the same sense, in [Follow-up Resolution 48/2022, Precautionary Measure No. 264-13](#), Members of Damas de Blanco (Ladies in White) regarding Cuba, September 28, 2022, the Commission requested the representation to “update the census of its members on a regular basis. This will allow this Commission to properly monitor their situation under the terms of Article 25 of its Rules of Procedure, and to have up-to-date information on who the current members are, in a timely manner.” The Commission also requests that “the representation include, together with the updated census, the concrete facts that the identified persons have been facing in the country.” (para. 45). Moreover, it mentioned that “Failing this, the Commission will send the State the information on the current members of the organization on the understanding that the State must know the beneficiaries that this international body has asked it to protect in the terms of the applicable international standards,” (para. 46).

<sup>15</sup> I/A Court H.R., Matter of Adrián Meléndez Quijano et al., Provisional Measures regarding El Salvador, Order of August 21, 2013, para. 22; Matter of Galdámez Álvarez et al., Provisional Measures regarding Honduras, Order of November 23, 2016, para. 24.

25. The Commission emphasizes that regardless of the lifting of these measures, in accordance with Article 1(1) of the American Convention, it is the obligation of the State of Colombia to respect and guarantee the rights recognized therein, including the life and personal integrity of the individuals.

26. The Commission recalls that the lifting of these measures does not prevent the representation from filing a new request for precautionary measures should they consider that there is a situation that meets the requirements established in Article 25 of its Rules of Procedure.

27. The Commission instructs the Executive Secretariat of the IACHR to notify this resolution to the State of Colombia and the representation.

28. Approved on March 27, 2025, by José Luis Caballero Ochoa, President; Andrea Pochak, First Vice-President; Arif Bulkan, Second Vice-President; and Roberta Clarke, members of the IACHR.

Tania Reneaum Panszi  
Executive Secretary