

# Tenth Central-American Summit

**T**he President of El Salvador, Alfredo Cristiani, chaired the Tenth Summit Meeting of Central American countries last summer. He welcomed his colleagues: Jorge Serrano Elías, President of Guatemala; Violeta Chamorro, President of Nicaragua; and Rafael Angel Calderón, President of Costa Rica. Carlos Andrés Pérez, President of Venezuela, and Patricio Aylwin, President of Chile, attended the Summit as observers. Although Guillermo Endara, President of Panama, was initially considered an observer, one of the first items on the agenda was accepting Panama as a participating member of the group. Endara took an active part once Panama was accepted.

The issues dealt with at this meeting focused on economic and political measures to integrate the region. The challenge is to develop real opportunities for eliminating poverty and improving the people's standard of living in peace and harmony. The agenda included three principal concerns: designing mechanisms for integration within the process of liberalizing economies, resolving the armed conflicts in Guatemala and El Salvador, and discussing the disarmament proposal to reduce armed forces in the region proposed by Honduras.

The general criteria for initiating integration were agreed upon in June 1990 at the Antigua (Guatemala)

Summit. The Central American Economic Action Program, created in Antigua, developed programs to be discussed and accepted by the Summit in El Salvador.

Several specific economic and commercial measures were approved. One established mechanisms to open interregional trade in agricultural produce, beginning this year. Another deals with developing a Free Trade Agreement that includes Venezuela within ten years. The agreement calls for awarding Central American products preferential treatment during the first five years as well as accepting Venezuela as a member of the Central American Economic Integration Bank.

The Summit also voted to reactivate the Organization of Central American States established in 1953. This institution stopped operating in 1969 during the "Football War" between El Salvador and Honduras. The Organization will be responsible for following-up on all the decisions taken at the Summit and coordinating their implementation. The attending heads of state agreed to create a mechanism to finance the work of the Secretariat for Central American Economic Integration within ninety days.

In the political arena, the final document condemned violence, terrorism and disruptive events that run counter to democratic processes, especially the use of violence focused on political goals. The heads of state expressed their satisfaction with the

progress attained in the pacification process in Guatemala. They called for unilateral disarmament of the Salvadorean guerrillas, under United Nations supervision, and expressed their support of the Cristiani government.

Spokesmen of the Farabundo Martí Liberation Movement (FMLN), the leading Salvadoran guerilla front, qualified this position as unrealistic, representing a lack of respect for the United Nations mediation efforts. They expressed the view that the resolutions passed would only serve to encourage those who oppose dialogue. The Government of El Salvador and the FMLN initiated negotiations, with the aid of United Nations mediation, in April 1990, in an effort to end eleven years of war which had cost seventy five thousand lives. The Salvadoran opposition stated that the call for unilateral disarmament is biased, and that the ambiguous language employed in it seems to favor the Government of El Salvador.

The proposal made by Honduras to de-militarize the area and implement a regional security program was not supported. As a matter of fact, Jorge Serrano, President of Guatemala, opposed it so vehemently that he left the meeting before the closing session, stating that his country could not sign an agreement of this nature, until the armed conflict had been resolved