
First National Seminar on the Friendly Settlement Mechanism in Mexico

The Ibero-American University in Mexico City provided the setting for the First National Seminar on the Friendly Settlement Mechanism on October 14 and 15, 2013.

The Inter-American Commission held this seminar during the implementation stage of the recommendations for strengthening the inter-American human rights system in order to promote the use of the friendly settlement mechanism as an alternative to a contentious proceeding in the inter-American human rights system. Its aim was to raise awareness of the impact achieved by the mechanism and provide an opportunity for dialogue in which petitioners and Mexican state officials could exchange best practices and identify future challenges with a view to bolstering protection of victims' rights.

The event was attended by representatives of the Mexican State, including the Secretariat for Health, SEGOB, SEDENA, Council of the Federal Judicature, Office of the Prosecutor General of the Republic, Secretariat of the Interior of the Federal District, Office of the Prosecutor of Chihuahua State, Office of the Attorney General of Morelos State, Office of the Attorney General of the Federal District, Secretariat of the Interior of Hidalgo, Assistant Attorney General of Tlaxcala State, Office of Legal Counsel of the Federal Executive Branch, Secretariat of the Interior of Chihuahua State, Office of Case Management of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Secretariat of the Interior of Guerrero State, Office of the Attorney General of Mexico State. Representing civil society were Comisión Mexicana de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos (CMDPDH), Comisión de Solidaridad y Defensa de los Derechos Humanos, A.C. (COSYDDHAC), Centro por la Justicia y el Derecho Internacional (CEJIL), Acción de los Cristianos para la Abolición de la Tortura y (ACAT), Centro de Derechos Reproductivos, Organización Indignación Promoción y Defensa de los Derechos Humanos A.C., Comisión Estatal de Derechos Humanos de Yucatán, Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, Centro Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez "Centro ProDH", Comisión de Derechos Humanos del Distrito Federal (CDHDF), Grupo de Información en Reproducción Elegida AC, Red Nacional de Organismos Civiles "Todos los Derechos para Todas y Todos", Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña, Tlachinollan, Asociación Nacional de Abogados Democráticos, Ideas, Litigio Estratégico en Derechos Humanos, A.C., Litiga OLE, Asistencia Legal por los Derechos Humanos A. C (ASILEGAL), Documenta, Análisis y Acción para la Justicia Social, A.C., Centro Mexicano de Derecho, Disability Rights, Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Francisco de Vitoria, Centro de Colaboración Cívica, Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económica, FLACSO México, ITAM, Centro Nacional de Comunicación Social (CENCOS), Artículo XIX-México, Ciudadanos en Apoyo de Derechos Humanos, (CADHAC), ITESO, Universidad Jesuita de Guadalajara, Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídica de la UNAM, Investigador en el IJJ de la UNAM, Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM), Abogadas y abogados por los derechos humanos, A.C. and Peace Brigades International - Mexico (PBI).

The inaugural address was delivered by José de Jesús Orozco, President of the IACHR. Among the special guests at the seminar were Ambassador Juan Manuel Gómez Robledo, Under-Secretary for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights of the Secretariat for Foreign Affairs; Doctor José Morales Orozco, Rector of the Ibero-American University; Minister Alejandro Alday González, Director General of Human Rights of the Secretariat for Foreign Affairs; Dr. Emilio Rabasa Gamboa, Permanent Representative of Mexico to the Organization of American States; and Dr. Victor Rojas Amandi, Director of Ibero-American University Law School.

The event began with a presentation delivered by Emilio Álvarez Icaza, Executive Secretary of the IACHR, on general aspects of the friendly settlement procedure, the evolution of the mechanism, and the Commission's role as facilitator.

The program on the first day began with a presentation on good practices entitled “The Perspective of the Mexican State.” It was followed by a presentation on “The Perspective of Mexican Civil Society,” after which there was an open discussion on best practices in to negotiation, agreements, and compliance, with the participation of both parties. On the second day, Sylvia Aguilera, of Centro de Colaboración Cívica, gave a presentation on tools for facilitating friendly settlements. After which, State and civil society representatives exchanged ideas on identifying challenges for the friendly settlement mechanism and was followed by a discussion on increased use of the friendly settlement mechanism in Mexico, lessons learned, and suggestions for the future.

In addition, participants expressed their thoughts about the future of the friendly settlement mechanism, its challenges, the lessons learned and suggestions for making it more effective, during an open discussion moderated by the IACHR’s Executive Secretary.

The seminar concluded with the presentation of certificates to the speakers and reflections by the IACHR Executive Secretary, Emilio Álvarez Icaza, in which he drew attention to the IACHR’s role and responsibility for creating opportunities for dialogue to move friendly settlement processes forward, the use of technology to bring parties together, and the challenges the IACHR faces in monitoring compliance with friendly settlement agreements.