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Canada

Ninth Inter-American Meeting of Electoral Management Bodies

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Monday, November 24

Inauguration

Ambassador Hugo De Zela Martínez, Chief of Staff of the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States, welcomed the region's Electoral Authorities on behalf of Secretary General José Miguel Insulza and thanked the National Electoral Jury and the National Office of Electoral Processes of Peru for their efforts in organizing and hosting the meeting and the Government of Canada for supporting the event.

In his welcoming speech, the Ambassador highlighted the importance of the Democratic Charter of the OAS and the principle of representative democracy. Likewise, he pointed out that one of the main purposes of the Charter is the promotion and consolidation of democracy, and the Electoral Observation Missions have embodied this principle of representative democracy.

Regarding the Ninth Inter-American Meeting of Electoral Management Bodies, the Ambassador explained that the issues to be discussed would be centered on the challenges faced during the different electoral processes over the last decade. The three discussion points of the meeting will be: government intervention in electoral processes, quality management in electoral processes and the implementation of the ISO Electoral Norm and the confrontation of electoral Institutionalality.

Wrapping up his presentation, Ambassador De Zela reiterated that purpose of these meetings is to strengthen alliances within regional institutions, to connect and generate new ideas, this is a space for cooperation and dialogue, where different electoral systems converge, with different capacities but common values; the discussions generated at this meeting will be enriched by the diversity of the region's electoral systems. In this way, the OAS offered its firm and unwavering support to democracy in the Americas.

Next, Ambassador Juan Federico Jiménez Mayor, Peru's Representative before the OAS, pointed out the OAS' concern with elections in the hemisphere, as a fundamental feature of the region's democracies, and how promoting and strengthening democracy is a permanent commitment for Peru, both internally and externally. Ambassador Jiménez stated that DECO's work goes beyond the EOMs as the recommendations that are included in the final reports for each Mission, are cooperation mechanisms with member states for strengthening democracy. Given the importance of the EOMs, the Ambassador suggested that member states should offer continuous contributions to the OAS permanent funds, and Peru committed to provide funds for different electoral observation missions.

Next, Mariano Cucho Espinoza, Chief of the National Office of Electoral Processes of Peru (ONPE, by its Spanish acronym), reminded participants that during the election processes held in 2014, over 200 million people exercised their right to vote in different elections throughout the region; these election processes are not only an affirmation of democracy in each country, but they also generate knowledge and innovation that can be shared with other countries. Dr. Cucho Espinoza highlighted that the Inter-American Meeting of Electoral Management Bodies is the ideal stage to promote the exchange of knowledge and experiences, and best practices of electoral administration in the region. The speaker also pointed out that these meetings facilitate horizontal cooperation between the different electoral institutions in the region.

Dr. Francisco Távara Córdova, President of the National Jury of Elections (JNE, by its Spanish acronym), recognized the continuous and sustained efforts to have opportunities to exchange electoral experiences with other countries from the region, as well as the comparative analysis of these experiences. Dr. Távara Córdova pointed out the three themes to be discussed during the meeting and ended by saying that he believed these meetings were based on the pillars of democracy, integration and fraternity; and with his words the meeting was inaugurated.

Plenary I – Government Intervention in Elections

Gerardo de Icaza, Director of the Department of Electoral Cooperation of the OAS, presented the invited panelist, Serguei Kouznetsov, Division Chief, non-European partners, European Council, and urged participants to use the opportunity to discuss uncomfortable topics and have a dialogue between Management Bodies that is candid and compare how different situations were handled and the lessons learned from each experience. Director de Icaza acknowledged the participation of representatives from IFES and International IDEA, stating that the joint work of the OAS and the European Council greatly benefits and strengthens the work of everyone present at this meeting.

Dr. Kouznetsov began by saying that in his opinion the discussion is really centered on the abuse of administrative resources by the different branches of power. Dr. Kouznetsov said he would be sharing information on two documents of references and standards regarding elections (best practices) and a report that was adopted in the plenary sessions on

administrative overreach, the report includes experiences from European countries and also from Latin America.

The first report discussed by Dr. Kouznetsov was the “Code of Best Practices in Electoral Matters” which became a reference document for all European countries to evaluate electoral processes and electoral legislation in member countries. The Code discusses the issue of independence of electoral bodies and establishes standards for the entire electoral cycle: before, during, and after the elections. The correct enforcement of the standards of the code also includes the possibility of enforcing them for all electoral bodies; however, in European systems, the judicial branch is the final referee in determining the results of elections, and ensuring respect for legality in all the stages of the electoral process. Also in the European systems, there are no specific jurisdictions, as is the case in the Americas. Today, this experience is being closely examined since the existence of an election-specific legal mechanism helps protect electoral rights that are embodied in the constitutions of democratic countries.

The second document Dr. Kouznetsov referred to was the report on the misuse of administrative resources adopted in September 2013. This report covers self-regulation as the first step against misuse by political powers; the report also covers legislation against bribery and corruption. The regulation for this issue must be very detailed, so that the prosecuting office can act in corruption cases that involve people in important positions. The report then covers the efficient implementation of legislation and studies the demands for transparency and freedom of expression, since voters should be informed of the behaviors of those in power: access to information is important as a warranty against abuse. Finally, the document covers the equal treatment between the different political parties, including legislation, so that both political parties in power and those in the opposition have the possibility of participating in equal conditions.

Dr. Kouznetsov ended his presentation by saying that the discussion could be centered on five main problems: first, the issue of government publicity during elections and the misuse that may occur; second, the potential use of a public position for electoral purposes; the third issue is the use of the State’s financial and intangible resources for electoral purposes; fourth, patronage and buying votes; and fifth, electoral migration.

At the end of the presentation, the floor was opened to discussion with the representatives of the Electoral Management Bodies at the meeting. Stephen Surujbally, President of the Guyana Electoral Commission (GECOM), who requested that the discussion be expanded to include the role of the opposition, since there are cases where the opposition is involved in misconduct such as disinformation, or threats against the personnel of the electoral bodies and if the discussion is limited to the government’s abuse, the whole problem is not being addressed. Dr. Kouznetsov answered that the discussion covered the government’s actions specifically, that it could be examined from the government’s perspective. He added that the discussion should also include all the actions that a government should take to ensure fair and transparent elections.

Next, José Antonio Dias Toffoli, President of the Supreme Election Tribunal (TSE) of Brazil, shared the Brazilian experience regarding misconduct in public administration and vote buying. On the one hand, he commented on the experience of the use of public resources in regional campaigns and the claims that have been presented, generating a discussion of ending reelection for executive branch positions. Likewise, the increased spending on election campaigns has created discomfort in the population, opening the debate on the effects of economic power over democracy. There are no limits to campaign donations under Brazilian law; the candidates and political parties establish the ceilings.

The Brazilian representative also commented on the successful experience his country has had with ending vote buying. Since 1999 there has been a law in Brazil that establishes that any monetary or illicit promise to a voter, even if it were not fulfilled, would lead to immediate disqualification, even if the candidate has already been elected. This law was the result of a joint initiative with civil society, and today the focus of civil society is to end campaign financing by corporations and the misuse of administrative resources. Dr. Kouznetsov followed by commenting that the issue of campaign financing and its limitations has generated a lot of interest because civil societies do not like to see economic power influence political power.

Dr. Flavio Galván Rivera of the Mexican Electoral Tribunal of the Federal Justice branch (TEPJF, by its Spanish acronym), intervened to express his support to the implementation of an ethics code, a code of best practices. Regarding campaign financing, he explained that to avoid illegal donations, there needs to be more public financing for political parties, both for ordinary activities and for election campaigns. Acknowledging the fact that using resources for political campaigns takes away funds for other social purposes, Dr. Galván stated that this was a way to prevent illegal funds from entering campaigns and controlling that political parties do not exceed the established spending caps. Likewise, he stated his agreement on the creation of an electoral branch as a tribunal with constitutional autonomy.

Next on the floor Mariano Cucho, ONPE Peru, focused on the issues of vote buying, and electoral migration. Dr. Cucho explained that Peru does not have direct public financing for political parties, the parties are responsible for raising their funds; currently, there is an initiative being developed to audit the resources received by political organizations. With regards to electoral migration, he believes this is a social issue, centered on the Electoral Registry. Dr. Kouznetsov replied by highlighting that a successful solution has been to empower civil society in electoral observation, since [civil] society does not participate in the same terms as political parties and they can act if there is legislation for them to do so.

Stephen Surujbally, GECOM Guyana, requested clarification on the code of conduct for political parties, specifically if the code is a legal entity or if is self-regulating. He explained that with the help of the OAS, he presented a code of conduct that was signed by the political parties, but because it was self-regulatory, the breaches were almost immediate. He also requested a discussion on who would help enforce the code and implement the sanctions to the breaches.

Julio Olivo Granadino, President of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) of El Salvador, mentioned that in his country, the main issue is the lack of implementation of the law and the corresponding sanctions. The legal instruments exist to rule political campaigns and their financing, but there is not a culture of following the legal norms. Likewise, he mentioned that although the State does offer financing to political parties, it is insufficient, which leads to private funding of political campaigns. The representative from El Salvador requested a discussion on finding solutions to cases where even though there are legal mechanisms, these are not enforced.

Next, Wilfredo Ovando, Vice President of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE, by its Spanish acronym) of Bolivia, expressed the need to have equal campaigns. In the case of Bolivia, the State financed election campaigns in the past, but due to pressures from civil society stopped doing so. At this time, there is an ongoing discussion on whether to offer financing once more, and the possibility of not offering resources directly to the parties, but offer services or goods. Mr. Oviedo also pointed out the particularity of reelection in Bolivia, where candidates must resign three months before the election, with the exception of the President and Vice President, which has generated criticism from some political sectors, yet the TSE was only enforcing the existing electoral law.

Next on the floor was Héctor Fernández Masís, Electoral Registry and Political Party Financing Director of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal of Costa Rica, who stated that the real problem was equality in the competition, and how this issue is difficult to regulate, especially when the authorities are part of the government. He also made reference to the existing laws and lack of political wills to enforce said laws. Costa Rica, and Panama, created a volunteer corps of electoral delegates in order to involve citizens in electoral processes and they work with the electoral body. There are also telephone lines to report election irregularities anonymously and free of charge. It is key that citizens legitimize the control measures to guarantee equality in the competition.

Sherlyn Hall, Parliamentary Commissioner of the Parliamentary Registration Department, Bahamas, focused on his country's current experience regarding the reform of an independent and autonomous Electoral Authority, as a result of the recommendations made during the 2012 elections by the Electoral Commission. The government has taken a step in the right direction, and now must establish a timeline to implement reforms, as well as finding the political will to execute legislation on political financing.

Erasmus Pinilla, President of the Electoral Tribunal of Panama, stated that democracy is based on a process that guarantees true participation of anyone who wishes to take part of the process, and that opportunity depends on political financing. It is imperative to find equality, which cannot be possible without controlling every aspect of political financing. He shared the experience of vote buying in Panama and how citizens have been key in avoiding it. Likewise, he insisted that electoral migration is the result of actions by the candidates, not the political parties. The political party has a vested interest in the whole district, and has nothing to gain from moving voters from one voting district to another. The Panamanian representative also

highlighted the importance of civil society in electoral processes and the need to put an end to reelection, as elected officials arrive to their first day on the job using public resources thinking about the next election.

Next, Alejandro Tullio, Director of the National Electoral office (DINE, by its Spanish acronym) of Argentina, considered that it is necessary to guarantee equality in the electoral competition, as long as it is not expected that Electoral Management Bodies take on more tasks than those established by law. Once there is awareness of the limits of action for the Electoral Management Bodies, we can avoid establishing objectives that constrain the activities of said Bodies. He also added that another issue is that of government publicity, considering that government publicity is a subjective right of those in power, then it should be exercised within the limits established by law. He urged that the problems presented be discussed within their particular contexts, to regulate and control misuse, but without killing or suppressing politics.

David Matamoros, President of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal of Honduras, commented that the issue of quality is reduced to access and control of the media; he agreed that there is a need to create regulation for campaign financing, but believes the focus should be on the media.

Patricio Santamaría, President of the Chilean Electoral Service (SERVEL, by its Spanish acronym), stated that the biggest challenge is the creation of awareness among citizens to promote political participation. Regarding the issue of campaign financing, it is his opinion that politicians tend to avoid it because it is a sensitive subject. In the case of Chile, the State provides resources for political campaigns and it is established by law that State companies, companies who are state contractors or in a bidding process with the State cannot provide direct or indirect resources during campaigns; public figures are also regulated by the constitution and in the electoral legislation. Regarding electoral migration, he considers that it is a mistake that in Chile, at the request of the voter, a voting table can be set up at work or the place where the previous night was spent, this creates an advantage for some candidates who make the request to win elections.

Offering the closing remarks and conclusions, Jorge Luis Yrivarren, National Chief of the National Registry of Identification and Civil Status of Peru, considered that the participants focused on the preconditions that lead to the misuse of resources by the State and not the issue itself. Transparency and equality of electoral processes, guaranteed by an active civil society and volunteers are the necessary conditions to avoid abuses by the State. The existence of regulations that sanction this conduct are a precondition to avoid the misuse of public resources by the State. He regretted that the discussion did not delve deeper into the main point of the plenary, but at the same time he stressed the importance of all the issues brought into the discussion.

Plenary II – Quality Management in Electoral Systems

The second plenary, led by Maria T. Mellenkamp, Section of the Technical Cooperation Section of DECO/OAS, began with the definition of quality management systems, pointing out that it promotes constant improvement and aims to improve effectiveness and efficiency of the services and products offered by the Electoral Management Bodies. The benefits of implementing a quality management system are transparency and accountability; satisfy citizens' demands; and, the professionalization of public officials. The OAS specialist then explained the eight steps of the methodology that are used to implement quality management systems and mentioned the cases of Panama and Costa Rica as successful examples of the implementation of said methodology.

Maria T. Mellenkamp also touched on the process of the creation of Technical Specification 17582, also known as the ISO Electoral Norm, created for electoral processes. The Specification includes eight processes, considered by experts to be essential to organize elections: voter registration; candidate and political organization registration; electoral logistics; voting and declaring results; electoral education; auditing political financing; and resolving electoral disputes.

The presentation continued with a detailed explanation regarding the Norm, pointing out that the implementation is voluntary, and it is flexible and adaptable to the characteristics of each electoral system. The Norm is aimed at how the Electoral Management Body organizes elections, its purpose is not to prevent fraud, nor manipulation, nor corruption, nor control de actions of political parties. Next, the internal and external benefits of applying the Technical Specification were discussed, based on better efficiency and greater transparency of processes. The next step for the project is to become the electoral accreditation body, which will have four roles within the quality management systems of electoral processes: certify, authorize, train and review. On this note, the second plenary ended and the floor was open to the participants.

First, Alejandro Tullio, DINE, Argentina, pointed out the contribution of quality management systems to efficiency and efficacy. He noted that in the case of Argentina, they are undertaking an exercise in quality management on financial contributions, campaign management and electoral statistics; and that the information and results would be shared with the OAS. Likewise, he stated that the most important goals of quality management systems are discovering vulnerabilities, procedure stability and reproduction of results. Finally, he repeated that quality management systems are a process of continuous improvement and Electoral Management Bodies must always look for better ways to undertake their tasks.

Next, Wilfredo Ovando from the Supreme Electoral Tribunal of Bolivia considered that internal and external factors of each country should play a more relevant role in the implementation of the ISO Electoral Norm. Stephen Surujbally, GECOM Guyana, asked how flexible the application of the Norm was, and if the assessment would be influenced by how the EMB treats the physically disadvantaged; referring to the specific case of Mexico where there was a campaign to include Braille ballots instead of proxy voting for the visually impaired.

María T. Mellenkamp replied to the questions made by the representatives from Argentina and Bolivia, clarifying that processes may be added if necessary. The Norm does not set restrictions on the reach of the quality management system for electoral processes. She also reminded participants that the Norm is reviewed every three years, and all areas are open for review. She then referred to the legal frameworks that regulate the electoral process, clarifying that these are above any other instrument, including the Norm. The Norm establishes basic criteria and minimum requirements of how things should be done, not how they must be done; the implementation of the Norm is voluntary and has no prevalence over the existing legal system in any country. Regarding the question made by the representative from Guyana, María T. Mellenkamp answered that the Norm is quite flexible and its aim is to establish the minimum requirements regarding infrastructure, documentation and registry and that each country will have a different Norm, since each country operates under different jurisdictions.

David Matamoros from the TSE (by its Spanish acronym) of Honduras expressed his support and interest in obtaining the certification in the next five years. Flavio Galván, TEPJF of México (by its Spanish acronym) considered that it was more important to obtain the support of the electorate through free, authentic, trustworthy and fair elections, than to obtain an ISO certification. In the case of Mexico, the National Institute of Elections is moving towards professionalization, which will establish basic principles to be followed by personnel. Francisco Távar Córdova, JNE Peru, added that the Jury obtained its ISO 9001 certification in 2008 and asked about the certification mechanisms for solving electoral disputes. For Erasmo Pinilla, Electoral Tribunal of Panama, the ISO Norm is an audit that reviews internal institutional processes without imposition. He added that accepted a new way of doing things means a change in culture, and in his opinion, that is why Panama has not been able to implement other changes, such as electronic voting.

María T. Mellenkamp agreed with the Mexican representative of the TEPJF that the best certification is the trust of the electorate, and adding that the ISO can be used as tool to support the legitimization of the Electoral Management Body, which is translated into citizen legitimacy. Likewise she noted that the Norm establishes certain minimum requirements for an Electoral Management Body that doesn't have dispute resolution mechanisms to study, evaluate and adopt them if it considers it necessary. Regarding the question of the Peruvian representative, the requirements for resolving disputes should be simple, and having already achieved an ISO 9001 certification, it would be an easy task. She added that the Technical Specification 17582 adds some requirements to that certification, so according to the reach of the certification, certain requirements should be identified and mapped.

The president of the National Electoral Council of Ecuador, Domingo Paredes Castillo, believed that the transformation of the State leads to the transformation of its institutions. In Ecuador, the CNE has incorporated electoral best practices and processes for the ISO 17582 certification, which has resulted in increased public credibility for the institution. He added that he would like to request that the OAS participate in the review of the administrative and electoral processes; he also added example of Ecuador's experience in the systematization of processes, following

ISO regulations, and that in his opinion, the application of ISO standards could lead to new regional collaboration.

Next, Fanny Rivas Rojas, of the TSE of Bolivia (by its Spanish acronym), stressed the urgency of the request made by her country to the OAS for an audit to clear suspicions of electoral fraud and irregularities. In her opinion, the methodologies developed by political organizations seek to discredit the referee in the electoral process. Patricio Valdés Aldunate, President of the Election Certification Tribunal of Chile, expressed that he considers that the best certification is that given by the voters, and in the case of Chile, they have used the same system since it was created at the beginning of the 20th century and have only received one complaint since its creation. He added that ISO regulations work for private business, where norms can be applied uniformly, but implementing them in different systems and socio-political contexts can create more problems than solutions. Guiseppe Dutra Janino, TSE Brazil (by its Spanish acronym), commented that the Brazilian experience with the ISO 9001 certification has been very positive. The advantages of the certification are: formal processes; analysis of indicators; continuous improvement of processes; and, increased credibility. Rafael Riva Palacio, National Electoral Institute of Mexico, added that is important to take into account the opinion of Electoral Authorities, as subject matter experts, when creating ISO guidelines.

María T. Mellenkamp pointed out the successful experience in the selection process for human resources in Ecuador, where there was no guidelines or manual for job post classification and now there is a manual with specific information on how to choose personnel to work in the Electoral Body, taking into account competence, experience, training and education. Answering the question posed by the Bolivian representative, Fanny Rivas, she clarified that the Norm is applicable to any Electoral Body, at all levels: a regional tribunal can apply the Electoral Norm, it does not have to be implemented by a National Tribunal. She also added that there is an enormous effort in the region to promote this voluntary instrument with international applications, to generate the minimum conditions to create trust and legitimacy with the voters.

Mariano Cucho, ONPE Peru, led the conclusions for the panel by stating that in his opinion, the main concern with a quality management system such as the ISO, is the focus on the internal and external clients. The external client is the voter, the political parties, the political organizations, the candidates, the media and international cooperation organizations. The internal clients are the workers of the electoral bodies. These words marked the end of the second and final plenary for the day.

Tuesday, November 25

Presentation on the Department of Electoral Cooperation (DECO)

DECO Director Gerardo de Icaza shared the vision and mission of the Department during the first presentation of the day. DECO is one of the three departments in the Secretariat of Political Affairs of the Organization of American States and is the body in charge of the Electoral Observation Missions (EOMs) and implementing technical cooperation projects with OAS member states. DECO is guided by the following principle “Promote and consolidate representative democracy, with due respect for the principle of nonintervention” as stated in Article 2 of the Charter of the OAS; and under the principle that “The peoples of the Americas have a right to democracy and their governments have an obligation to promote and defend it,” as enshrined in Article 1 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter.

Since 1962, the OAS has observed and accompanied over 200 elections in 30 countries around the hemisphere. DECO observes: political integration (gender equality, underrepresented groups, voting from abroad, accessibility); the electoral process (equal access for media, electoral organization and technology, and electoral justice); and, electoral integrity (political campaign financing, safety and electoral crimes, government intervention in electoral processes).

Based on the experiences of the EOMs, DECO makes recommendations that are systematized for the creation of technical cooperation projects. Most of the recommendations made by DECO after an EOM fall into the category of electoral organization (56%) and within this category, most recommendations are related to the voting process (32%), which led to the creation of the ISO Electoral Standard 17582 presented in Plenary II on Quality Management Systems.

Director de Icaza also mentioned that since 2007, DECO has implemented 30 technical cooperation projects, covering different issues such as: auditing electoral registries, auditing electronic voting systems, electoral technology, quality management systems and certification of electoral processes, among others. The presentation ended by highlighting the positive impact of the EOMs in the region and with a brief recount of the election calendar during 2014 and the upcoming elections in 2015.

During this panel, the President of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal of Brazil, Dias Toffoli, provided that the TSE was co - organizer of the X Inter-American Meeting of Electoral Authorities, which will be held in Rio de Janeiro in November 2015.

Plenary III – Confronting Electoral Institutionalality

The third plenary of the meeting was titled “Confronting Electoral Institutionalality” led by Dr. Fernando Tuesta Soldevilla, who began by stating that the main challenge of the electoral bodies in the region was the general lack of trust in the State and its institutions. The

responsibility of well-organized, transparent, and highly visible elections falls on the electoral body. Modern democracy demands not only recurrent electoral processes, but these must also be fair, transparent and with unquestionable results. Dr. Tuesta discussed the particularities of the electorate and elections in Latin America, for example, different historical perspectives and demographic differences, as well as the role of the media.

Dr. Tuesta pointed out that the problems faced by regional authorities of electoral management bodies are, first, the discredit of electoral bodies, as an issue of neutrality and supposed illegal actions. In second place, disinformation on the administrative and jurisdictional processes, in his opinion, this disinformation is the result of a lack of knowledge by the media and political actors. When legislation and regulations do not grant the necessary tools for auditing, the electoral body must deal with this lack of knowledge or false accusations. And finally, disavowing electoral results. Dr. Tuesta ended his presentation by asking participants how to confront these problems or what other problems they have dealt with when faced with questioning, which is common in the region, regarding the performance, work and public perception of the electoral bodies.

Alejandro Tullio, DINE Argentina, stated that there was a need for self-reflection to detect weaknesses and then consider external elements; in his opinion, the internal elements include the lack of transparency, which works against the credibility of the electoral bodies; internal processes such as naming officials or executing the budget should be made public. He considers that the responsibility borne by electoral bodies has led to their institutional arrogance. He also mentioned overlapping competencies in countries that have more than one electoral body, and how the disputes between these bodies are not well received by the public. He also mentioned that electoral bodies have become isolated from public opinion and political parties.

Dr. Tullio continued by stating that electoral bodies must include political parties as contributors to the electoral process. He also commented on the pressure exercised by the media and its participation as a political actor in elections. He ended his speech by referring to the case against the Paraguayan electoral judge Dr. Ramírez Zambonini.

Maria Elena Wapenka, Vice President of the Superior Tribunal of Electoral Justice of Paraguay thanked Alejandro Tullio for his solidarity with Dr. Ramírez Zambonini. Next, Rafael Riva Palacio, INE Mexico, stated that it was difficult for electoral authorities to undertake functions or activities for which there were no guidelines or legal bases, which also weakens the electoral bodies.

Héctor Fernández, from the TSE of Costa Rica, shared the experience of his country during the 2014 elections, when there was a credibility crisis after official ballots appeared before the election material was released. He believed that the crisis was overcome satisfactorily because they had considered the scenario where something like this could happen and they had documented their processes as part of the ISO certification, so they had the justification in writing of their procedures. In his opinion, one of the elements in their success has been

transparency and accountability, being open to the public, to critics and give the correct answers at the right time.

Stephen Surujbally, GECOM Guyana, expressed agreement with the previous participants and added that electoral authorities could also act in a way that could be perceived as incorrect, for example, be an electoral authority and then move on to lead a political party. This behavior does not encourage voters, as it is evidence of partisanship within bodies that are supposed to be neutral. Likewise, in exercising their right to vote, electoral authorities are assuming a preference in a political election, creating suspicion among voters and lack of trust in electoral authorities.

Flavio Galván Rivera, TEPJF México, shared the Mexican experience of how transparency and publicity have been the best tools for institutional credibility. There are tools and channels so that any interested party can access the processes and decisions of the Tribunal, all the proceedings of the Tribunal are public, there are electronic platforms that collect and publish all the information related to each case. The cases before the electoral tribunal are heard in public sessions, including the individual votes; and these sessions are also broadcast live on the Web. He also pointed out that the schedules of the authorities are public and as public servants, they execute public budgets that are open to the public.

Fanny Rivas Rojas, of the TSE Bolivia, criticized the behavior of authorities when they do not agree on a jurisdictional issue or an electoral procedure and vent their disagreements in public; or when the authorities share official information with the media in advance, this hurts, in her opinion, the image of the institution. Likewise, she commented on the discredit of the electoral authorities in the media and believes this is an irreparable damage to the honor of the person who is questioned.

Next, Domingo Paredes Castillo, president of the CNE Ecuador, insisted on the issue of trust in the process and institutions and acknowledged that in the 2013 and 2014 elections in Ecuador the high number of observers contributed to the transparency of the electoral process. He stated that his country has began applying the observations and recommendations made by the Electoral Observation Missions and added that he would like to see more constructive exchanges among electoral management bodies and political organization. The speaker also brought to light the crisis of 2012 and how modernization has contributed to the creation of a new political culture.

Sherlyn Hall, Parliamentary Commissioner of the Parliamentary Registry, Bahamas, commented that in the Bahamas, the biggest challenge is the verification of documentation to register voters, since there is no continuous registry; it is updated every five years. He added that the employees of the electoral registry follow a rigorous training to guarantee the integrity of the voting process, which has won the respect and trust of the community and the voters. Mr. Hall ended by saying that the Bahamas has no legislation on political financing, so parties have no spending limits, this is something that he would like to see changed.

The session continued with words from Julio Olivo Granadino, TSE of El Salvador, who commented on the internal experiences of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal in his country regarding the challenges of guaranteeing transparent electoral processes and modernizing the electoral system. He requested cooperation from his colleagues for the creation of methodologies to stop the misuse of information from the electoral registry and to regulate the behavior of Tribunal employees. He criticized the meddling by the judicial system in the electoral processes, referring specifically to a case on conditions for participation of political parties in the elections of March 2015 in El Salvador.

Patricio Valdés, TCE Chile by its Spanish acronym, commented on how members are named to the Election Certification Tribunal, stressing that members are Justices on the Supreme Court who are given this additional task, and in his opinion guarantees the independence of the electoral body. He also added that the electoral bodies should always be absolutely independent in matters related to jurisdiction and their decisions should not be subject to review. The independent nature of the Certification Tribunal generates trust in the public.

Closing remarks for the session were offered by Dr. Távara Córdova, JNE Perú, who believes that part of the problem lies in the social anomy within our societies, because people do not know how hard it is to prepare elections and then solve the conflicts or controversies that may arise. In Dr. Távara's opinion, it's necessary to break with the dichotomy of virtuous citizen and defective institution that prevails in Latin America, which starts with institutional design and the autonomy and independence of electoral bodies, including the naming of authorities and officials. He stressed the importance of credibility and trustworthiness of the electoral bodies and the need to fulfill tasks efficiently and effectively, achieved through continuous training.

CLOSING REMARKS

Dr. Gerardo de Icaza, Director of DECO OAS, led the closing remarks by thanking on behalf of the Secretary General and the Secretary for Political Affairs the hosting institutions in Peru, as well as the interpreters. He thanked the Venice Commission, IFES and International IDEA for their participation and Brazil for agreeing to host the next meeting. The closing remarks continued with Mariano Cucho, ONPE, Peru, who expressed his admiration for quality management systems and his belief that all tools and methodologies can be systematized. He also expressed interest in the possibility of creating a website through the OAS to share the experiences of the different countries in quality management systems, this site would also help for collective training on matters related to the ISO 9001 audit. Finally, Dr. Francisco Távara Córdova, JNE, extended invitations to other events in Lima in the following days and expressed his sincere gratitude to the participants and formally closed the Ninth Inter-American Meeting of Electoral Management Bodies.

