

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### *THE OAS GENERAL ASSEMBLY APPROVES RESOLUTIONS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION*

Washington, D.C., June 15, 2005. The Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights highlights the support of the XXXV General Assembly of the Organization of American States - held from June 5-7 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, United States - for the rights to freedom of expression and access to public information through its adoption of the resolutions on the "Right to Freedom of Thought and Expression and the Importance of the Media" and "Access to Public Information: Strengthening Democracy."

In the resolution on the "Right to Freedom of Thought and Expression and the Importance of the Media," the General Assembly took note of the most recent report of the Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression and reaffirmed the importance of the right to freedom of expression.

The resolution on "Access to Public Information: Strengthening Democracy" marks the third time the General Assembly has passed a resolution on this issue. In the June 2003 meeting G.A. in Santiago, Chile, the Member States adopted a resolution in the area of public information asserting the duties of the States to respect and promote respect for access to public information. During the XXXIV General Assembly, held in June 2004 in Quito, Ecuador, a second resolution extended this effort by encouraging OAS Member States to implement legislation or other provisions providing citizens with broad access to public information and calling upon the Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression and the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy (now the Office for the Promotion of Democracy) to provide support to the States in preparing such initiatives. In the most recent resolution on access to information adopted by the XXXV General Assembly, the G.A. reaffirmed what was resolved in the earlier resolutions and additionally called upon the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights "to conduct a study on how the State can guarantee all citizens the right to seek, receive, and impart public information on the basis of the principle of freedom of expression." Moreover, the G.A. once again called upon the Permanent Council to convene a special meeting of experts on access to public information, with the assistance of the Office of the Special Rapporteur and the Office for the Promotion of Democracy.

The Special Rapporteur is deeply committed to carrying out this work and supporting Member States in the adoption of legislation in this area.