



# First Partial Report on the IACHR Strategic Plan 2017-2021

**February 2018**



Now that 2017 has ended, the Executive Secretariat is providing a report on the results achieved from implementing the current 2017-2021 IACHR Strategic Plan, approved by the IACHR on March 20, 2017 (OEA/Ser.L/V/II.161, Doc. 27/17) as the principal instrument for management of the institution.

The Report at first presents a summary of the main results for the period. Afterwards, it provides six chapters, one for each of the Plan's five Strategic Objectives plus a chapter on the Special Program to Monitor IACHR Recommendations (Program 21). The final part draws conclusions on the plan's implementation.

## Main Achievements

- Increase in the budget from the Regular Fund with staggered application as of the year 2018 until it has reached twofold its current amount by the year 2020.
- Designing and implementing a more integrated and horizontal administrative structure.
- Broader public presence of the IACHR in the region's countries.
- 10% reduction in procedural delays compared to the preceding year.
- Implementing the Processing Unit and multiple measures aimed expediting the processing of petitions and cases.
- Enhanced, integrated, and coordinated monitoring for a greater impact on the basis of the new administrative structure.
- Establishment of the Unit on Memory, Truth, and Justice, the Unit on the Rights of Older Persons, and the Unit on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Installing the Special Rapporteurship on Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights (ESCER), with implementation of public selection process to appoint a Special Rapporteur. Renewal of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression and the Rapporteurship's twentieth anniversary celebration.
- Implementing the Rapid and Integrated Response Coordination Unit (RIRCU) in view of the situations of human rights risk and violations.
- First Forum of the Inter-American Human Rights System held in Washington, D.C., with 507 persons attending the Forum's 24 parallel events.
- Consolidating advisory services and technical cooperation to Central America for institutional and public policymaking capacity building with a human rights-based approach.
- Drafting and launching, with the United Nations Human Rights Office (OHCHR), the Joint Action Mechanism to Contribute to the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in the Americas.
- Drafting and implementing the Plan for Financial Sustainability.



# SO1

**To contribute to the development of more effective and accessible inter-American justice in order to overcome practices of impunity in the region and achieve comprehensive reparation for victims through decisive measures for the strengthening of the petition and case system, friendly settlements and precautionary measures.**

## Results achieved:

- Reducing procedural delays by 10% compared to 2016 (-714 petitions and cases being processed)
- Initial review of 100% of the petitions received in 2016 was carried out.
- Implementing the Processing Unit and multiple measures to expedite the processing of petitions and cases.
- Strengthening the Friendly Settlements Mechanism with the publication of tools on the use of the mechanism and training aimed at civil servants and users.
- Strengthening the Precautionary Measures Mechanism. There were 107 requests received, which accounts for twice the average received in 2012-2015; of these requests more than 90% were processed in 2017. The Precautionary Measures Section was implemented and various methodological advances were implemented to expedite the processing and review of requests.

In 2017, substantial progress has been achieved in terms of reducing procedural delays and expanding the use of the Friendly Settlements and Precautionary Measures Mechanisms. This was achieved with the implementation of a new organizational structure and working methodologies aimed at improving efficiency, with highly satisfactory results secure for this strategic objective.

## P1: Special Procedural Delay Reduction Program

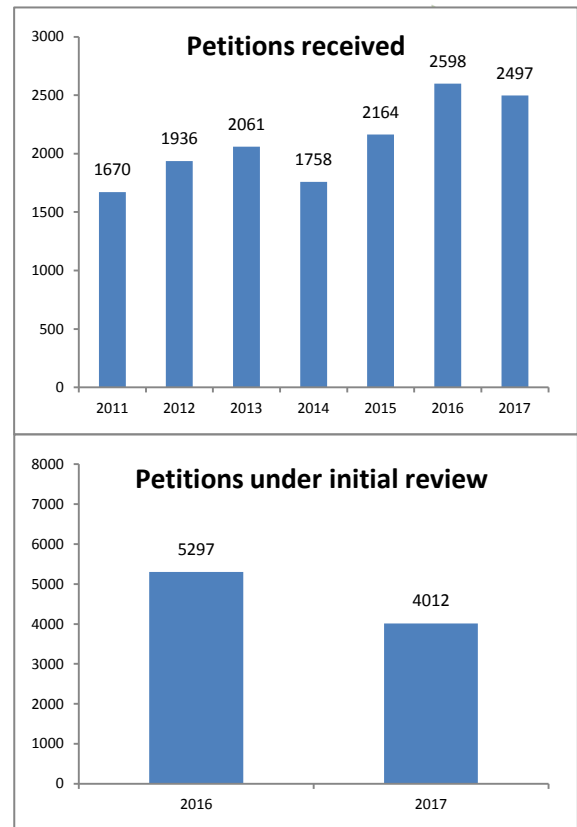
In 2017, 2,497 petitions have been received, in keeping with the high average of the last years. This highlights the steady relevance and legitimacy of the Commission and the Inter-American Human Rights System, as well as the persistence of serious human rights situations in the region.



➤ **Initial review:**

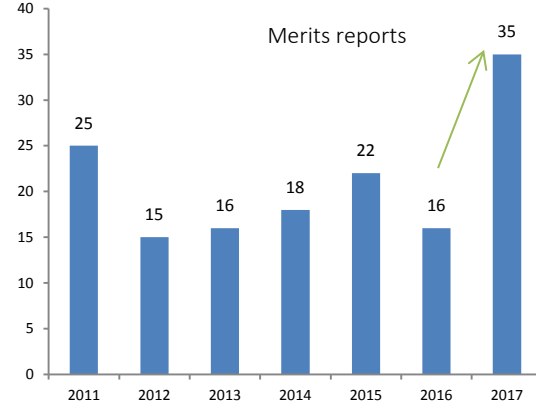
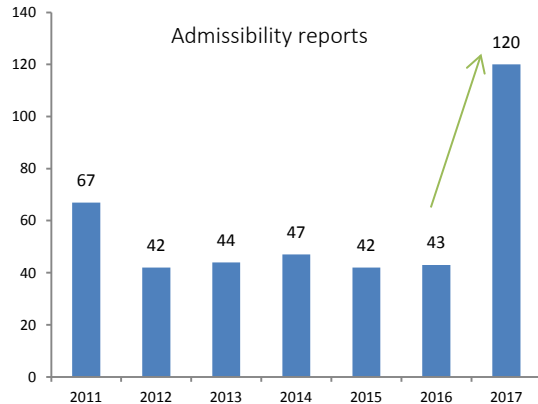
In 2017, the IACHR conducted the initial review of all the petitions received in 2016. With this review, it has managed to carry out a first evaluation of 100% of the petitions received in the immediately preceding calendar year and to give continuity to the measures implemented to resolve the procedural backlog in the initial review stage for the second consecutive year.

On the basis of this achievement, the number of petitions pending an initial review fell from 5,297 to 4,012 petitions.

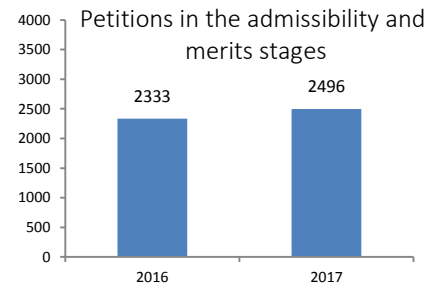


➤ **Stages of admissibility, merits, and Court**

In 2017, the IACHR adopted 120 admissibility reports (114 for admissibility and 6 for inadmissibility), which accounted for the highest number of reports adopted in IACHR’s history for that procedural stage. In addition, in 2017, the IACHR adopted 35 merits reports, as a result of which it was able to approve more than twice the number of reports than in the immediately preceding year. As for working with the Inter-American Court, in 2017, the Commission referred 18 contentious cases, increasing the number from the two preceding years. This progress was achieved thanks to the measures adopted by the IACHR as part of the Special Procedural Delay Reduction Program: the establishment of a Processing Unit; the implementation of the new format for admissibility reports; and the development of new methodologies and the specialization by portfolios. Furthermore, the IACHR started the gradual implementation of Resolution 1/16, which reduces the backlog in the admissibility stage.



The admissibility and merits files grew, as a result of the large number of petitions for which a decision was made to open a case in the registry stage.



➤ **Results in procedural delay reduction**

On the basis of detailed actions to reduce procedural delays, it was possible to reduce by 10% the total number of petitions in the initial review stage, admissibility stage, and cases in the merits stage. This reduction amounts to more than 700 fewer petitions and cases than the preceding year which are in the process of being reviewed and decided upon by the IACHR.

Because the focus of the work over the past two years has been on reducing the number of petitions in the review stage, it has been observed that the “procedural delay” has shifted to the following stages, that is, admissibility and merits. In 2018, the focus shall be on keeping up the increase in petitions evaluated in the admissibility stage and cases processed in the merits stage.

Although these measures are still not sufficient to undo years of procedural delay, they are key steps reflecting the IACHR’s commitment to the system of petitions and cases. In addition, the initiatives and results that have been achieved highlight the real and concrete possibility of implementing further and better measures to provide a timely response to persons who turn to the Inter-American System.

## P2: Program to Expand the Use of Friendly Settlements

In 2017, institutional capacity building and dissemination actions regarding the use of friendly settlements were carried out in order to address the challenge, on the one hand, of expanding the IACHR’s capacity to process and follow up on expressions of interest and, on the other hand, of disseminating among IAHRs users relevant



information for the success of the procedures. Among the most important achievements, the following are noteworthy:

➤ **Expanding institutional capacity**

With the new administrative structure, the area was strengthened, and it will now have a full-time person in charge of the section, as well as additional staff hired, thus culminating in more than twice the previous working capacity.

➤ **Historical record in promoting friendly settlements by the IACHR**

In 2017, a historical record of working meetings held, which is an important indicator of the mechanism's use, was set. There were four working visits conducted to promote friendly settlement agreement negotiations and compliance with IACHR decisions in petitions and cases. During these visits, a total of 57 working meetings were facilitated with the participation of states, petitioners, and victims in various cases in the stage of negotiating and implementing friendly settlement agreements and monitoring compliance with recommendations made by the IACHR in its merits reports.

### **P3: Program to Strengthen Precautionary Measures**

Throughout 2017, the IACHR was able to uphold its timely response to requests for precautionary measures, in a scenario where the level of requests remained high. Institutional measures to build up the Executive Secretariat's capacity were taken and have led to positive results.

➤ **Institutional management**

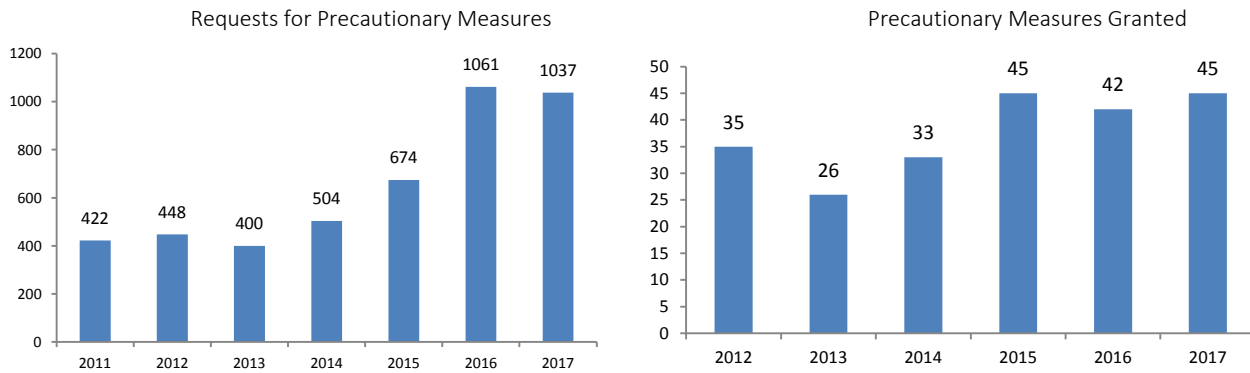
For the purpose of strengthening management and specialization when reviewing requests, as well as monitoring measures currently in force, the Commission decided to convert the Protection Group into a Precautionary Measures Section within the Assistant Executive Secretariat for Cases, Petitions and Precautionary Measures. In addition, throughout 2017, the IACHR has made various adjustments to facilitate and expedite decision making with respect to precautionary measures, including more efficient consultation strategies, the management of requests and precautionary measures granted through files, and prioritization in the evaluation of requests showing indications of greater urgency. The IACHR adopted a series of measures aimed at expediting decision making regarding requests that obviously do not meet the requirements set forth in Article 25 of the Rules of Procedures, do not have up-to-date information, or else are inactive for a long period time because of the petitioner's failure to submit additional information.

➤ **Results achieved**

There were 1,037 requests received, and of these more than 90% were processed in 2017. This number of requests is twice the average number of requests during 2012-2015. The Commission adopted resolutions to grant precautionary measures (45), extend them (5), and lift them (3) in accordance with Article 25 of the IACHR Rules of Procedures. These figures account for a 30% increase over the average of those carried out in the years



2012-2015. In addition, the Commission held 40 working meetings regarding the precautionary measures in force at its periods of sessions and 7 meetings as part of the visits made by the country-specific rapporteurs for the purpose of identifying and resolving difficulties in their implementation. Two working visits were also made in connection with precautionary measures being processed.



#### **P4: Program for Transparency and Access to Information**

As for the Program for Transparency and Access to Information, a process to review existing protocols has started and, together with the Rapporteurship for Freedom of Expression, explorations have started with experts in institutional transparency in order to design and submit a proposal to the IACHR in 2018.



# SO2

**To have an impact on prevention measures and the factors that lead to human rights violations through the coordinated use of IACHR mechanisms and functions to achieve improved capacity for monitoring and coordinating relevant, timely and appropriate responses**

## Results achieved

- Improved, integrated, and coordinated monitoring for exerting a great impact.
- Balance ensured among the Thematic Rapporteurships, with plans of action with a common funding base and with the hiring of a professional for each previously established rapporteurship.
- Creation of the Unit on Memory, Truth and Justice, the Unit on the Rights Older Persons, and the Unit on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Implementation of the Special Rapporteurship on Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights (ESKER) with a competitive selection for the Special Rapporteur. Renewal of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression and celebration of the Rapporteurship's twentieth anniversary.
- Increased production and enrichment of inter-American human rights standards.
- Implementation of the Rapid and Integrated Response Coordination Unit (RIRCU) to address human rights risk and violation situation.

In the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan, the IACHR adopted a multidimensional strategy that has led to prioritizing a series of issues and population groups, on the basis of cross-cutting themes. In its efforts to implement this strategy, in 2017, the IACHR made progress in striking a balance among the Thematic Rapporteurships, with plans of action with a common funding base and with the hiring of a professional for each previously established rapporteurship. Furthermore, in 2017, the IACHR extended its capacity for thematic coverage and fulfilled the commitments it had made in its Strategic Plan with the establishment of new thematic units.

In 2017, the IACHR made an effort to overcome the scattered and overlapping efforts in monitoring the human rights situation, as well as to define performance strategies for the integrated and coordinated use of its various human rights promotion and protection mechanisms. In that respect, in the framework of the Executive Secretariat's restructuring, the Assistant Executive Secretariat for Monitoring, Promotion and Technical Cooperation on Human Rights was created. With this new structure, in addition to the creation of new staff





positions and the modernization of its functioning, the Executive Secretariat was able to merge the geographical monitoring and priority themes areas into three monitoring coordination sections and to incorporate the cross-cutting themes into its working agenda.

As a result of this restructuring and merging of areas in 2017, consolidation of the intersectional perspective of gender and diversity was observed as a result of integrated work with various sections of the Executive Secretariat. An improvement in the internal exchange of information among the teams was also observed. As for the work of preparing the Annual Report, the following are noteworthy: better harmonization in the methodology of drafting the chapters; a new form of systematizing the information of the annual monitoring work; and a more objective and clear way of presenting information to society. Finally, it must be stressed that the installation of the Rapid and Integrated Response Coordination Unit (RIRCU) expanded IACHR's capacity for action to address crisis and emergency situations in the continent, providing coordination of the Commission's instruments and integrated responses.

Although not all programs displayed the same level of progress, because the achievements secured are structural, it is possible to assert that implementation of this strategic objective has been highly satisfactory.

## **P5: Program to Improve the Scope and Impact of the Monitoring of Human Rights Situations by Theme and Country**

The institutional changes promoted in the monitoring led to major results in 2017, as presented below:

### **➤ Integration of the working methodology and processes for thematic and country-specific monitoring**

In 2017, on the basis of the administrative structure's reform, the Executive Secretariat managed to merge the geographical monitoring and priority themes areas into three monitoring coordination sections and to mainstream the cross-cutting themes into its working agenda, focusing on the constructive transition to its new structure. Integration in terms of the structure was followed by a process to standardize and harmonize workflows, processes, and instruments, as well as to draw up protocols, which is still ongoing in 2018.

### **➤ Installation of three thematic units**

The IACHR expanded its thematic coverage capacity and fulfilled the commitments it had made in its Strategic Plan to create the Unit on Memory, Truth and Justice, the Unit on the Rights of Older Persons, and the Unit on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It managed to make progress in defining the priorities for the agendas of the first two units mentioned above, on the basis of two participatory public consultations carried out in Montevideo, Uruguay, which gathered information on the situation of these themes in the region and the issues of interest that the units must tackle in its activities.

### **➤ Publication of nine Thematic Reports and reports on the situation of human rights in the countries**

- *"Indigenous women and their human rights in the Americas"*



- *“Report on measures to reduce pretrial detention in the Americas”*
  - *“Practical guide to reduce pretrial detention”*
  - *“Report on poverty and human rights”*
  - *“Toward effective protection of children: National Systems for the Protection of the Rights of the Child”*
  - *“Toward effective policies for the comprehensive protection of human rights defenders”*
  - *“Basic guidelines for the investigation of violations of the rights of human rights defenders in the Americas”*
  - *“Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Guatemala”*
  - *“Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Venezuela”*
- **Development of innovative human rights standards in the region**
- In 2017, substantial progress was made on defining standards that make it possible to enlarge the scope of protection for persons in the Americas and that, in turn, contribute to developing the interpretation of human rights as set forth in inter-American instruments. Among the innovative issues for which the IACHR developed standards, there are the following: measures that must be adopted to reduce pretrial detention, in particular in connection with drug-related criminal policy; corruption and human rights; natural disasters and climate change; forced evictions and internal displacement; right to seek and receive asylum; violence involving the use of firearms; the rights of older persons; the obligations of states with respect to investing financial resources for the benefit of children; the human rights of indigenous women; the sexual and reproductive rights of women; guaranteeing the rights of persons of African descent; and respect for and guarantee of the rights of LGBTI persons, in particular in terms of health, education, and investigating acts of violence against transgender persons.
- **Impacts on preventive measures and factors that lead to human rights violations with the issuance of 42 requests for information filed with member states**
- In the discharge of its monitoring duties, the IACHR issued 42 letters requesting information to the states of the region: 10 in connection with Article 18 of the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man and 32 in connection with Article 41 of the American Convention on Human Rights.
- **Onsite visit to Guatemala**
- The IACHR made an onsite visit to Guatemala on July 31 to August 4, 2017, for the purpose of observing, in the field, the human rights situation in the country. To that end, the Inter-American Commission held meetings with government authorities from the state’s three branches of government, with representatives and organizations of civil society, human rights defenders, indigenous authorities, autonomous bodies, international organizations, academics and journalists. It also gathered testimonies from the victims of human rights violations and their next of kin. When concluding the onsite visit, the IACHR held a press conference where it reported its preliminary observations on the visit, appearing in the attachment to Press Release



No. 114/17. Finally, as a result of its onsite visit to Guatemala, the IACHR approved the report on the situation of human rights in the country.

➤ **Six working visits to various countries of the region**

- The working visits to **Peru** were aimed at examining the Peruvian State's main progress and challenges with respect to reducing pretrial detention (February 23 and 24, 2017), as well as gathering information on the communities affected by the oil spills from the pipeline in **Peru's Amazon region** (on July 8 and 9, 2017).
- As for the working visit to **Guatemala** on March 30 and 31, 2017, it was aimed at monitoring implementation of Precautionary Measure No. 958/16 granted on March 12, 2017 to protect the life and personal integrity of the children and adolescents who were living in the Virgen de la Asunción Shelter at the time of the fire that occurred on March 8, including those who ended up with various injuries as a result of the fire and those who were moved from this shelter to other places.
- The working visit to **Brazil** was made at the invitation of the State of Brazil to attend the thematic hearing on "Situation of human rights of juvenile offenders in Brazil." The visit took place on November 13 to 17, 2017 for the main purpose of monitoring the functioning of the National Socio-educational Service System (SINASE) for adolescents who have to deal with criminal law, as well as the conditions of deprivation of liberty of these adolescents.
- The focus of the working visit to **El Salvador** on November 20 to 22, 2017 was "violence and discrimination against girls and women" in the framework of the project "Eliminating violence and discrimination against women and girls in Latin America and the Caribbean."
- Finally, the visit to the **Dominican Republic** took place on November 23 and 24, 2017 as a result of an invitation extended by the Dominican State to monitor the human rights situation and the recommendations made by the IACHR to the country.

➤ **125 hearings on monitoring and new human rights situations or to follow up on IACHR recommendations**

- The IACHR substantially expanded coverage of public hearings, with public hearings increasing from 102 in 2016 to **130 in 2017**. Of these hearings, 125 have to do with monitoring and new human rights situations or to follow up on IACHR recommendations.

➤ **222 press releases issued by the IACHR, 161 of them about monitoring the human rights situation in the region, with respect to the countries and thematic priorities of the IACHR**

- Over the past few years, using the mechanism of press releases, the IACHR has managed to expand its positioning for the benefit of human rights in the region. In 2017, out of the 22 press releases issued by the IACHR, 161 had to do with monitoring the human rights situation in the region, with respect to countries and thematic priorities of the IACHR. It is also important to stress that, in 2017, these press releases have made progress with respect to the IACHR's positions on important issues in the region, such as the reproductive rights of women and girls, abortion, the rights of LGBTI persons, racial discrimination, hate speech, the impacts of climate



change, among others. Included among these, there were 20 press releases issued jointly with the United Nations and with other regional and international organizations.

## **P6: Special Rapporteurships Program**

### **The IACHR Special Rapporteurship for Freedom of Expression**

#### **➤ Renewal of the Special Rapporteur's term of office**

When Edison Lanza's three-year term of office as the IACHR Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression came to an end in October 2017, the Inter-American Commission unanimously decided to renew his mandate for an additional three-year period, pursuant to Article 15 of its Rules of Procedure and based on approval of the objectives achieved by the Special Rapporteurship under his leadership.

#### **➤ Review and updating of the thematic agenda for the mandate's next period**

In 2017, the Special Rapporteurship for Freedom of Expression celebrated its twentieth anniversary with various initiatives. On November 2 and 3, it brought together 30 experts in Bogotá, Colombia, to discuss the agenda on freedom of expression in the face of the Hemisphere's current democratic challenges. On this occasion, a session open to the public was held at the University of the Andes, where the Commissioner Luis Vargas participated as the IACHR's representative. The following day, a workshop was held with specialized civil society organizations, experts, and academics aimed at receiving inputs to draw up a renewed thematic agenda to develop the Freedom of Expression Program in the framework of the IACHR's Strategic Plan. In April, the OAS Committee on Juridical and Political Affairs (CAJP) held a meeting at which the states highlighted the role and relevance of the Special Rapporteurship for the promotion of fundamental freedoms and democracy building.

#### **➤ Consolidation of inter-American standards for freedom of expression**

In 2017, the Special Rapporteurship consolidated the inter-American standards for the safety of journalists, highlighting current problems with the IACHR's approval and subsequent publication of the report "Silenced Zones: Highly Dangerous Areas for the Exercise of Freedom of Expression," which provides a local perspective of the problems affecting communicators. Likewise, the IACHR approved a second thematic report, which was published by the Rapporteurship, on the Internet's impact on exercising freedom of expression and human rights in the Americas (Standards for a Free, Open, and Inclusive Internet).

#### **➤ Effective monitoring of the situation of freedom of expression**

The Special Rapporteurship also reached important objectives in the framework of monitoring the gravest situations on the continent. Thus it participated in IACHR's onsite visit to Guatemala and drafted the respective chapter. Along the same line, the Special Rapporteur's official mission to Mexico with David Kaye, the United



Nations Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, is noteworthy; the visit was widely commended by the state and civil society organizations; the indispensable information for drafting a country-specific report on the situation of the freedom of expression in Mexico was received; and recommendations were made to tackle the crisis of violence against journalists and the matter of impunity, as well as to address other substantive issues for Mexican democracy. The Special Rapporteurship also contributed, with the Executive Secretariat, to drafting the sections on freedom of expression and social protest for the report on democratic institutionalism, rule of law, and human rights in Venezuela.

➤ **Implementation of expert advisory services and joint work with the United Nations and the OAS**

As part of the expertise offered by the Rapporteurship to bodies of the Organization of American States and its member states, the Rapporteurship processed many consultations in the framework of the adoption of Resolution 2908 by the OAS General Assembly (human rights pillar), in one of whose chapters the member states condemned and called for an end to acts of violence against journalists and urged the states to implement comprehensive measures for the prevention, protection, and investigation of crimes against communicators targeted because of their work. It also adopted the Joint Declaration on Freedom of Expression and “Fake News,” Disinformation and Propaganda, along with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Freedom of Opinion and Expression, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Representative on Freedom of the Media, and the Rapporteur of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights.

➤ **Promoting strategic petitions and cases**

In the framework of the framework for petitions and cases, the IACHR issued merits reports in the cases of Alfredo Lagos del Campo (Peru), Rocío San Miguel Sosa et al. (Venezuela), Vladimir Herzog (Brazil), Nelson Carvajal Carvajal and Family (Colombia), Tulio Alvarez (Venezuela), and Vladimiro Roca Antúnez et al. (Cuba) where it was established that Article 13 and other rights protected by the American Convention had been violated. The Special Rapporteurship’s team drafted the respective merits reports, which were then submitted to IACHR’s approval. The merits report for Cuba shall be submitted to the IACHR for its final publication in this period of sessions. The other cases were already submitted to the Inter-American Court and the Rapporteurship also participates in the litigation strategy being developed for this body. Likewise, the Rapporteurship provided IACHR’s contributions to the Advisory Opinion on the Environment and Human Rights and intervened in the hearing to monitor the judgment issued by the Inter-American Court in the case of *Fontevecchia D’amico et al. v. Argentina*. Thus, the IACHR and its Special Rapporteurship promoted the adoption of the relevant jurisprudence to protect the exercise of civil and political rights by the exercise of the right to freedom of expression and called upon the Court’s judges to make progress in identifying the specific obligations of the states in connection with investigating with due diligence the premeditated attacks of violence against journalists and other new issues.

➤ **Judicial operators trained in inter-American standards of freedom of expression**

In compliance with its projects in connection with the training of judicial operators on the subject of inter-American freedom of expression standards, in 2017, the Special Rapporteurship, in partnership with UNESCO, was able to train 2,000 judges of the region in enforcing the inter-American freedom of expression standards, using an online course housed in the University of Texas (Austin), which benefits from the participation of



Rapporteurs and former Rapporteurs for Freedom of Expression and the tutorial of a team of experts. This course was able to reach 5,000 judges of the Americas during the current mandate. Various onsite courses were developed by the team of the Special Rapporteurship aimed at the judicial schools of the Americas Center.

## **Special Rapporteurship on Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights (ES CER)**

### **➤ Launch of the Special Rapporteurship on ESCER**

In 2017, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights decided to put into operation the Special Rapporteurship on ESCER and issued the invitation to participate in a competitive public selection process for the position of Rapporteur on Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights (ESCER). The process was broad, open, transparent, and participatory, with a total of 92 persons registering as applicants for the position, which was issued to the public on February 16, 2017. After a period of public consultation with civil society and states regarding the finalists and after the four finalists had been interviewed, the Commission chose Soledad García Muñoz for the position of Special Rapporteur. On Monday, August 28, 2017, the Special Rapporteur on Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights (ESCER), Soledad García Muñoz, came into office at the headquarters of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) for a three-year mandate and started her activities as the Rapporteur.

### **➤ Promotion of ESCE rights**

The Special Rapporteur carried out important promotional and academic activities with various counterparts in various countries of the region (Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Mexico, Uruguay, and the United States). There has also been a fruitful agenda of meetings and contacts with states, public institutions, the academic sector, rights holders, civil society, other OAS bodies, intergovernmental bodies, and donors.

### **➤ Monitoring of the situation of ESCE rights**

Since the start of its mandate, the Special Rapporteurship on ESCER has been carrying out monitoring activities in close coordination with the teams of the IACHR Executive Secretariat, receiving and looking for information on the situation of ESCE rights in the region. In the development of these activities, it has contributed to drafting the annual report by preparing the first annual report of the Special Rapporteurship on ESCER. It has also participated actively in launching the report on poverty and drafting the ESCE rights chapter for the report on Venezuela, as well as joint press releases with other IACHR Thematic Rapporteurships: on natural disasters with the Rapporteurship on the Rights of Migrants; on sexual and reproductive rights with the Rapporteurships on the Rights of Women and Children; on the International Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDoR) and on Paraguay's banning education promoting "gender ideology" with the Rapporteurships on the Rights of Women, Children, and LGBTI Persons. The Rapporteurship has also participated in the RIRCUs regarding the United States, Honduras, and Venezuela.

### **➤ Specialized contributions and opinions in the processing of petitions and cases**

The Rapporteurship has started to provide its specialized contributions and is in the process of assessing an ESCE rights litigation to identify those related to the strategic agenda for the strengthening and broadening of IACHR standards in the matter. Likewise, the Rapporteur has met with the petitioners and representatives visiting the IACHR or during the periods of sessions and has given her inputs during the registry process, the review of requests for precautionary measures, and admissibility reports for petitions and cases being processed in the IACHR.

➤ **Start of the thematic study on business and human rights**

This is a project funded by Spanish cooperation. In 2017, the team of the Rapporteurship started to gather information to draw up the report and establish contact with key stakeholders. The Special Rapporteurship on ESCER participated directly in the Third Regional Consultation for Latin America and the Caribbean on Business and Human Rights organized by the Office for South America of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Santiago de Chile. It also organized two events, one with civil society and the other with states, in order to gather relevant information to prepare the report.

➤ **Hiring of first attorney to support the Special Rapporteurship on ESCER**

During the first months of its mandate, the Special Rapporteurship on ESCER has finalized the process of hiring the Rapporteurship's first attorney (Luis Buob Concha), who is supporting the drafting of the first Thematic Report on Business and Human Rights.

➤ **Presentation and Open Consultation of the Special Rapporteurship on ESCER in the framework of the First Inter-American Forum of the IAHR to draft the agenda for its first period in office**

On December 5, 2017, the Special Rapporteurship on Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights (ESCER) held an open consultation attended by representatives of the Working Group of the Protocol of San Salvador (WGPPS), as well as various states, civil society organizations, and independent experts of the academic sector. The consultation focused on the process of drawing up a working roadmap for the period of its first term of office and the drafting of the first thematic report. To that end, the organization of this discussion group was aimed at the preliminary collection of inputs for the new Rapporteurship that would make it possible to respond to the themes identified in the IACHR 2017-2021 Strategic Plan and the thematic report being drafted on the subject of "business and human rights."

## **P7: Rapid and Integrated Response Coordination Unit (RIRCU)**

To exert a greater impact on emergency situations and to coordinate its various tools, the IACHR strengthened its rapid and integrated internal response mechanisms aimed at preventing possible violations of rights to protect those who might encounter risk, with the creation and definition of the Rapid and Integrated Response Coordination Unit (RIRCU).



In March, the Executive Secretariat activated, for the first time, its Rapid and Integrated Response Coordination Unit (RIRCU). The RIRCU was activated in six situations that required the drafting of a rapid strategy and response for Chile, United States, Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay, and Venezuela.

- **Chile:** The RIRCU-Chile was convened to respond to the IACHR's request, as proposed in the framework of a discussion held during the onsite visit to Guatemala, to take the decision to end precautionary measures MC 341/16 and MC 166/17 and to propose a strategy with other lines of action to address the situation of children and adolescents in the care and protection of the National Juvenile Service (Servicio Nacional de Menores—SENAME) in Chile. As a result of the RIRCU, notification was transmitted that the precautionary measures were being lifted, and requests were transmitted to the state for information.
- **Guatemala:** The RIRCU was aimed at addressing the situation of Commissioner Ivan Velázquez, the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), other members of the CICIG, judges of the Constitutional Court, and six human rights defenders, in the framework of the delicate situation stemming from investigations of reports of corruption allegedly compromising the state's top authorities. The work conducted in the context of the Unit led to the publication of a press release, the priority review of the request for the precautionary measure, and reinforcement of monitoring for the country.
- **Honduras:** The post-election crisis led to calling upon the RIRCU. On the basis of the Unit's proposals, the Commission requested the state to grant an emergency visit; a press release on the situation of violence was issued; a videoconference with civil society organizations was held to gather information on the crisis, in coordination with international cooperation agencies; the drafting of a resolution was promoted; and requests for extending the current precautionary measures were processed.
- **Paraguay:** In the context of the violence in March and April regarding the proposals to amend the Constitution for the purpose of permitting the reelection of the President and governors, the RIRCU coordinated the preparation of a press release on the facts and sent an Article 41 letter on violence and repression in the framework of the protests.
- **United States:** This RIRCU was called upon as a result of IACHR's grave concern over the situation of discrimination because of migrant, racial, and gender identity status; hate speech and other actions that constrain the free exercise of freedom of expression; and regressive policies in terms of ESCE rights. On the basis of the RIRCU, priorities were defined for monitoring and press releases; the situation of petitions, cases, and precautionary measures linked to the issues of concern started being reviewed; ex officio hearings were held; ties with civil society and the local press started being strengthened; among others. The RIRCU shall continue to be in force in 2018.
- **Venezuela:** The RIRCU of Venezuela was activated on various occasions since March up to the present and has made it possible to draw up strategy and rapid response to the country's critical situation, with constant monitoring of the situation. Through RIRCU-Venezuela, the IACHR was presented with various proposals and paths of action, including the drafting of 20 press releases, the issuance of Article 18 letters, the identification of requests for precautionary measures for their rapid evaluation and the request for consent to visit the country; and suggestions were made to convene hearings ex officio. Likewise, on the basis of the RIRCU, drafting a Country Report was proposed, and it shall be launched in 2018. Furthermore, for the purpose of giving greater visibility to the actions taken by the IACHR, it was proposed that a letter would be drafted and addressed to the Permanent Council on all the actions taken regarding Venezuela's institutional crisis.





The results for 2017 have shown RIRCU's relevance to facilitate internal coordination and the timely use of IACHR's functions and mechanisms. Facilitation of the exchange of information among the Executive Secretariat's sections and the drafting of common proposals under the various institutional functions were essential for the Commission's timely and consistent performance in situations of serious concern throughout the year. For 2018, the RIRCU must be an important instrument to prepare a coordinated strategy for scheduled onsite visits.

## **P8: Integrated Information Analysis and Management Platform (IIAMP)**

In 2017, the IACHR started designing the IIAMP project. In addition, other tools were examined, such as the Americas Digital Information System of the OAS Secretariat for Political Affairs, which could achieve part of the objectives that are expected to be met with the IIAMP. In 2018, one major challenge shall be raising additional funds to finance the Platform's implementation.



# SO3

**To promote democracy, human dignity, equality, justice, and fundamental freedoms based on an active contribution to the strengthening of State institutions and public policies with a human rights approach in accordance with inter-American norms and standards and to the development of the capacities of social and academic organizations and networks to act in defense of human rights**

## Results achieved

- Program for the training and promotion of human rights thinking and culture and inter-American human rights standards consolidated in the IAHRs.
- In 2017, the IACHR jointly held with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights their First Forum of the Inter-American Human Rights System in Washington, D.C., attended by 507 persons at 24 parallel events, for the purpose of promoting and disseminating a culture of respect for human rights in the region, on the basis of a review of current issues of interest to the region.
- Advisory services and technical cooperation to Central America for institutional and public policymaking capacity building with a strengthened human rights approach.
- Implementation and expansion of collaboration and social participation mechanisms with the academic sector and civil society.

The IACHR has managed to consolidate its activities in training, promotion, and campaigns to promote human rights thinking and culture in the region, fostering greater understanding about the IACHR's mandate and inter-American human rights standards among persons using the IAHRs.

In 2017, the Commission has strengthened collaboration with Central America for the Project on Democracy and Human Rights in the Northern Triangle.

The principal innovation of the new administrative structure regarding strategic objective 3 is the establishment of a Specialized Advisory Service for the Caribbean to ensure implementation of the Program of Attention and Collaboration with the Caribbean and Central America. In addition, the subject of technical cooperation was removed from the advisory services for inter-agency relations, and it was merged into the Public Policy Section.



That measure must address the challenge of creating more technical cooperation capacity in human rights as part of the progress in public policymaking.

Concerning collaboration with the academic sector and civil society, the channels for dialogue and opportunities for social participation were expanded to defend human rights in the region.

In that respect, all programs made progress, and this makes it possible to state that implementation of this strategic objective has been satisfactory.

## **P9: Expanded Program for Training and Promotion of Thought and Culture on Human Rights**

### **➤ Forum of the Inter-American Human Rights System**

In 2017, the IACHR held, jointly with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, its First Forum of the Inter-American Human Rights System in Washington, D.C., on December 4 and 5. The Forum was attended by 507 persons at its 24 parallel events; its aim was to promote and disseminate a culture of respect for human rights in the region, based on a review of current issues of interest for the region. This event was attended by civil servants and representatives of states, civil society, international organizations, social and trade union movements, and the general public.

### **➤ Promotion and training on the IAHRs**

IAHRs promotion and training activities in the Hemisphere were strengthened. It is noteworthy that 454 persons received training in various courses and workshops held or sponsored by the IACHR. Among said activities, the following can be mentioned: the “Héctor Fix Zamudio” Training Certification carried out in collaboration with the Legal Research Institute of UNAM, the Course on the IAHRs for civil society, the Course on Strategic Litigation in the IAHRs, and the Fifth International Specialized Course on Human Rights.

In the exercise of their duties, in 2017, IACHR Rapporteurships and thematic units also carried out a total of 146 promotional activities to disseminate IAHRs standards and build up the capacities for action of civil servants and organizations and networks of social and academic stakeholders in defending human rights. Many of these activities were undertaken with other stakeholders, consolidating the collaboration with civil society organizations, regional and international institutions, and states. See Report on the Promotional Activities of the Rapporteurships.

### **➤ Campaigns for disseminating standards**

In 2017, the IACHR undertook campaigns to disseminate inter-American human rights standards drawn up in its thematic reports for the purpose of promoting greater understanding in civil society, social stakeholder networks, and member states about their scope and, when relevant, for their application and incorporation, with a human rights-based approach, in decisions, regulatory frameworks, and public policies. In that respect, the following awareness-raising and prevention campaigns for the dissemination of thematic reports have reached social media:



- Report on Freedom of Expression in Chile: total outreach, 172,000
- Report on Indigenous Women: total outreach, 1.9 million
- Report on Poverty: total outreach, 1.2 million
- Report on Pretrial Detention: total outreach, 2.2 million

The IACHR also adhered to the regional initiative and campaign entitled “Living with dignity and rights at all ages” of the Permanent Commission on Older Persons of the MERCOSUR Meeting of High-Level Human Rights Authorities (RAADH). This initiative is aimed at contributing to and encouraging the signing and ratification of the Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons, as well as raising awareness about the importance of viewing older persons as the subjects of rights and comprehensive care, with autonomy and independence. The campaign was organized by the MERCOSUR Institute of Public Policies on Human Rights (IPPDH) and launched on October 24 in Brasilia and Montevideo.

Furthermore, the IACHR’s Promotion and Training Section was strengthened, with workflows and roles identified and processed together with the Planning Section and the staff of the Section established. Training modules and agenda forms were drawn up.

## **P10: Program for Attention and Collaboration with Central America and the Caribbean**

### ➤ **Project on Democracy and Human Rights in the Northern Triangle**

Jointly implemented with the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF) with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the project has drawn up a plan of promotional activities based on three pillars: i) training of Human Rights Ombudspersons and civil servants, ii) training for civil society organizations that conduct litigation activities, and iii) promotion of inter-American standards for human mobility.

During the project’s first year of implementation, 219 persons were trained, among whom civil servants of the state, civil society representatives, and ombudspersons.

In the framework of the above-mentioned project, an assessment is being carried out on internal displacement in the countries of the Northern Triangle and Nicaragua. In that respect, working meetings have been held with social organizations; a regional consultation with civil society, international organizations, study centers, and civil servants is being organized; and a survey and review of related regulatory and case law matters are being conducted. In that respect, cooperation is being carried out with Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua on forced internal displacement, for the purpose of highlighting the issue of internal displacement and providing tools for public policymaking on the subject.

### ➤ **Advisory Service for Caribbean Affairs**

The IACHR established the Advisory Service for Caribbean Affairs in the Office of Specialized Advisors, in the framework of its internal restructuring for the purpose of making further progress in technical cooperation and



collaboration actions with the countries in that region. In that regard, the IACHR was able to draft the Collaboration Plan with the Caribbean.

The IACHR also trained the civil servants of the Caribbean missions accredited with the OAS at the Sixth Annual Seminar: The Caribbean and the Inter-American Human Rights System, a course delivered with George Washington University Law School on November 8 and 9, 2017 in Washington, D.C. In addition, there were two videoconferences on the Inter-American Human Rights System for law students of the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, Barbados, on October 31 and November 2, 2017. A special dialogue session was also held with the Caribbean countries at the First IAHR Forum.

## **P11: Technical Cooperation Program on Institutional and Public Policies with a Human Rights Approach**

### **➤ Structuring of the Technical Cooperation and Public Policy on Human Rights Section**

It is important to highlight the importance of the consolidation of the IACHR's Technical Cooperation and Public Policy Section in 2017 and the establishment of its working team. The Section's duties were set forth, as well as its workflows defined, with emphasis on cooperation with states in human rights and, in particular, with respect to their national human rights plans.

In the framework of this objective, progress has been made in designing a technical assistance proposal for the drafting of public policies on human mobility. The proposal takes into account the IACHR's cumulative work in human mobility and its technical assistance role performed through the various mechanisms provided by the System. A work structure was designed and it can be replicated on the basis of other themes and can be adjusted on the basis of various contexts, thus strengthening the work of the IACHR's Technical Cooperation and Public Policy Section.

In 2017, it is also possible to highlight some other results in terms of technical cooperation:

- Three technical cooperation requests made by the States were received and taken into consideration.
- First version of the document on public policies with a human rights approach was developed.
- Activities and deliverables of the Project for the Northern Triangle were satisfactorily implemented.
- The IACHR's role in examining and monitoring National Human Rights Plans was strengthened.

### **➤ Advisory services in human rights to member states**

One of the IACHR's duties is to provide advisory services in human rights to states; these services are offered, among others, through the IACHR's ties with the political bodies of the OAS: the General Assembly (GA) and the Permanent Council (PC) and its Committees, in particular the Committee on Juridical and Political Affairs (CAJP) and the Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Affairs (CAAP). In that respect, consultations with member states on the Strategic Plan were organized; meetings of the IACHR's Chair and Executive Secretary with the missions and delegations were organized; presentations were made to the CAJP and the Permanent Council on issues such as business and business, gender, the human rights situation in Venezuela, among others; and debates on the OAS Budget were monitored in the CAAP, the Working Group on the Strategic Vision of OAS, and the Regular and Special General Assemblies, at which the states approved progressively increasing twofold the allocation to the bodies of the Inter-American Human Rights System up to the year 2020.



## **P12: Program on Social Participation and Contribution to Capacity Building for Actions by Social and Academic Organizations and Networks in Defense of Human Rights**

### **➤ Periodic channels of dialogue with civil society and the academic sector**

On May 3, the Executive Secretariat submitted the Strategic Plan to a coalition of NGOs in order to agree upon a work plan that could be carried out jointly. In follow-up to the above, in October, the entire petitions and cases team met with the coalition to monitor the Plan's implementation.

The Commission carried out various activities in coordination with civil society. For example, during each period of sessions, the IACHR held a meeting with inter-American civil society organizations, in addition to dozens of bilateral meetings. Furthermore, in the framework of the 165 period of sessions, two courses were provided to civil society and defenders: one course together with American University, RFK, and others, and one workshop on defenders of the land and environment which benefited from the attendance of a former Commissioner of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and civil society organizations of the Americas, Africa, and Asia, along with the International Land Coalition (ILC). On March 27 and 28, it also conducted a workshop for 20 indigenous leaders who are members of the Pan-Amazon Ecclesial Network (REPAM).

### **➤ Expansion of the social participation and collaboration channels with civil society and the academic sector**

In 2017, the mechanisms for social collaboration and participation with the academic sector and civil society were enlarged. The IACHR held nine regional consultations to define its priorities: four of them for the participatory preparation of its 2017-2021 Strategic Plan; two on the priorities for the new thematic units created in the framework of the Plan (Unit on Memory, Truth and Justice; and Unit on the Rights of Older Persons); one public consultation on the IACHR and United Nations Human Rights Office (OHCHR) Joint Action Mechanism to Contribute to the Protection of Human Rights Defenders; one consultation on the strategic agenda of the Special Rapporteurship on Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights (ESCER) at the IAHR Forum; and one consultation questionnaire for the drafting of the "Report on the progress and the constructive efforts regarding the respect and the guarantee of the rights of LGBTI persons in the Americas."

### **➤ Specialized academic network in the Inter-American System: agreements with academic research centers on the IAHR**

In 2017, the IACHR worked on establishing closer ties with 57 universities of the Hemisphere and signed cooperation agreements with five of them.

### **➤ Associate Staff Program in the IACHR**

One of the Secretariat's priorities has been negotiating the institutional agreements that make it possible for the IACHR to receive fellowship beneficiaries or associate staff from various institutions, universities, or entities. At the beginning of 2017, the IACHR approved Guidelines on Associate Staff in the IACHR (or guest professionals) to



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build up the presence of professionals from state institutions, universities, and other bodies of the Commission. It also approved a model institutional agreement, on the basis of which it has given priority to entering into institutional agreements to send professionals to the IACHR.

In 2017, one person was received as an associate staff and priority has also been given to receiving young fellowship beneficiaries from universities and institutions into the IACHR. In 2017, four fellowship beneficiaries were received.

In 2017, 11 mutual collaboration agreements were signed with the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), the Ibero-American University of San Ignacio de Loyola, the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsperson of the Union of Brazil, the National Human Rights Institute of Chile, the Office of Public Criminal Defense Attorneys of Chile, the Supreme Court of Mendoza, the Office of the Defense Attorney General of Buenos Aires, the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsperson of Oaxaca, the Diego Portales University, the University of Texas, and the University of Colorado.



# SO4

**To promote the universalization of the Inter-American Human Rights System through coordinated initiatives with the Inter-American Court, and to cooperate with other international, regional, and sub-regional human rights agencies and mechanisms.**

## Results achieved

- The IACHR expanded its collaboration with United Nations agencies, holding exchange meetings, publishing joint communiqués, and inviting experts to collaborate in its hearings.
- Collaboration and exchange activities were held with the African Human Rights System.
- With the United Nations Human Rights Office (OHCHR), the Joint Action Mechanism to Contribute to the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in the Americas was drawn up and launched.
- Coordination between the Inter-American Court and the Commission was expanded, on the basis of the work carried out by the Working Group. Among the principal results, there is the design of a common strategy for funding the Inter-American Human Rights System, which culminated in increasing twofold the budget from the Regular Fund for both institutions between 2018 and 2020.

The IACHR intensified its collaboration and exchange activities to promote human rights and the universalization of the IAHRs, with three major partners: the Inter-American Court, the United Nations human rights agencies, and the African Commission. Important achievements were made in terms of coming closer to the Universal System and coordinated action with the Court, which points to satisfactory achievement of the Strategic Objective in 2017. There still are challenges for coming years of the plan's implementation regarding collaboration with subregional institutions and other regional bodies, as well as with respect to the implementation of coordinated strategies aimed at universalizing the system.

## **P13: Cooperation and Coordination Program with the Universal Human Rights System and other international agencies**

### ➤ **Collaboration with the United Nations**

The IACHR made progress in its efforts to coordinate and cooperate in 2017 with the Universal Human Rights System, giving priority to identifying common points of interest and convergence. Coordination focal points were designated in all areas of the United Nations and close communication was kept with the national and





regional offices of the UN High Commissioner in the Americas. In 2017, there were at least 18 activities carried out jointly, including collaboration for the onsite visit to Guatemala and the joint visit of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Speech and the United Nations Rapporteur. There were 20 press releases jointly issued with United Nations agencies, such as the United Nations Human Rights Office (OHCHR) (headquarters and regional representatives); the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; and the special rapporteurs. The issues addressed mainly involved: human rights defenders, freedom of expression, refugees, indigenous peoples, and women. The participation of United Nations experts in IACHR activities was promoted, inaugurating as of the 164 period of sessions the practice of inviting them to attend the hearings, which was repeated for the 165 period of sessions. In 2017, the IACHR collaborated with the Universal System by sending its contributions to the Universal Periodic Review for Ecuador, Guatemala, Cuba, Canada, and Colombia. Finally, a joint impact strategy on corruption in human rights is being drafted with the United Nations OHCHR, on the basis of a first meeting of experts held in December.

## **P14: Program of Coordination and Complementarity with Regional Systems and Sub-Regional Mechanisms in the Area of Human Rights**

### **➤ Collaboration with the African Human Rights System**

The IACHR gave a special working commission to the Press Officer to provide onsite advisory services to the African Commission and Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, as part of an African System capacity building project by the European Union. A visit made in 2016 by the Secretariat of the African Commission was the background to this advisory service; at that time three potential advisory services to be provided by the IACHR were identified: press, fund-raising, and a joint South-South case law browser. The following joint activities were carried out as well:

- Presentation of reports on extractive industries at the Permanent Forum on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, jointly with the African Commission, in New York, on May 2, 2017.
- Presentation of reports on extractive industries, jointly with the African Commission, at a Session of the Mechanisms of Experts on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Geneva, July 11, 2017.
- Presentation of regional human rights mechanisms and reports on extractive industries of the IACHR and the African Commission at the United Nations Forum on Business and Human Rights in Geneva, November 29, 2017.

## **P15: Mechanism of Protection for Human Rights Defenders in the Americas (with the OHCHR)**

### **➤ Creation and installation of the Mechanism**

Throughout 2017, the drafting and planning stage was finalized, and, with the United Nations Human Rights Office (OHCHR), the Joint Action Mechanism to Contribute to the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in the Americas was installed. In the framework of the 165 period of sessions, the IACHR welcomed the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein. In this framework, both bodies launched the Joint Action Mechanism to Contribute to the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and agreed upon a four-year joint



work plan. To implement the Joint Mechanism, a consultant was hired to undertake the first joint study (baselines), and she was welcomed at IACHR headquarters. Preparations also started for the meeting of focal points to be held at the 167 special period of sessions in Colombia. The Joint Action Mechanism is intensifying the work of the institutions for the benefit of human rights defenders, taking advantage of their national, regional, and international capacities, taking advantage of their complementary strengths, and creating sounder ties among their staff.

## **P16: Program for the Universalization and Coordination of the IHRS with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights**

### **➤ Articulation and coordination with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights**

Outreach amongst the principal bodies of the Inter-American Human Rights System was promoted. The Court-Commission Working Group, comprised of an executive board and the Executive Secretaries of each body, met three times last year, promoting a dialogue about human rights challenges and priorities in the region and coordination in the framework of the system. In the framework of these dialogues, a plenary meeting was held on September 2, 2017. Funding is one of the important issues set forth in the Strategic Plan regarding coordination in the framework of the system. One major achievement stemming from the joint efforts made by the Court and Commission for the System's capacity building was the decision taken by the OAS General Assembly to increase twofold the budget allocated to the two bodies from the Regular Fund, ensuring in three years greater stability for the fulfillment of their mandates and duties. Another important result was holding the first Forum of the Inter-American Human Rights System, with 507 persons registered for more than 24 events, which contributed to the dialogue about the human rights challenges in the region, reflections about the System's challenges, and dissemination of standards and best practices. Finally, in the framework of the dialogues, it was possible to harmonize the calendars of the sessions for 2018 for both bodies and to plan joint activities for the year.

### **➤ Performance of the IACHR with the Inter-American Court**

As for working with the Inter-American Court, in 2017, the Commission referred 18 contentious cases and submitted four requests for provisional measures to the Court regarding Mexico, Argentina, Nicaragua, and Brazil. In 2017, a request for an Advisory Opinion from the Court was requested with respect to democracy and human rights in the context of impeachment proceedings. The request is aimed at promoting a review and interpretation, by the Inter-American Court, of the inextricable relationship between democracy and human rights, specifically in cases where there is a change in the executive branch of government under circumstances that challenge its legitimacy or the principle of the separation of powers, including impeachment proceedings against democratically elected Presidents. The Commission asked questions about the rights to due process of law, the principle of legality, political rights, and judicial protection in this kind of proceeding. Finally, the Commission appeared, in the role designated to it by the Convention, before the Court in 26 hearings and submitted 163 documents.

### **➤ Universalization of the Inter-American Human Rights System**

In 2017, the Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons came into force, ratified by Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, and Uruguay. The Inter-American Convention against Racism,



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Racial Discrimination and Related Forms of Intolerance also came into force that year, ratified by Costa Rica and Uruguay. In its plans, the IACHR has included the dissemination of these new instruments.



# SO5

**To guarantee the human resources, infrastructure, technology, and budget necessary for full implementation of the mandate and functions of the IACHR by means of results-based institutional management for efficient, effective, and measurable institutional development.**

## Results achieved

- Progress made in the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Follow-up Plan (PMSI) of the Strategic Plan.
- Ongoing implementation of the Work Environment Improvement Plan that had been collectively drafted.
- Drafting and implementing the Financial Sustainability Plan.
- Designing and implementing a more integrated and horizontal administrative structure.
- Expanding IACHR's public presence in the region's countries.
- Increasing the budget from the Regular Fund with staggered application as of the year 2018 to reach a twofold increase by the 2020.

The IACHR has taken major steps to modernize its management with necessary organizational instruments such as the strategic plan, the organizational structure, the mapping of processes, and the training of key staff in results-based management. It has also made great progress toward securing its financial sustainability, which started with the OAS Assembly's decisions to increase its budget and, in addition, with the drafting of a sustainability plan that specifies the road to take so that the IACHR can be prepared for and avoid situations as the one that occurred in 2016. The new administrative structure and the twofold rise in the budget from the Regular Fund constitute important achievements for securing IACHR's institutional stability.

Although not all programs made progress, because the achievements are structural, it is possible to assert that implementation of this strategic objective has been highly satisfactory.

## P17: Institutional Management and Development Program

### ➤ 2017-2021 Strategic Plan

It was drafted with the participation of many stakeholders and approved; it is currently being implemented. Public consultations were undertaken, four of which were regional, along with workshops, meetings, questionnaires, and interviews, among other activities, in a participatory process that benefited from the contributions of 536 persons and 343 institutions. The result of the dialogue led the Commission to identify important issues and proposals to tackle the challenges of the context for human rights. For the 2017-2021



period, the Inter-American Commission gave priority to a series of issues and population groups, of which some have already been focused on, through its Rapporteurships such as: indigenous peoples; women; migrants, refugees, stateless persons, and victims of human trafficking, and internally displaced persons; Afro-descendants; children and adolescents; human rights defenders; persons deprived of liberty; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex persons; persons with disabilities; and older persons. The Plan envisages three priority thematic areas: right to freedom of expression; economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights; and the right to memory, truth, and justice. Likewise, the Strategic Plan has six cross-cutting areas: democratic institutional framework; judicial independence and independence of the Public Prosecution Service and access to justice; institutional framework for human rights; security and violence; development and human rights; and gender equality and diversity. The Plan is developed on the basis of five strategic objectives and 21 working programs. These programs and actions associated with the strategic objectives exert impacts and transformations over the immediate, short, and medium terms, which shall contribute to fostering the effectiveness of the Inter-American Human Rights System and, therefore, better enjoyment and protection of the human rights of the population in the Americas, which is the Plan's ultimate purpose.

➤ **Approval and implementation of the organizational structure**

The Executive Secretariat's new organizational structure incorporates elements of results-based management and modernizes its functioning, providing greater horizontality and effectiveness to the institutional organizational chart, which has shifted from five departments and five hierarchical levels to a structure with two Assistant Executive Secretariats and three hierarchical levels. In addition the process meets a historical need to provide the Executive Secretariat with an institutional framework.

➤ **Collectively drafting and currently implementing the work environment plan**

A group comprised of civil servants and consultants prepared and submitted to the Executive Secretariat the Work Environment Improvement Plan. This Plan was based on recommendations and proposals made by the entire staff, and they were classified and prioritized by category. The proposal focused on the organizational structure, strategic and operational planning, the financial sustainability plan, institutional management, and human resources management. Therefore, a large part of the proposals are being implemented and, as a result, they are boosting the staff's motivation and commitment.

➤ **Expanding IACHR's public presence in the region through roaming periods of sessions**

The first year, the IACHR organized four periods of sessions outside headquarters, which is a historic milestone since the Commission's creation. These sessions took place in Argentina, Peru, Mexico, and Uruguay. The roaming sessions made it possible to ensure greater participation of local organizations and civil servants in the processes and activities that the IACHR carries out during these sessions. At these sessions, 81 hearings and 31 working meetings were held, which could not have been held had it not been for these sessions.

➤ **Training in drafting projects, results-based management, and financial resilience**

Three training workshops on financial resilience, teamwork building, leadership, and organizational culture were held. This has made it possible for teams to benefit from greater capabilities for results-based management and project management.

➤ **Accountability to donors**



Preparation and submittal of 13 mid-term and final narrative reports and 39 financial reports to donors, which made it possible to meet donor requirements. During the year, the IACHR received positive feedback in writing from at least three donors: ARCUS Foundation, Avina/Cammina, and Ireland.

➤ **Communications Strategy and Plan**

A press and communications plan was drafted, and it was included in the Action Plan of this objective. The Plan includes various actions to strengthen institutional communication and the dissemination of the IACHR's decisions. Among the actions, there is the redesigning and creation of new sections for the IACHR website, as well as other actions for more effectively disseminating IACHR decisions.

## **P18: Program of Technological Innovation Applied to Human Rights**

➤ **Definition of Systems' requirements**

Progress has been made in functionally documenting and analyzing the information, objectives, deliverables, macro-actions, and resources needed to create new automated management systems in coordination with all areas of IACHR's Executive Secretariat, for the development of the IACHR Technological Innovation Plan as envisaged in the Strategic Plan. It is estimated that the cost of these systems would amount to US\$5.5 million.

➤ **Modernization of equipment**

All the equipment that had obsolete operating systems was replaced. The IACHR has 156 computers with current operating systems and the elements needed it to carry out its work effectively.

➤ **Update and upgrade of existing tools**

After the initial assessment, updates and changes were made to the documents management system (DMS), the petitions and cases management system (PCMS), the digital information storage units (G drive, I drive, and Public Folder), and institutional email accounts for sending information to IACHR users. Although they are not structural, these updates and upgrades are solving functional problems that the areas are encountering.

## **P19: Financial Sustainability Plan**

➤ **Increase in the Regular Fund**

The OAS General Assembly approved a gradual 33% increase per year as of 2018, which means that the regular budget granted by the OAS will have grown twofold by the end of three years. This decision transmitted a clear signal regarding the Organization's commitment to human rights and the objective of providing an adequate budget for the Commission to adequately fulfill the mandate assigned to it by the states.

➤ **Implementation of the Fund-Raising Committee**

A group was established with the initial participation of 19 persons from various areas of the IACHR. The Committee, through its members, has drafted the Financial Sustainability Plan.

➤ **Financial Sustainability Plan with prospects for the diversification of sources**

The Fund-Raising Committee worked on the assessment of the progress made and challenges tackled in terms of fund raising, on the basis of which the Financial Sustainability Plan was drawn up; it was then validated and approved by the Executive Secretary of the IACHR. The Plan contains the guiding principles and policy for fund-raising; it also contains objectives and four strategic results, with the detail of the actions that shall be undertaken, those responsible, the timetable to achieve them, and the indicators to measure them. The objectives and actions involve various areas of organizational management, because fund-raising entails organizational culture, communicational strategy, teamwork leadership and effectiveness, and financial planning actions as such. These actions refer to the actions that are scheduled for implementation up to 2020.

## **P20: Center for Attention to Users of the System**

The Center for Attention to Users of the System has been established in the IACHR's organizational structure and attached to the Office of Management, Planning and Finance. It has not as yet been implemented, but it is expected that the staff required shall be assigned in 2018 as staff posts will be opened, in addition to the specific funds that are secured for this purpose.



# P21

## Special Program to Monitor IACHR Recommendations

### Results achieved

- Consolidation of the Monitoring Mechanism with the “Recommendations Monitoring Section” and with the steps taken to implement the Inter-American System for Monitoring IACHR Recommendations (Inter-American SIMORE).
- Consolidation of the Mechanism for Monitoring the Ayotzinapa Case with three official visits made to Mexico in 2017.
- Establishment of the Working Group for Monitoring the Implementation of Human Rights Policies in the Dominican Republic.

#### ➤ Recommendations Monitoring Section

The new section was established in the framework of the IACHR’s restructuring formally mandated on July 26 by Executive Order No. 17/06 of the OAS Secretary General. According to the new structure, the area is attached to the Assistant Executive Secretariat for Monitoring, Promotion, and Technical Cooperation on Human Rights and must “coordinate monitoring the recommendations made the IACHR on the basis of its various instruments and tools” (Annex I, D, 7).

#### ➤ Inter-American SIMORE

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed with Paraguay for the exchange of experiences and mutual technical cooperation for the development of joint projects and activities in human rights and support for the establishment of the Inter-American System for Monitoring IACHR Recommendations (Inter-American SIMORE) and disseminated by a specific press release.

#### ➤ Preparation of the assessment of the monitoring process

The drafting of the Plan of Action of Program 21 was finalized. Implementation of its first activity, aimed at drafting a “Document of assessment of the process of monitoring recommendations issued by the IACHR in its various mechanisms, also started.”

#### ➤ Mechanism for Monitoring the Ayotzinapa Case

Regarding the establishment and consolidation of the Mechanism for the Monitoring of the Ayotzinapa Case (MESA), in 2017 the case continues to be alive because of the Mechanism, its visits, and official press releases. Since the installation of the Special Mechanism, the IACHR has been doing the monitoring by means of letters, working meetings with the parties, public hearings during its periods of sessions, questionnaires with the transmittal of information among the parties, working and official visits. After every official visit, which includes the participation of the country-specific rapporteur in charge of coordinating the MESA, the Commission holds press conferences and publishes a press release specifying the working agenda that was carried out, reiterating





the recommendations, recognizing the efforts made, tackling priority issues, and calling for those items that require further progress to continue being the focus of the investigation, the search for the missing persons, the comprehensive care given to victims and next of kin, and the structural measures of non-repetition.

In 2017, three official visits were made to Mexico and the results of the work were disseminated in press conferences and releases.

As a result of the work, in connection with the investigation, the Mexican State assigned an exclusive team of more than 90 persons; instructions were given to municipal and federal police forces by the Office of the Attorney General of the Republic; and progress was made in investigating the missing cell phones. At present, there is certainty that the cell phones and chips of the students were used after the night of September 26 and 27, 2014, a fact which, along with other elements of evidence, confirms the need to dismiss the initial version that indicated that the phones had been burned in the garbage dump of Cocula.

As for the search, it was possible to implement, in the field, the search for the students based on the use of LIDAR technology. Regarding services to victims, the authorities were presented with an Assessment of Psychosocial Impacts stemming from the Ayotzinapa Case that was drafted by FUNDAR, and effective measures were undertaken to transfer Aldo Gutiérrez to his home in Ayutla de los Libres, Guerrero, and surgery was performed on the jawbone of Edgar Vargas, who started attending school again. As for structural measures, the General Law to prevent, investigate, and punish torture and other cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatments or sentences and the General Law on the forced disappearance of persons were enacted.

For its last visit in 2017, after complying with the work plan submitted in November 2016, the members of the Mechanism met with representatives of the State, the next of kin of the missing students, and their representatives to evaluate monitoring of the Mechanism in 2018. In that respect, the Mexican State expressed its commitment to endorse the IACHR's monitoring of the precautionary measures throughout the year 2018. At the IACHR's first period of sessions in 2018, the parties shall review and, if appropriate, shall agree to schedule new working visits and meetings of the Special Monitoring Mechanism.

➤ **Establishment of the Working Group to Monitor Human Rights Policies in the Dominican Republic**

The Commission has monitor the measures adopted by the Dominican Republic to comply with the recommendations made in the 2015 Report on "The Human Rights Situation in the Dominican Republic," as well as in "Chapter IV" of its 2016 Annual Report.

In view of the interest and willingness expressed by the Dominican State, through its various authorities, along with the Inter-American Commission, it was decided to continue working through a Working Group on the Implementation of Human Rights Policies in the Dominican Republic which shall be held in 2018.

The achievements that were reached are substantive and make it possible to assert that the implementation of this special program has been highly satisfactory.



## Conclusions

The progress achieved as depicted in the present report make it possible to assert that, for each strategic objective, structural progress and other advancements that will be leaving their imprint on IACHR's history were achieved.

In SO1, the reduction in petitions pending an initial review and the approval of 120 admissibility reports are noteworthy; these are landmark figures that highlight the impact on reducing delays. Another important achievement is implementation of the Processing Unit and the many measures aimed at expediting the processing of petitions and cases. These first few months, the groundwork, methodologies, and protocols needed for IACHR to progressively show greater advancement in strengthening the system of petitions and cases have been laid. With the adoption of measures aimed at reducing procedural delays, the victims of human rights violations shall have faster access to inter-American justice, which means that the IACHR will be able to reach the objective of contributing to the development of a more effective and accessible inter-American justice for the Hemisphere's population.

In SO2, with the public selection of the first Special Rapporteur, the launch of the Special Rapporteurship on Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights (ESCER) is of the utmost historical importance. Other very important achievements are the establishment of the Unit on Memory, Truth and Justice, the Unit on the Rights of Older Persons, and the Unit on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The creation of these Rapporteurships and Units shall make it possible for these thematic areas, which were prioritized in the Strategic Plan, to be included in the processes of monitoring and drafting reports on the human rights situation. Furthermore, implementation of the RIRCU as mechanisms for the immediate and timely response to human rights violations is also very important. On the basis of these achievements, the IACHR shall have greater capacity to act in strategic areas and thus exert an influence on preventive measures and on factors leading to rights violations.

In SO3, one of the noteworthy achievements is the development of a service program in Central America in collaboration with the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF). The training actions for judges and civil servants, as well as organizations that work in defending human rights and provide advisory services to state authorities for the drafting of regulations and policies on human mobility, shall enable the IACHR to exert an important targeted impact on promoting democracy, human dignity, and fundamental freedoms in this region. Another achievement involves organizing the First Forum of the Inter-American Human Rights System in Washington, D.C., which was attended by 507 persons at its 24 parallel events. These events, which shall be held every year, not only facilitate dissemination and training, but also constitute a public forum for the discussion and participation of many stakeholders.

In SO4, two important achievements are noteworthy: the drafting and launch, with the United Nations Human Rights Office (OHCHR), of the Joint Action Mechanism to Contribute to the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in the Americas, and the other was the coordinated work with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

In SO5, important structural advances were made. One of the achievements is the increase in the budget from the Regular Fund with staggered application as of the year 2018 until it reaches twofold the present amount by



2020. This decision shall enable the IACHR to benefit from the resources needed to cover the costs of permanent basic staff and current operating expenses, which shall reduce its vulnerability and reliance on temporary and uncertain resources such as specific funds. Another noteworthy achievement is the implementation of the new administrative structure, which is more integrated and horizontal and expedites decision-making. Finally, another achievement is organizing four roaming periods of sessions outside headquarters with the support and funding of states where these sessions are held, on the basis of which IACHR's public presence was broadened in these four countries.

It can be asserted that, over the first nine months of the Strategic Plan's implementation, the IACHR has stressed the institutional framework, organization, and resources required to pave the way for achieving the targets and goals of the 2017-2021 Strategic Plan. As it can be inferred in each one of the objectives, progress was made in the working protocols and methodologies in various areas and the special mechanisms, as well as in the allocation of resources.

The IACHR hopes that the next implementation report shall be based on the indicators of the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan, which are still under review and subject to internal approval and revision of their baselines.