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*Delegation for relations with the countries of Central America  
Ad hoc Delegation*

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17.5.2021

## MISSION REPORT

following the delegation visit which took place in El Salvador and Honduras  
from 23 to 28 February 2020

Delegation for relations with the countries of Central America

Members of the mission:

Tilly Metz	(Verts/ALE) (Leader of the mission)
Javier Nart	(Renew) (Vice-Chair)
Caterina Chinnici	(S&D)
Teuvo Hakkarainen	(ID)
Juan Ignacio Zoido Álvarez	(PPE)
Ignazio Corrao	(Verts/ALE)

## ***Introduction***

The Delegation for relations with the countries of Central America, which visited El Salvador and Honduras from 23 to 28 February 2020, was led by DCAM Chair Ms Tilly METZ (Greens/EFA, Luxembourg) and composed of five other MEPs, Mr Javier NART, First Vice-president (Renew, Spain), Mr Juan Ignacio ZOIDO ALVAREZ (PPE, Spain), Ms Caterina CHINNICI (S&D, Italy), Mr Teuvo HAKKARAINEN (ID, Finland), Mr Ignazio CORRAO (Greens/EFA, Italy).

The Delegation was assisted at all times by Mr Helmut WEIXLER and Ms Frédérique ALBERT, representing Parliament's General Secretariat, and a team of interpreters made up of Mr Diego GARZÓN NU ES (team leader), Ms Fernanda VILA KALBERMATTEN, Ms Sinead DORAN, Ms Lorraine REGAN, Ms Aija Hanna KIVISAARI-MARTINEZ, Ms Susanna MATTILA.

According to the programme (see annex) the delegation addressed a broad variety of issues during its visit to El Salvador and Honduras, ranging from economic and political aspects to the social, legal and human rights situation in both countries. This visit offered an opportunity to the delegation members to become acquainted with some of the specificities of each country. Exercising its scrutiny activities, the EP Delegation visited project-sites in both countries, allowing the MEPs to have a look at the implementation of EU funded projects.

The visit to El Salvador took place only two weeks after the President Nayib Bukele provoked a constitutional crisis when he marched into the Legislative Assembly accompanied by military in order to pressure the deputies to authorise a credit he needed for his security policies. Bukele's election marked a watershed in El Salvador's recent history. He is the first president since 1989 who does not come from one of the two parties that have been ruling in the past 30 years, the centre-right Nationalist Republican Alliance (Alianza Republicana Nacionalista, ARENA) and the left-wing Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional, FMLN). Bukele's election reflected widespread discontent with the established political system and ARENA's and the FMLN's decade-long dominant position. His campaign focused largely on a pledge to fight corruption, address the problem of criminal violence and promote economic and social development to create jobs and improve social services. As he could not register his own political party in time, he presented himself as candidate of the GANA party, which he left after his victory.

The visit to Honduras was carried out shortly after the Honduran Government decided not to prolong the mandate of the Mission to Support the Fight against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (Misión de Apoyo contra la Corrupción y la Impunidad en Honduras, MACCIH) and thus jeopardized the country's anti-corruption policies. Since the controversial re-election of President Juan Orlando Hernández in November 2017, the country has been marked by a deep political polarisation, which has been further aggravated by social unrest and large-scale protests against the government. The government's commitment to fighting organised crime, particularly drug trafficking, and endemic corruption is very much in the spotlight. Similarly, despite stable economic growth in recent years and the reduction of macroeconomic imbalances, Honduras remains the country in Latin America that has the highest share of people living in poverty. Assistance from international partners continues to be fundamental for Honduras to address the challenges of economic and social development.

### List of annexes:

Annex I: Final programme of the delegation visit

## **I. El Salvador (23-25 February 2020)**

### **Meetings:**

#### **1. Working breakfast hosted by Ambassador Andreu Bassols, Head of the EU Delegation to El Salvador, with the Ambassadors of EU Member States in El Salvador**

EU Ambassadors participating: H.E. Mr Federico Torres (Spain), H.E. Mr François Bonet (France), H.E. Mr Bernd Finke (Germany), H.E. Umberto Malnati (Italy)

Mr Andreu Bassols, Head of the EU Delegation to El Salvador, opened the discussion by saying that the visit of the EP's Delegation was very timely as El Salvador is experiencing its first constitutional crisis in 28 years.

Mr Federico Torres (Spain) highlighted that the current situation in El Salvador could be qualified as a self-coup. The relations between the executive, the legislative and the judicial branches of the country are strained. The Supreme Court is expected to decide on the events of 9 February in March/April 2020. Mr Torres underlined that the EU and other actors of the international community play an important role in defusing the crisis, while President Bukele has clearly taken a more aggressive line of action. Mr Torres echoed the Head of the EU Delegation by noting that the Delegation visit was a very timely opportunity to remind President Bukele that he should respect his mandate. The Spanish government expressed concerns as to what might happen during the elections to the Legislative Assembly in February 2021.

Mr François Bonet (France) said that President Bukele is divided: on the one hand, he sidelines existing elected structures for decision making and appeals directly to the people to push through his political programme; on the other hand, he cares about his international image. Freedom of the press is respected but there are some concerns as to whether this will remain so. The President wants to communicate directly with people while keeping his distance from the institutions and the civil servants who work in them and avoiding institutionalised dialogues. He is systematically weakening the social fabric of the country.

Mr Bernd Finke (Germany) said that the situation was most alarming and that a new form of polarisation between executive and legislative could be observed. Those daring to criticise the President's actions and ideas are banned. Bukele is ignoring civil society. Women's rights remain an issue; at least 17 women are in prison because of strict abortion laws, a problem linked to El Salvador's very conservative society. However, Mr Finke added that it is possible to have an open discussion on human rights in El Salvador. President Bukele will not put forward an agenda including women's and LGBTI rights, because he knows that in that case, his party will lose the next elections.

Mr Umberto Malnati (Italy) pointed out that in the current political climate, the traditional parties are doing badly in public opinion polls. The issue of criminality is a crucial element, with El Salvador having witnessed record numbers of assassinations very recently. The government is relying on a considerable reduction in assassinations before the elections on 28 February 2021. The President, who does not have a political group in the current Legislative Assembly, reckons that a success in the fight against criminality will win him the elections.

The following Members spoke: Tilly Metz, Javier Nart, Caterina Chinnici, Juan Ignacio Zoido

## 2. Visit of Ciudad Mujer

The Delegation visited one of the six service centres of the *Ciudad Mujer* (CM) programme, located in San Martín (municipality) in San Salvador (department). The Minister of Local Development, María Ofelia Navarrete - also known as María Chichilco - hosted the Delegation Members.

President Mauricio Funes launched CM in late 2012. The six centres, which are located throughout the country, provide both teenagers and adult women with specialised services and quality care. CM's areas of work are sexual and reproductive health, gender-based violence, education in women's rights, and economic empowerment.

CM's design incorporates elements that seek to ensure that women can indeed access its services, such as the provision of free childcare facilities or the fact that men have no access to the premises. The potential beneficiaries of CM's six service centres include women living in each centre's municipality and those living in the surrounding municipalities, totalling 940 000 potential direct beneficiaries (El Salvador's female population was of 3 514 023 in 2018). Since its opening, CM has already provided services to approximately 1 500 000 users.

Assessing the centre, Delegation Members found that the location of the centre is far away from populated areas and not easily accessible. The premises made a very aseptic impression. Members denounced that there is no possibility for the women to stay overnight. At the time of the visit, the centre was suffering problems with water provision due to pollution. Consequently, water had to be brought in plastic bottles for human use; plants and lawn in outside areas were starving. Members criticized that the Secretariat of Social Inclusion (*Secretaría de Inclusión Social*, SIS), which is responsible for the administration of CM, has been weakened under the Bukele administration, which transferred the Secretariat to the Ministry of Culture.

The future of CM under President Bukele is unclear, as is the case of many of the previous administrations' programmes. In this case, the fact that CM's development was an initiative by the then Secretary for Social Inclusion and former First Lady, Ms Vanda Pignato, plays an important role, as the new government is very keen on making its own mark and very aware of the importance of public perception. However, CM's continuity has been confirmed by President Bukele thus far and its 2019 allocation has been maintained, as reflected in the 2020 draft budget (USD 7 298 310).

The EU supported CM's work from June 2014 to October 2016 with a €2.25 million grant under the complementary support component of the EU's budget support programme on poverty reduction (PACSES). The grant focused on supporting CM's provision of health services (720 women received comprehensive dental rehabilitation treatments and 10 149 were screened for breast cancer) and the development of their economic empowerment activities (farming training to 2 285 women, vocational training to 5 706 women and provision of seed capital to 87 undertakings).

The EU's €50 million budget support programme for the Social Plan, signed by former President Sánchez Cerén's administration in February 2017 (*Apoyo al Plan Social de El Salvador 2014-2019*), included the productive inclusion of women as one of its three specific objectives geared to support social inclusion in El Salvador. Progress of CM's concessional productive loans scheme *Fondo Mujer* (first piloted in the second half of 2016 with the support of the Italian Cooperation Agency and United Nations Women) was selected as one of the eight

indicators linked to tranche disbursements under the programme.

### **3. Working lunch with the Minister of Foreign Affairs Alexandra Hill Tinoco**

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alexandra Hill Tinoco, began her statement by stressing that the government in office has inherited a difficult legacy. She accused the former Presidents of misuse of public funds and observed that one ex-President fled to Nicaragua (Mauricio Funes), another is serving a prison term (Antonio Saca) and the third one died, while serving a house arrest, before a trial on corruption charges could take place (Francisco Flores). The rampant corruption under the previous Presidents has totally damaged the social fabric of the country and led to polarisation and mistrust. Ms Hill told Members that when she took over her ministry, she found a completely run-down organisation (“a horror”, as she called it). The Minister deplored migration from El Salvador to the North (Mexico and USA) because of a lack of opportunities. Currently, the country has a population of approximately 6.5 million inhabitants, while an estimated 3.5 million Hispanics of Salvadoran origin live in the US, which means an incredible loss of human capital for the country.

Ms Hill pointed out that the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights visited El Salvador in December 2019 for the first time in 32 years and made recommendations on the human rights situation in the country. She underlined that Central America is a club of democracies, as is the EU, and that the countries in the region are interdependent. Against this background, it would be important to develop a project for the region. El Salvador welcomes the initiative launched by Costa Rica for a profound restructuring of the Central American System of Integration (*Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana*, SICA). The Foreign Affairs Minister was critical of the Ortega regime in Nicaragua and confirmed that the government of El Salvador has suspended relations with the regimes of Maduro and Ortega. She underlined the importance of strengthening the capacity of Salvadoran institutions to fight the different forms of corruption. She confirmed that water remains a problem since many water sources are polluted and clean water is scarce in the country. However, there is no quick solution to these problems; instead, it requires a true development plan for the country. She affirmed that the government wants to restore democracy and relations with the US. Ms Hill highlighted that the government has opened up the country to the world and wants to make it attractive for foreign investments.

The following Members spoke: Tilly Metz, Javier Nart, Ignazio Corrao.

### **4. Meeting with the Nicaraguan opposition**

Participants:

Civic Alliance for Justice and Democracy (*Alianza Cívica por la Justicia y la Democracia*, ACJD):

Mario Arana, Coordinator of the Committee of International Relations for the ACJD and President of the American Chamber of Commerce *Cámara Americana de Comercio*, AmCham);

Valeska Valle, Representative of the Student Sector of ACJD and President of the April 19 University Movement (*Movimiento Universitario 19 de Abril*, MU19A);

Edwin Carcache, Exiled Representative of the ACJD and Former Political Prisoner, Student and Representative of Civil Society);

Medardo Mairena, Representative and Leader of the Peasant Movement (*Movimiento*

*Campeño*)

National Blue and White Unity (*Unidad Nacional Azul y Blanco*, UNAB):

Felix Maradiaga, Political Council Member of UNAB;

Guillermo Incer, Political Council Member of UNAB; Alexa Zamora, Political Council Member of UNAB

Others:

Brooklyn Rivera, Indigenous Leader of *Yatama*;

Mauricio Díaz, Chairman for International Relations of Citizens for Liberty (*Ciudadanos por la Libertad*, CxL)

Mr Mario Arana, Coordinator of the Committee of International Relations for the Civic Alliance for Justice and Democracy (*ACJD*) and President of the American Chamber of Commerce (*AmCham*), thanked the delegation for the invitation to meet and the support given by the European Parliament through its resolution from December 2019. He said the agreement concluded with the Nicaraguan government in 2019 has still not been fulfilled. From the 700 opposition prisoners the regime had promised to release, 70 still are in prison. He said that pressure on the opposition is intensifying and, in addition, the economic situation is deteriorating.

Felix Maradiaga, Political Council Member of the National Blue and White Unity (UNAB), said that talks between opposition forces are being held to form a National Coalition, which unites all civil and political organisations opposed to the government of Daniel Ortega. The aim of this coalition is to fight for justice, democracy and against the dictatorship of Daniel Ortega. This project is currently in a phase of coordination and dialogue. The opposition is also preparing a joint proposal for electoral reform, which should be put in place before the elections scheduled for November 2021. The programme has three main components: 1) freedom and human rights, 2) electoral reform, and 3) a government plan for a new Nicaragua. Ortega is benefiting from internal contradictions in the US. Mr Maradiaga stressed that the presence of the EU is very much appreciated by the Nicaraguan opposition.

Medardo Mairena, Representative and Leader of the Peasant Movement, said that the Peasant Movement has organised seven national marches against the Ortega regime, which were suppressed by the police and the military. Selective assassinations by police and paramilitaries in the countryside continue as a way of intimidation. Nicaragua witnesses a lot of violence, torture, assassinations and, most disturbingly, violence against children. He maintained that only external pressure could save democracy in Nicaragua. Mr Mairena stressed that the opposition has to promote its plan for electoral reform. He called for the release of the 70 political prisoners.

Brooklyn Rivera, Indigenous Leader of *Yatama*, said the situation was critical, as his people are faced with a policy of internal colonialization; natural resources in indigenous land are plundered, armed paramilitaries are roaming the countryside and the pressure of displacement is mounting. Mr Rivera accused President Ortega of defending the colonisers. He emphasized that *Yatama* is not a proper party, but a grassroots organisation.

Mauricio Díaz, Chairman for International Relations of Citizens for Liberty (CxL), explained that geopolitically, Venezuela is the primary objective of the US, followed by Nicaragua. President Ortega knows that he will lose the next elections if they are held in a fair and



transparent way, which is why he does not want to negotiate. The report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Michelle Bachelet, accurately documented the massacre of the Nicaraguan people in the aftermath of the demonstrations in April 2018.

Edwin Carcache, Exiled Representative of ACJD, highlighted his status as student in exile. More than 90,000 Nicaraguans have fled the country, most of them living now in Costa Rica. A huge humanitarian crisis is taking place. People who wanted to return to Nicaragua were killed at the border.

Guillermo Incer, Political Council Member of UNAB, pointed out that there are only 20 months left to achieve electoral reform, which is very little time for this complex task. Ortega has to feel pressure to agree to reforms and, therefore, sanctions are needed. Institutional sanctions are not as effective as personal sanctions, which should target persons in government and security forces, including the military, who are supporting the regime. Institutional sanctions should be targeted at those enterprises, which support the government.

Alexa Zamora, Political Council Member of UNAB, pointed out that the current government repeatedly violates human rights and has thus created a humanitarian crisis. There are clandestine prisons and extrajudicial executions. The Nicaraguan people need the support of the EU. She emphasised that she would like to see good coordination between the US and the EU.

Valeska Valle, Representative of the Student Sector of ACJD and President of the April 19 University Movement, expressed her worries about illegal troops, operating in the Caribbean part and in the north of the country, who carry out secret assassinations. Forced displacements are another major problem. He said that ACJD would lead a civic and peaceful fight to find a compromise.

Responding to a question by DCAM Chair Tilly Metz, Mr Mario Arana said that negotiations were the only way to achieve a solution and that the opposition would be willing to negotiate in good faith even after two failed attempts to find a way out of the crisis.

The following Members spoke: Tilly Metz, Javier Nart.

## **5. Meeting with H.E. Nayib Bukele, President of El Salvador**

President Nayib Bukele orchestrated the meeting with the EP's Delegation very carefully to cater to his audience. He knew that his intrusion into the National Assembly on 9 February (in El Salvador also dubbed „9 F“) would be at the centre of the MEPs' attention. Hence, his main objective was to diffuse concerns about upcoming authoritarianism. Instead of the one hour scheduled for the meeting, it lasted more than two hours, illustrating the importance that the President attached to this meeting and a gesture in line with the impression that Mr Bukele cares about his international image. He skilfully mediated the meeting, mainly through social media, even publishing several tweets during the meeting.

The President opened his statement by praising the good relations between the EU and El Salvador while at the same time complaining about a cut of EU cooperation funds for the country (by EUR 23 million). He underlined that El Salvador is ready to work with the EU in many fields, such as development and human rights.

Mr Bukele pointed out the successes of his government in fighting criminality and lowering the extremely high homicide rates. According to official statistics, the annual homicide rate has fallen from 81 homicides per 100 000 inhabitants in 2016 to 36 per 100 000 in 2019 (2016: 5 269

homicides in total, 2019: 2390 homicides). The government is tackling the main challenges of El Salvador, namely poverty, migration, a lack of jobs and violence. He deplored the fact that only 600,000 out of the 6.5 million Salvadorans have social insurance and 33 000 people live on the street in the capital San Salvador alone. He accused the Legislative Assembly of a lack of willingness to legislate in order to resolve these problems. As an example, he quoted the Amnesty Law (*Ley de Amnistía General de 1993*), which was cancelled by the Supreme Court in 2016 and highlighted that 3 ½ years later the Legislative Assembly has still not adopted a new law to the detriment of the victims of the civil war and families of the victims. He recalled that the deadline for the adoption of a new law is 28 February 2020, meaning four days after the meeting with the EP Delegation.

President Bukele also alleged that the slowness of legislators was one of the factors, which led to the events of 9 February 2019 and the following constitutional crisis. He defended the right of the executive to convene an extraordinary session of the Assembly, referring to Art. 167.7 of the Constitution, which posits that it is the responsibility of the Council of Ministers to convene the Legislative Assembly extraordinarily when the interests of the Republic demand it.

President Bukele downplayed the events of 9 February 2020, the day he entered the Legislative Assembly accompanied by the military with the aim of putting pressure on legislators to approve the government's request for additional security funding. He claimed that it had been a peaceful demonstration and that the Assembly's Vice-President authorised the military to enter the Parliament. Moreover, he said that he had spent only three minutes in the plenary room. Bukele assured the EP's Delegation that the action had not been directed against the democratic order.

President Bukele emphasised his respect for and observance of freedom of the press and fundamental rights. He claimed there was total freedom of the press, which he considered to be illustrated by the publication of 45 critical articles on the government during the last few days.

Responding to a question by DCAM Chair Tilly Metz regarding the women sentenced to long prison terms due to miscarriages because of El Salvador's rigid abortion laws, Bukele showed understanding and acknowledged the existence of this problem. He recognised that women are punished twice, first by the miscarriage itself and second by the imprisonment. He quoted the recent example of a child who got pregnant after being raped by her stepfather. Consequently, she had a miscarriage but was subject to criminal proceedings nonetheless. He said that the 17 cases of women who are currently in prison have been brought to the Supreme Court. Although it is a judicial decision, he promised that the government would do its part to resolve the problem. President Bukele said he was aware of the risk of a backlash by the very conservative Salvadoran society but deemed that his current rates of popularity (between 80-90% approval ratings) would allow him to do so. At the same time, he announced his wife's launch of a programme, together with UNICEF, providing care for children so that their mothers have the opportunity to join the workforce.

Responding to a question regarding the incorporation of the Secretariat of Social Inclusion (SIS) into the Ministry of Culture, he first contended that the Secretariat was mostly staffed with partisans and that many of them were not performing well. He justified the incorporation into the Ministry of Culture, explaining that culture is not only about spectacles, but also about a way of life.

The President underlined the importance of his Territorial Control Plan (*Plan de Control Territorial*) to fight crime and violence and to ensure citizens' security. Phase 5 of the plan focuses on prevention of recidivism and immersion of criminals into society. He said that El



Salvador loses 30% of its GDP due to violence. The major cause for violence is prevailing inequality in the country.

The following Members spoke: Tilly Metz, Javier Nart, Juan Ignacio Zoido Álvarez, Caterina Chinnici.

## **6. Meeting with Civil Society Organisations and Representative of the International Organization for Migration (IOM)**

Participants:

Manuel Escalante, Central American University's Human Rights Institute (*Instituto de Derechos Humanos de la Universidad Centroamericana*, IDHUCA);

Noah Bullock, *Cristosal*;

Verónica Reyna, Passionist Social Services (*Servicio Social Pasionista*, SSPAS);

Antonio Rodríguez López-Tercero, Foundation for Studies on the Application of Law (*Fundación de Estudios para la Aplicación del Derecho*, FESPAD);

Ramón Villalta, Social Initiative for Democracy (*Iniciativa Social para la Democracia*, ISD);

Juan Meléndez, The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD);

Alejandra Burgos, Feminist Collective for Local Development (*Colectiva Feminista para el Desarrollo Local*);

Bianka Rodríguez, Association Communicating and Training Trans Women in El Salvador (*Asociación Comunicando y Capacitando a Mujeres*, COMCAVIS TRANS);

Oliver Martin, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC);

Iván Morales, Oxfam;

Jorge Perazo, International Organization for Migration (IOM)

This meeting was chaired by First Vice-President Javier Nart, as the Chair had a parallel meeting with the President of the Legislative Assembly.

Bianka Rodríguez, Association Communicating and Training Trans Women in El Salvador (COMCAVIS TRANS), said that the question today is how to maintain the progress made in the field of LGBTI rights. She criticised the assignment of the LGBTI portfolio to the Ministry of Culture, which she did not consider a very strategic ministry. She deplored that the killings of transsexual persons persist in El Salvador and that these crimes are not prosecuted. For the public, transgender people do not exist.

Alejandra Burgos, Feminist Collective for Local Development, stressed the high number of femicides and widespread sexual violence in the country. She pointed out that many girls between 12 and 19 years get pregnant and can be criminalised on the grounds of the very strict anti-abortion law. Eight women have been sentenced to 30 to 40 years in prison. She also deplored a series of attacks against journalists during the previous months. She underlined that El Salvador needs free media to investigate. In a time when there are attempts to restrict the media landscape, it is important to maintain access to public information.

Noah Bullock, *Cristosal*, judged the establishment of the International Commission against Impunity in El Salvador (*Comisión Internacional Contra la Impunidad de El Salvador*, CICIES) as a symbolic progress only. She warned that CICIES could be used as an instrument to destroy the opposition in El Salvador. She said despite a guarantee by the Organisation of American States (OAS), it is doubtful that the Commission will have enough independence and resources.

Verónica Reyna, Passionist Social Services (SSPAS), criticised the complete lack of transparency as regards the Territorial Control Plan (*Plan de Control Territorial*). There is no information available on the plan. Ms Reyna explained that the previous government used the military to maintain security. It seems that the fight against criminal gangs is also conducted by illegal means; i.e. there are reports about extrajudicial executions by security forces. While it is a fact that the number of homicides has decreased, it is not clear if this is a consequence of the Territorial Control Plan. There is no apparent strategy and the effectiveness of the Plan remains unclear.

Antonio Rodríguez, Foundation for Studies on the Application of Law (FESPAD), observed that armed forces are being permanently integrated into security forces, in order to improve public security. This has weakened all hopes civil society had and is exacerbating polarisation in the country. The question of public security is used to generate political polarisation; at the same time, a culture of anti-democratic values is being established. There are many doubts about what is being pursued under the theme of security. Mr Rodríguez pointed out while the numbers of homicides are falling according to governmental data, the number of disappeared persons is increasing. He cautioned that more data is still needed to draw conclusions on this development. He suggested that many people do not contact authorities, if relatives are missing, as they want to avoid repression. At the same time, he denounced that El Salvador is becoming a society which denounces out of fear and creates a culture of fear.

Juan Meléndez, Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), expressed his worries about the closing of important institutions by the Bukele administration. At the beginning of his term, Bukele eliminated the secretariats of planning, social inclusion, transparency and governance. On 9 February, the President sent the Deputies of the Legislative Assembly home, triggering the worst constitutional crisis in El Salvador since the signing of the peace agreements in 1992. Only the pressure of the international community, the complaints of civil society organizations and the opposition of other institutions were able to contain the institutional breach that President Bukele's actions provoked. Mr Meléndez said President Bukele emphasised his security plans and increased substantially the budget for security. However, it is not clear what the components of those security plans are exactly, because there is no document that concretely describes the content of these components.

Oliver Martin, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), said that more than 30% of prisoners are held in isolation, without visits from their families. According to him, when these people get out of prison they will face significant problems. In El Salvador, the main business of organised crime is not drug trafficking but extortion. He added that the female population in prisons multiplied by 8. This entailed a huge social cost, he said, as children stay alone at home, and many children let alone are drawn into drug trafficking.

Iván Morales, Oxfam, stated that water is one of the main problems of the country, especially in the so-called dry corridor (*corredor seco*), which covers 60% of the Salvadoran territory, entailing a high risk of desertification. *El Niño* has much more impact in this zone. The people living there have no opportunities to stay; displacement is the consequence. Hunger has returned to the country. A major problem is also the distribution of water, as the public service is not working. The lack of water is leading to social conflicts. He stressed that El Salvador needs to find a balance in its eco-systems and warned that El Salvador needs a more long-term vision as well as a dialogue about the future of the country. This would be beneficial for both the government and civil society. In the discussion, Mr Morales mentioned the problem of tax injustice and the need of fiscal reform: as a maximum, rich people only pay a mere five percent of their income as taxes, which leaves the state without adequate funding for a normal basic

public service.

Jorge Perazo, International Organization for Migration (IOM), said that violence is the second cause for migration. Migration is a multi-cause phenomenon, which has existed for 30 years. The rise of the *Maras*, criminal gangs, accelerated migratory movements. Another important factor are the consequences of climate change and ecological degradation, which deprives people of their livelihood. He also pointed at the fact that 20.22 percent of the GDP stems from remittances.

Manuel Escalante, Central American University's Human Rights Institute (IDHUCA), denounced recurrent media censorship. He criticised the Law of Communal Defence (*Ley de Defensa Comunal*), which was presented in the Legislative Assembly by the political party GANA, as it permits actions by groups of self-defenders and armed persons. He added that the process of militarisation had already begun under former governments.

Ramón Villalta, Social Initiative for Democracy (ISD), said that the breach of laws and the very slow legislative process as witnessed with the adoption of the National Reconciliation Law (*Ley de Reconciliación Nacional*) pose a major problem. In addition, the Water Law (*Ley General de Aguas*) has already been in the legislative pipeline for many years.

The following Members spoke: Javier Nart, Juan Ignacio Zoido Álvarez.

## **7. Meeting Tilly Metz, DCAM Chair, with H.E. Mario Ponce, President of the Legislative Assembly**

The planned meetings of the Delegation with the President and other representatives of the Legislative Assembly had to be cancelled on short notice as an urgent vote on the second version of the National Reconciliation Law (*Ley de Reconciliación Nacional*) had been put on the agenda of the Assembly at the time scheduled for the meetings. After the highly mediated meeting of the EP's delegation with President Bukele, it was absolutely necessary to meet Members of the Legislative Assembly in order to balance the meetings of the Delegation. The Head of the EU Delegation arranged a spontaneous meeting for DCAM Chair Tilly Metz with the President of the Legislative Assembly, Mr Mario Ponce. The conversation focussed on the tense relations between President Bukele and the Legislative Assembly. Ponce described the events of 9 February 2020, when the President, accompanied by armed police and military troops, entered the Assembly, as an orchestrated action. Mr Ponce also criticised the President for convening the Legislative Assembly for an extraordinary meeting to approve a USD109 million loan to buy equipment for the police and the armed forces while, at the same time, withdrawing all protection measures for the deputies. It was a clear demonstration of power by President Bukele. Mr Ponce acknowledged the President's strength in media work. He hinted that Bukele might suffer from psychological problems (schizophrenia), as the President often seems to forget what he said the day before. Mr Ponce said that President Bukele does not shy away from portraying the members of the Legislative Assembly in a negative light.

## **8. Meeting with H.E. Felix Ulloa, Vice-President El Salvador; H.E. Guillermo Castillo, Vice-President Guatemala; and H.E. Ricardo Álvarez, Vice-President Honduras**

The three Vice-Presidents of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras came together in San Salvador to present new projects in the framework of the Trifinio Plan (*Plan Trifinio*). The plan is a trans-border project covering an ecological zone of around 7 400 km<sup>2</sup> where the borders of

El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras meet. It seeks to develop a process for managing the environment and the territory of this region, in order to improve the living conditions of border communities. Guillermo Castillo, Vice-President of Guatemala, said that the new projects would tackle deficiencies in the health system. There will be a thorough assessment of the needs on site with visits by the Vice-Presidents scheduled to all departments of the region. The state of the public services will be examined. Vice-President Castillo underlined the importance of the fight against corruption, which is a primordial objective for a transparent government. An important programme is also a new nutrition plan. 50 % of the children in the region suffer from malnutrition. The Vice-President asked for support by the European Union for this programme. Vice-President Castillo said that the second issue he discussed with his colleagues was fiscal reform, as all countries need more revenues to finance their programmes. He also underlined the importance of investing in education. Many children do not attend school because they do not have the physical strength. This is a problem, which needs to be resolved comprehensively.

The following Members spoke: Javier Nart, Ignazio Corrao, Caterina Chinnici.

#### **9. Working lunch hosted by Ambassador Andreu Bassols, EU Head of Delegation in El Salvador, with Mr Vinicio Cerezo, Secretary General of SICA**

Mr Vinicio Cerezo, Secretary General of the Central American System of Integration (SICA), introduced his statement with a historic review. In the 1970s and 1980s, Central America was suffering from very serious ideological and political problems, the lack of democracy in the region and confrontations of a political-military kind. 15 years later, the war reached an impasse and a space for dialogue opened up for a non-military solution. In Nicaragua, the Sandinistas had taken the power, whereas in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras governments were installed by a coup. Democratic groups in the region were suffering heavy losses with more than 300 of their leaders assassinated. Following the conclusion of the peace agreements in Central America, SICA was founded in February 1993 in order to promote economic and social development in the region. SICA has eight members with each of the countries facing a different political reality. SICA's General Secretariat is based in San Salvador, the Economic Secretariat for Central American Economic Integration (*Secretaría de Integración Económica Centroamericana*, SIECA) in Guatemala City and the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (*Banco Centroamericano de Integración Económica*, CABEI) in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. The pro tempore presidency of SICA is passed on in alphabetical order of the member countries. The Secretariat is elected every four years. The development strategy for Central America is based on six pillars: 1) infrastructure, 2) free movement of persons, 3) the fight against climate change, 4) citizen's security, 5) defence of women rights and the rights of the most vulnerable populations, 6) economic integration. Mr Cerezo said that the next step for Central America would be to create a political union, a Central American Federation, but highlighted that this proposal needs to be put forward with caution. The elections in Central America have produced presidents with different political tendencies and differences in a number of subjects. However, despite these differences, the system is working.

The following Members spoke: Javier Nart, Ignazio Corrao, Caterina Chinnici.

#### **10. Meeting with Ambassador Ronalht Ochaeta, Representative of the International Commission against Impunity in El Salvador (Comisión Internacional Contra la Impunidad de El Salvador, CICIES)**

Ambassador Ronalth Ochaeta, Representative of the International Commission against Impunity in El Salvador (CICIES) explained that this new institution to fight corruption was created by the Salvadoran government with support of the Organisation of American States (OAS). There were different views on the level of autonomy and independence this body should have. There is a plan to create an “anti-corruption” unit within the police. Currently, CICIES is negotiating agreements with different institutions of the State, of which the most important is the agreement with the Attorney General (fiscal general). On 9 December 2019, an agreement on cooperation and technical assistance was signed to strengthen the capacities of the Office of the Prosecutor to combat impunity and corruption in the civil service. The model of CICIES is different from its (extinct) Guatemalan counterpart, the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (*Comisión Internacional contra la Impunidad en Guatemala*, CICIG). In El Salvador, any modification requires a constitutional reform, which needs to be approved by two legislative assemblies. The next Assembly will ratify the agreement. The scope of the work of CICIES is limited to the executive, i.e. all ministries and its dependencies. CICIES will investigate only major cases where at least three persons are involved. Currently, three cases are being investigated in close cooperation with the Attorney General. There is a lack of technical resources, which makes it impossible to follow up on all cases. The most important goal is to strengthen the institutions and to build citizenship. Mr Ochaeta underlined that CICIES wants to work with civil society. He said that people know exactly who is corrupt, but they do not know how they can make use of their rights.

The following Members spoke: Tilly Metz, Javier Nart

## **II. Honduras (25-27 February 2020)**

### **1. Working breakfast hosted by Alessandro Palmero, Head of the EU Delegation in Honduras with Ambassadors of EU Member States in Honduras**

EU Ambassadors participating: H.E. Mr Guillermo Kirkpatrick de la Vega (Spain), H.E. Mr Emmanuel Pineda (France), H.E. Mr Thomas Wriessning (Germany)

Introducing the debate, Alessandro Palmero, Head of the EU Delegation in Honduras, described Honduras as a country with high poverty levels, a highly polarized society and a troubling security situation with highest levels of violence. Honduras is a transit country for cocaine; corruption is widespread. The economy was stable until six months ago, but, at the time of the visit, economic growth was decreasing. Political instability is deterring foreign investment and there is no internal investment. The political and economic situation as well as the country's security context have led to mass migration, namely so-called ‘caravans’. The 2017 general elections were overshadowed by widespread suspicions of fraud, although the EU Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) did not find evidence of fraud. Within the governing party, the National Party of Honduras (*Partido Nacional de Honduras*, PNH), political infighting is taking place regarding the succession of President Juan Orlando Hernández Alvarado (commonly called Juan Orlando or JOH). Liberty and Refoundation (*Partido Libertad y Refundación*, LIBRE), the new third force in Honduras, is doing well in polls. The brother of President Orlando, Mr Juan Antonio („Tony“) Hernández, is in jail for drug trafficking in the United States. Investigations by MACCIH (anti-corruption body, the Mission to Support the Fight Against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras) started to dig into co-responsibilities of more members of the Hernández family. In this context, the mandate of MACCIH was not renewed. The EU contributed to the funding of MACCIH and maintained a constructive



dialogue with all actors until its closure.

German Ambassador Thomas Wriessning pointed out that there is no foreign investment in the country; on the contrary, investors are leaving Honduras. There is also a lack of jobs. Honduras has to reintegrate more than 100 000 people returning from Guatemala. Many children cannot attend school. The government is setting unsuitable priorities focussing on security issues without much success, while the budgets for health and education are cut. Honduras is one of the world's most unequal countries, dominated by a political and economic elite. Courts are mostly politicised and, consequently, most cases are not brought before courts. Building an independent judiciary is crucial. A new census has to be carried out in time to allow for transparent and fair elections. President Orlando has not much trust in the police and thus counts on the military for the fight to ensure security. A process of militarisation can be observed in many areas.

Spanish Ambassador Guillermo Kirkpatrick de la Vega stated that there is a persistent climate of distrust in Honduras. Two important electoral laws are about to be adopted. There have been many protests during the last few years and people are increasingly tired. The macroeconomic situation of Honduras is good and inflation is under control. The economy depends a lot on remittances, which account for 20% of the GDP, almost the same amount as in El Salvador. Economic growth is decreasing from 3% to 2%. The fight against rampant criminality follows a policy of '*mano dura*' but solving this problem permanently would require social policies. Migration to Spain increased considerably; currently, 170 000 Hondurans live in Spain. The human rights situation is worrying. In 2019, Honduras had the highest number of homicides of human rights defenders per capita in the world. Honduras also represents a dangerous place for journalists and LGBTI people.

The French Ambassador Emmanuel Pineda denounced that money for education and health is being diverted. People had a lot of faith in MACCIH and would like to restore MACCIH to its original form. Social mobility does not exist in Honduras, which is dominated by the elite. The economic situation according to official numbers is good, but 60% of the population live in poverty. The human rights situation is worrying; the homicide rate is very high and there is extreme violence against women. Rights of indigenous people are affected by mining projects, hydroelectric power plants, and the cultivation of palm oil.

## **2. Meeting with President of the Republic H.E. Juan Orlando Hernández and Minister for Foreign Affairs H.E. Lisandro Rosales**

President Juan Orlando Hernández opened his statement by noting that climate change is a huge challenge for Honduras and that dry periods are increasing dramatically. He deplored that Honduras is not receiving funding from the Green Climate Fund (*Fondo Verde del Clima*, FVC), which was set up by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2010. He asked for the EU's support to get access to the latter.

President Juan Orlando praised the benefits of the EU-Central America Association Agreement and advocated a strengthening of bilateral cooperation. As an example of a good bilateral project, he pointed to the EU-Honduras Voluntary Partnership Agreement on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT), which is the first agreement of its kind to be implemented in Latin America.

President Orlando stressed the progress made to increase citizens' security and said that the number of homicides has decreased by 50% since 2013. Much of the violence is due to the

operations of the four drug cartels, which operate in Honduras as well as in the whole Northern Triangle (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras), which is a strategic area for drug trafficking. President Orlando blamed inequalities and unequal economic growth for criminality. According to him, Honduras' second largest city, San Pedro Sula, was the most violent city of the world until 2016 but now has improved considerably due to the implementation of an effective policing system. In 2013, the city counted 187 homicides per 100 000 residents, which dropped to 55 in 2019.

The President pointed out that 46 % of the population live in rural areas. The biggest challenge is to create jobs and to give young people better prospects. President Orlando underlined the importance of the special economic zones (*maquiladoras*) in Honduras for the development of the country's economy. He underlined that there are four important banks relevant for the funding of development in Honduras.

President Orlando stressed that the creation of jobs is a huge challenge for the country. In that context, he welcomed the decision by Nike to construct a new factory in San Pedro de Sula, which will create more than 6000 jobs and will be the largest sportswear factory in Latin America.

Turning to corruption, the President said that corruption also exists in Europe. He explained that a prolongation of the mandate for the anti-corruption body MACCIH would have needed the consent of Congress. Regrettably, despite long negotiations, Congress voted by 71 to 57 votes against the extension of the mandate in December 2019, claiming that the mission had exceeded its powers and had violated the Constitution. President Orlando said that the fight against corruption would continue and that the government will hire 100 new prosecutors and 50 more special agents. The President assured that in today's Honduras, nobody is untouchable anymore.

The following Members spoke: Tilly Metz, Javier Nart, Ignazio Corrao, Juan Ignacio Zoido Álvarez, Caterina Chinnici, Teuvo Hakkarainen.

### 3. Lunch with Businessmen

**Participants:** Daniel Fortin, Vice-President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Tegucigalpa (*Cámara de Comercio e Industrias de Tegucigalpa*, CCIT); Pedro Barquero, President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Cortés (*Cámara de Comercio e Industrias de Cortés*, CCIC); Juan Carlos Sikaffy, President of the Honduran Council of Private Enterprise (*Consejo Hondureño de la Empresa Privada*, COHEP)

Daniel Fortin, Vice-President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Tegucigalpa (CCIT), underlined that the respect of rule of law is fundamental for an efficient and transparent state as well as for competitiveness. Therefore, it is important to strengthen the rule of law. Unfortunately, Honduras declined 25 positions in the [International Rule of Law Index](#) in 2019. Mr Fortin said that corruption is an endemic evil in the country, which also leads to fiscal problems as the state lacks revenues. In addition, taxes are mainly imposed on consumption, not on revenues, a situation which hits the poor worse than the rich. The state has to invest more in health and education, Honduras urgently needs a different health system. Honduras does not have enough hospital beds and ventilators to cope with a possible outbreak of COVID-19. Moreover, Honduras needs a plan to fight corruption. The enterprises have to collaborate more. The current situation, criminality, and the lack of jobs push many people to emigrate. While Honduras showed good growth rates until 2018, GDP growth will not reach 3 % in 2019. 60 %

of people are experiencing job-related difficulties, there is a huge informal sector and there are 900 000 young people who neither study nor work. A core problem is the low level of institutional trust, which leads to a dramatic decrease of investments. Both the country's telecommunications sector and the financial sector are very solid and absorb 66 percent of the FDI (Foreign Direct Investment), but they are not major job creators.

The following Members spoke: Tilly Metz, Javier Nart.

#### **4. Meeting with Civil Society Organisations and lawyers of human rights defenders**

Participants:

Carlos Hernández, Association for a More Just Society (*Asociación para una Sociedad más Justa*, ASJ);

Menelson Barrientos and Donny Reyes, LGBT Rainbow Association (*Asociación Arcoíris*); José Ramón Ávila, ASONOG;

José Guadalupe Ruelas, Covenant House Honduras (*Casa Alianza Honduras*, CAH);

Franklin Almendares, National Union of Rural Workers (*Central Nacional de Trabajadores del Campo*, CNTC);

Reina Rivera, Diakonia;

Moises Sánchez Gomes, Federation of Trade Unions of Agribusiness Workers (*Federación de Sindicatos de Trabajadores de la Agroindustria*, FESTAGRO);

Ismael Zepeda, Social Forum of External Debt and Development of Honduras (FOSDEH);

Hervé Bund, Trócaire

Carlos Hernández, Association for a More Just Society (ASJ), said that MACCIH made an important contribution to the political culture of the country. In Honduras, systemic corruption affects all sectors of society, notably the public sector. During the four years of MACCIH's activity, progress was made, though you have to be pragmatic regarding expectations. By diverting funds from much needed investment in education, health and other public services, the effects of corruption become devastating ("corruption kills!"). He denounced that 1 100 000 children are outside the school system in Honduras.

Menelson Barrientos, LGTB Rainbow Association (*Asociación Arcoiris*), said that the situation of LGBTI people is difficult. 331 LGBTI people were assassinated since 2009.

Reina Rivera, Diakonia, said the way in which public policies are managed is favouring corruption. MACCIH was targeting all those who were misusing public funds. Hondurans are grateful that the EU supported MACCIH. After the closure of MACCIH, the government entrusted the National Anti-Corruption Council (*Consejo Nacional Anticorrupción*, CNA) with the fight against corruption, a body, which lacks the clout of MACCIH.

José Guadalupe Ruelas, Covenant House Honduras (CAH), said that Honduras has transformed itself into a very dangerous place. Minimal protective standards are missing. 98 % of crimes remain unpunished. He said that Honduras witnesses religious fundamentalism in its most extreme form. Hooded military police men are carrying out assassinations during the night, which is called "the silent death", civil society organisations are being annihilated. They are leading a fight for survival. Moreover, the growing militarisation of Honduras is particularly worrying. Organised crime has infiltrated all structures. A National Protection Mechanism (*Sistema Nacional de Protección*) has been created to protect human rights defenders, journalists, social communicators, and justice operators but the mechanism has not been

sufficiently effective in guaranteeing the safety of those who have received protective measures. Life expectancy for LGTBI people is only around 40 years, for transsexuals it is 35 years. There is still a state policy of discrimination against LGBTI persons.

Moises Sánchez Gomes, Federation of Trade Unions of Agribusiness Workers (FESTAGRO), reported that the relations with trade unions in the country resemble a war, especially in rural areas. Private enterprises are leading a constant fight against trade union representatives. They seemingly are above the law. Living conditions in the countryside are miserable and eight of ten persons live in extreme poverty.

Franklin Almendares, National Union of Rural Workers (CNTC), pointed out that 1 750 trade unionists are in prison and that they might be subject to criminalisation, persecution and assassination. The Bank for Agricultural Development (*Banco Nacional de Desarrollo Agrícola*) is only lending money to projects of millionaires but not to those of small farmers. The trade unions want justice; they are the defenders of life on the earth. The grievances in the rural areas are leading to enormous migration from the countryside.

Ismael Zepeda, Social Forum of External Debt and Development of Honduras, (FOSDEH), said that corruption in Honduras accounts for 12 % of the GDP; corruption is systemic. Drug trafficking is ubiquitous and dominates 40 % of the economy.

Hervé Bund, Trócaire, said the EU could do more to support human rights in Honduras. Attacks against human rights defenders are common, the assassination of Berta Cáceres being one of the more prominent cases. Though seven people were already convicted for the assassination, the instigators of the crime have yet to be identified and brought to justice. He reiterated that the National Protection Mechanism (*Sistema Nacional de Protección*) is not working well at the moment. He criticised the predominant economic model called „extractivism“ (which relies on the extraction and export of non-processed natural resources), and reminded the audience that the UN Convention 169 (on the prior, free and informed consultation of indigenous and farmer communities ahead of the execution of a project in their area of habitat) is not respected. He also referred to the seven Guapinol environmental rights defenders, currently in preventive prison, who are deprived from the right to defend themselves in liberty.

The following Members spoke: Tilly Metz, Javier Nart.

## **5. Meeting with the National Electoral Council and the National Registry of Individuals**

Participants:

Kevin Aguirre (*Consejo Nacional Electoral*, CNE);  
Ana Hall, National Electoral Council (*Consejo Nacional Electoral*, CNE);  
Enrique Reina, Tribunal of Electoral Justice (*Tribunal de Justicia Electoral*, TJE);  
Gaudy Bustillo, Tribunal of Electoral Justice (TJE),  
Roberto Breve, National Registry of Individuals (*Registro Nacional de las Personas*, RNP)

Delegation Members met with high-ranking representatives of the three institutions involved in the election process, namely the National Electoral Council (*Consejo Nacional Electoral*, CNE), the Tribunal of Electoral Justice (*Tribunal de Justicia Electoral*, TJE) and the National Registry of Individuals (*Registro Nacional de las Personas*, RNP).

Enrique Reina, President of the TJE, said that Honduras' National Congress approved the constitutional reform, which paved the way for the electoral reforms, on 24 January 2019, by a

large majority. In March 2019, Congress approved the reform of the RNP.

Ana Hall, President of the CNE, said that the reform and modernisation of the RNP is a key element of the electoral reform in Honduras. Last year, the Congress established a Commission for the reform of this body in order to ensure the trust of Honduran people in the electoral process. The RNP included many dead individuals and individuals, who do not live in the country anymore. Currently, a census is being carried out in order to update the RNP, which will benefit the enrolment of 6.5 million citizens and deliver 5.0 million new identity documents.

Moreover, a new system for data transmission will be established, which should be ready six months ahead of the elections.

The National Congress of Honduras is drafting legislative proposals for reforms that would guarantee free, fair, and transparent elections, which would be substantially better than those of 2017.

As required by the Constitution, two legislatures approved a historic constitutional reform, creating the CNE and the TEJ. This new constitutional framework represents a unique opportunity to re-establish the electoral system by democratic and institutional means.

The EU supported the electoral reform process with technical assistance. Mr Reina expressed his satisfaction with the EU's support. The recommendations of the EU Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) in 2013 and 2017 were partly included in the reforms.

Ideally, the electoral reform should be concluded in time before the primary elections scheduled for March 2021.

The following Members spoke: Tilly Metz, Javier Nart.

## **6. Meeting with 1st Vice President Antonio Rivera, Directive Board and Heads of the Political Groups in the National Congress**

Participants:

Antonio Rivera, National Party of Honduras (*Partido Nacional de Honduras*, PNH);  
Mario Pérez, National Party of Honduras (*Partido Nacional*, PNH);  
Mario Segura, Liberal Party of Honduras (*Partido Liberal de Honduras*, PLH);  
Mario Noe Villafranca, Honduran Patriotic Alliance (*Alianza Patriótica Hondureña*);  
Carlos Zelaya, Liberty and Refoundation (*Partido Libertad y Refundación*, LIBRE);  
Jorge Calix, Liberty and Refoundation (*Partido Libertad y Refundación*, LIBRE);  
Enrique Yllescas, Honduran Patriotic Alliance (*Alianza Patriótica Hondureña*);  
Gladis Aurora, National Party of Honduras (*Partido Nacional*, PNH);  
Doris Gutiérrez, Innovation and Unity Party (*Partido Innovación y Unidad Social Demócrata*, PINU-SD)

DCAM Chair Tilly Metz opened the exchange of views with the question of whether the new penal code would shorten sentences for corruption-related crime and could criminalise the lawful exercise of the right to protest and the right to assembly with vaguely worded definitions of crimes like 'public disturbances'. Responding to the question, Mario Pérez, 3rd Vice President of Congress and Member of the National Party of Honduras (PNH), said that the Supreme Court of Justice has ordered Congress to elaborate a new penal code, in which the more than 20 existing laws will be unified. Congress adopted the new law in 2018, which will



enter into force soon. He thanked the EU for its support in providing European experts to advise Congress on this law. Mr Pérez said that Honduras is witnessing a lot of violence against women, which in too many cases leads to the death of the victim. He underlined the importance of the fight against crime, for which two new bodies were set up: a directorate for the fight against drug trafficking and a technical agency for criminal investigations.

Mario Segura, Liberal Party of Honduras (PLH), said the setting up of the new National Register of Persons (*Registro Nacional de las Personas*) is a very important step towards clean politics. He stressed that Congress has worked a lot on the subject of transparency. It is important that all parties, which are registered for the elections, can participate in the vote count to avoid fraud.

Jorge Calix, Liberty and Refoundation (LIBRE), said the new electoral law will ensure that citizens can exercise their electoral rights. The final draft of the law was submitted to the Vice President last week. The law takes into account the analysis made by Election Observer Missions of the irregularities found during the elections in 2017. Vice-President Pérez added that another important new law (*Ley de Financiamiento, Transparencia y Fiscalización a Partidos Políticos y a Candidatos*) regulates the funding of electoral campaigns.

On the closure of MACCIH, 3rd Vice President Mario Pérez said that MACCIH is at least substituted by a similar organisation, the Special Fiscal Unit Against Corruption Networks (UFERCO). He claimed that some actions of the MACCIH were against the law, which is why Congress decided not to prolong its mandate.

Mario Noe Villafranca, Honduran Patriotic Alliance, saw two main topics for cooperation with the EU: 1) water and hydroelectricity, and 2) the coronavirus. He pointed out that more than two million Hondurans are without access to the sanitary system and in many regions access to water is difficult.

Carlos Zelaya, Liberty and Refoundation (LIBRE), underlined the importance of preserving natural habitats and he cited the Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve as an example. The EU has dedicated EUR 5 million to support this reserve. There is a close cooperation between the EU, some European countries and Honduras regarding the fight against climate change.

Doris Gutiérrez, Innovation and Unity Party (PINU-SD), reported on the activities of the Support Front for MACCIH (*Frente de apoyo a MACCIH*), which organised massive demonstrations in favour of the anti-corruption body: up to 200 000 people took to the streets. She expressed her concerns regarding the transferral of personal data to the new National Register of Persons (*Registro Nacional de Personas*). She criticised the budgetary priorities of the government, arguing that the military and the agricultural sector currently are the main beneficiaries, whereas the real priorities should be focusing on youth, education, infrastructure and health. Ms Gutierrez qualified the security situation as alarming, pointing out that there are territories in the capital Tegucigalpa and in other cities, which are considered no-go areas. She called for better protection of women considering that one woman had been killed every day of 2020 at the time of the visit, in almost total impunity, and called for an Integral Law for the Protection of Women.

Enrique Yllescas, Honduran Patriotic Alliance, said he voted for extending the mandate of MACCIH, which played an important role in the fight against corruption and impunity. The security situation is improving as the homicide rate has fallen by 50 % since its peak. The main fields of activity of organised crime in Honduras are extortion, drug trafficking and kidnapping. Honduras has the youngest population of the Americas with many of the young people without a job or prospects for the future.

Gladis Aurora, National Party of Honduras (PNH), stressed the importance of education and said the Fundamental Law for Education (*Ley Fundamental de Educación*) stipulates a basic education of nine years for all children. She underlined the importance of the electoral reform and the establishment of the National Electoral Council (CNE). The issuing of new identity cards represents an important step towards fair and transparent elections.

The following Members spoke: Tilly Metz, Javier Nart, Caterina Chinnici.

**7. Working lunch with Claudia Barrientos, Organization of American States (OAS); Luis Javier Santos, Specialized Fiscal Unit Against Corruption Networks (*Unidad Fiscal Especializada Contra Redes de Corrupción*, UFERCO); Fatima Mena, National Anti Corruption Council (*Consejo Nacional Anticorrupción*, CNA), Gabriela Castellanos, National Anti Corruption Council (*Consejo Nacional Anticorrupción*, CNA), the latter women also belong to the Coalition for the extension of MACCIH**

Claudia Barrientos, Organization of American States (OAS), recalled that it was the Honduran government that asked for support for the Public Prosecutor's Office in Honduras in order to fight against corruption, which the OAS provided.

Fatima Mena, National Anticorruption Council (CNA), said the Coalition for the support of MACCIH was born to extend the mandate of MACCIH. The government's decision not to renew the mandate of MACCIH was a very strong blow to the fight against corruption. MACCIH attacked all institutions in its investigations. Honduras needs the support of the international community in order to be able to lead transparent and effective processes. Ms Mena criticised the government's twofold narratives, which it is using to pay lip service to the fight against corruption, while at the same time undermining efforts to fight corruption in the institutions.

Gabrielle Castellanos, National Anticorruption Council (CNA), underlined that the Honduran citizens are ready to fight corruption in an effective manner. Currently 80 % of all cases of corruption go unpunished. A recent study by the CNA concluded that corruption accounts for 40 % of Honduras' budget. The Attorney General has weakened the instruments for the fight against corruption.

Luis Javier Santos, Specialized Fiscal Unit Against Corruption Networks (UFERCO), specified that out of the four years in which MACCIH was operating, two years were spent on organising its works and two were dedicated to proper work. The investigations aimed at Congress members and members of three governments. In December 2017, the predecessor organisation of UFERCO, the Special Prosecutor's Fiscal Unit Against Impunity and Corruption (*Unidad Fiscal Especial Contra la Impunidad de la Corrupción*, UFECIC), in collaboration with MACCIH, accused 5 members of Congress of embezzlement of public funds through various NGOs. The case was transferred to the High Court of Accounts (*Tribunal Superior de Cuentas*, TSC) for investigation. This case caused strong hostility towards MACCIH in the National Congress, which ultimately led to the Congress' recommendation of 9 December 2019, not to renew MACCIH's mandate (by 71 votes in favour and 56 against). Mr Santos said that corruption is directly linked to drug trafficking with the institutions being at the service of drugs traffickers. He confirmed that the government is paying lip service to the fight against corruption while at the same time it is weakening the institutions to fight them.

Mr Santos deplored that UFERCO has only of eight prosecutors in one of the most corrupt countries in the world.

The following Members spoke: Tilly Metz, Javier Nart, Caterina Chinnici, Ignacio Zoido Álvarez.

## **8. Visit and assessment of EU-co-funded project: Access to Justice and Full Citizenship for LGBTI People in Honduras**

Delegation members met representatives of the Honduran LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex) community who were trained as legal facilitators in the framework of the EU-co-funded project 'Access to Justice and Full Citizenship for LGBTI People in Honduras'. This project is of high relevance as (LGBTI) persons in Honduras may face legal challenges not experienced by non-LGBTI residents. Though both male and female same-sex sexual activities are legal in Honduras and discrimination against LGBTI people is illegal under Article 321 of the Penal Code, LGBTI people face high rates of violence and homicide. Since 2009, aggressions have increased significantly: 264 LGBTI people, of whom approximately half were gay men, were murdered in the country between 2009 and 2017. In 2019 alone, 723 aggressions against LGBTI people were registered, 43 cases were brought to court, but the perpetrators were convicted only in one case. Conditions for LGBTI people in prisons are horrifying and often lead to suicide.

The representatives deplored that same-sex marriages, *de facto* unions, and adoption by same-sex couples have been constitutionally banned since 2005. They underlined that Honduras is legally bound to the January 2018 Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) ruling, which held that same-sex marriage is a human right protected by the American Convention on Human Rights (ACHR).

The Head of the Development and Cooperation Section of the EU Delegation to Honduras, Mr David Mogollón, said that Honduras has received a total of EUR 300 million of development aid between 2014 and 2020. The project was financed in the framework of the EUR 30 million project *Eurojusticia*, with a specific budget line for civil society organisations.

The project had the following objectives:

- )] Strengthening the technical capacities of LGTBI leaders and judicial operators to advance collective solutions for the full exercise of the rights of the LGTBI population;
- )] Developing capacities at the local level to provide psychosocial, legal and restorative services to LGBTI people;
- )] Facilitating access to justice for LGTBI people via a local participatory management audit model.

Results achieved:

- )] Opening of a structure for counselling and follow-up of cases of violence and human rights violations; an application was designed to record and monitor complaints of cases of violence and violations of human rights of LGTBI people;
- )] Creation and support of six departmental structures of coordination of approaches and discussion between the different LGTBI organisations, security operators, justice, municipalities, human rights organisations and ministries, for the coordination and follow-up of cases of human rights violations of LGTBI people;
- )] Training of 87 LGTBI leaders as legal facilitators certified by the National Commission

for Non-Formal Education (*Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de la Educación Alternativa no Formal en Honduras*, CONEANFO). Moreover, 696 security and justice operators were trained regarding the importance of respecting the human rights of the LGTBI population and their access to timely and effective justice;

- )] Financing of eight small projects focused on strengthening newly formed LGBTI organisations at local level.

The following Members spoke: Tilly Metz, Caterina Chinnici, Ignacio Zoido Álvarez.

### **9. Meeting with Andrés Celis, Head of Office in Honduras for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**

Mr Andrés Celis, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), said that the UNHCR works to strengthen state and civic responses to forced displacement in Honduras. Internal displacements are a huge problem in Honduras with 180 000 people having been displaced during the last five years. According to government statistics, some 247 000 Hondurans are estimated to have been internally displaced within the country since 2004 – the vast majority of them fleeing extortion, coercion and targeted threats by gangs and other criminal organisations. The crisis in Nicaragua contributes to migration: more than 65 000 requests for asylum are pending in Honduras. In 2019, more than 110 000 persons were deported from the US and Mexico. Nevertheless, emigration to the US continues, especially by persons who already have family links there.

Mr Celis listed a number of reasons for migration: 1) violence, as Honduras has a high homicide rate and high levels of domestic violence; 2) a lack of assistance schemes resulting in the absence of safe places; 3) high levels of poverty and extreme poverty; 4) a lack of job opportunities; 5) the effects of climate change, such as a lack of access to water; 6) very limited support by the state, resulting in limited financial resources to respond to the migratory crisis.

The following Members spoke: Tilly Metz, Javier Nart, Ignazio Corrao.

### ***Conclusions***

The visit to both countries - El Salvador and Honduras - was very timely. The Delegation arrived in El Salvador only two weeks after the events of 9 February, when President Bukele entered the Legislative Assembly accompanied by military, which triggered a serious constitutional crisis. In Honduras, the Delegation visit fell in the aftermath of the decision by the Honduran Government not to extend the mandate of the anti-corruption body MACCIH, which delivered a huge blow to the anti-corruption fight in the country.

### **EL SALVADOR:**

#### **Constitutional crisis**

The election of Nayib Bukele as President in 2019 signalled a radical change of El Salvador's political landscape. For the first time since the signing of the peace agreements in 1992, the president was not a candidate of one of the two dominant parties, the centre-right Nationalist

Republican Alliance (ARENA) and the left-wing Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN). The President enjoys large popular support with approval rates of 80-90%. Bukele apparently has an accurate analysis of the main problems of El Salvador and he is eager to implement his ambitious reform agenda, but he lacks his own majority in the Legislative Assembly to do so. The relations between the executive, the legislative and the judicial branches of the country are strained. The President alleges that he takes his decisions in direct contact with the people and therefore prefers to circumvent traditional institutions and organisations, including civil society. On 9 February 2020, the President marched into the Legislative Assembly, accompanied by military, to force the deputies to adopt a loan of over USD 109 million that he needed for his security plan, triggering the worst constitutional crisis in 28 years. International pressure and a strong reaction by the Salvadoran institutions and civil society defused the dangerous situation. In this context, the EU ambassadors to El Salvador commended the Delegation's timely visit to remind the President that he should respect the mandate he has. Bukele has clear authoritarian tendencies and it remains to be seen if they will become stronger after the legislative elections in February 2021, where his party "New Ideas (Nuevas Ideas)" is likely to win a large majority.

### Security

The government is banking on a considerable reduction in assassinations and crime before the elections on 28 February 2021. One of Bukele's core promises in his election campaign was to tackle the rampant crime in the country and to restore citizens' security. He launched the 'Territorial Control Plan' (Plan Control Territorial), a seven-phase comprehensive security plan. Indeed, the number of homicides has decreased considerably since Bukele took office from 3 346 in 2018 to 2 383 in 2019 according to the government, a drop of 28.8%. However, it is unclear as to whether this development is due to the President's security plan or to other factors. The number of homicides had already begun to decline under the previous government. In addition, the number of persons who have disappeared has increased massively. There are persistent rumours that Bukele conducted an agreement with the "maras", criminal gangs responsible for most of the crimes in the country. The President has always denied the existence of such an agreement.

### Corruption:

Bukele delivered on his second key election campaign promise namely to fight corruption by setting up the International Commission against Impunity in El Salvador (Comisión Internacional Contra la Impunidad en El Salvador, CICIES). The anti-corruption body was set up in cooperation with the Organisation of American States (OAS) and along the lines of similar institutions in Guatemala (CICIG) and MACCIH (Honduras); both have since been shut down. By the time of the Delegation visit, CICIES was concluding agreements with all institutions needed for its work (General Prosecutor, etc). Critics expressed their doubts whether CICIES will have enough power to successfully combat corruption, even more so as its competence is restricted to the executive. Opposition forces fear that Bukele could use CICIES to attack political adversaries.

### Water

Like all countries in Central America, El Salvador is heavily affected by the consequences of climate change. In addition, the country suffers a severe problem regarding access to clean water. 80 % of the water is contaminated and not apt for human consumption. Many people die



of kidney failure caused by the consumption of polluted water. Large areas of the country have to be supplied with water in plastic bottles. The government is aware of the problem but admitted that it can only be solved in the long term.

### Women rights and abortion law

In its meeting with the President, the DCAM Chair brought up the problem of the imprisonment of women and girls who suffered stillbirths or miscarriages. The reason for this is the strict anti-abortion law, which forbids abortion under all circumstances. Women who had a miscarriage are often accused of having had an abortion and are given long prison terms. Currently, 17 women are serving long prison terms due to the Draconian abortion law of the country. The socially very conservative society of El Salvador is backing the strict abortion laws. In his meeting with the Delegation, the President signalled understanding for the problem but said the release of these women falls in the competence of the courts. President Bukele said he is aware of the social injustice of this law, as it affects only poor women. El Salvador has the highest femicide rate in Latin America and violence against women is increasing. In the meeting with the Delegation, Civil Society called for comprehensive measures to protect women.

## HONDURAS

### Corruption:

On 19 January 2020, the Honduran government decided not to renew the mandate of the Mission to Support the Fight against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (Misión de Apoyo contra la Corrupción y la Impunidad en Honduras, MACCIH), set up by the Organization of American States (OAS) to support the Honduran authorities in preventing and fighting against corruption and impunity. Congress had voted by 71 to 57 votes against the extension of the mandate. The failure of MACCIH shows how entrenched corruption is in Honduras as well as in other countries of Central America. According to civil society representatives, MACCIH made an important contribution to the political culture of the country by targeting all those who were misusing public funds. In Honduras, systemic corruption affects all sectors of society, notably the public sector. MACCIH has contributed to the investigation of various cases of corruption and the prosecution of several former or present government officials and politicians, including members of Congress and of the governing PNH. Overall, the cooperation between the MACCHI and the Attorney General's Office led to the prosecution of 133 people in 14 cases, according to the OAS. After the closure of MACCIH, the Government created a national successor agency, the Specialized Fiscal Unit against Corruption (Uferco), but this body will not have the same powers and resources as MACCIH did. It became clear that Honduras needs the support of the international community in order to be able to lead transparent and effective processes; but even with international support, the eradication of corruption seems to be almost impossible, if root actors and factors such as links to international economic actors are not systematically tackled.

### Security

Honduras has one of the world's highest homicide rates. The homicide rate reached an all-time high of 85.1 per 100 000 inhabitants in 2011 - at that time the worst rate in the world - the number of killings has fallen considerably since then to 41.2 homicides per 100 000 inhabitants in 2019. Much of the violence is due to the operations of the allegedly four drug cartels, which operate in Honduras as well as in the whole Northern Triangle (El Salvador, Guatemala, and

Honduras). The main fields of activity of organised crime in Honduras are extortion, drug trafficking and kidnapping. Drug trafficking is ubiquitous and is believed to make up 40 % of the economy. The high criminality along with the lack of opportunities in the country is the main reason of mass emigration from Honduras, often organised in “caravans”.

#### Electoral reform:

After the marred elections in 2017, when the government was accused of electoral fraud, the National Congress embarked on an electoral reform process. On 24 January 2019, Congress members approved the constitutional reform, which paved the way for the electoral reforms by a large majority. The National Congress of Honduras is drafting legislative proposals for reforms that would guarantee free, fair, and transparent elections, which would be substantially better than those of 2017. The comprehensive electoral reform law includes many recommendations by the EU’s Elections Observer Missions (EOM) in 2013 and 2017. Congress approved the reform of the National Registry of Persons (Registro Nacional de las Personas, RNP), which is a key element of the electoral reform in Honduras. The RNP included many dead individuals and individuals, who do not live in the country anymore, which opened the door to fraud. Another important new law regulates the funding of electoral campaigns and political parties. The reform of the electoral law should be concluded in time to be in force before the elections scheduled for November 2021.

#### Budget priorities

Many interlocutors from business, civil society and the Congress criticised the budget priorities the government is setting. In their view, too much money is going to the military, security policy, the agricultural industry and big business, whereas the real priorities should be education youth, infrastructure and health. This misguided budget policy impedes a sustainable and fair development of the Honduran economy and society. Honduras is one of the world’s most unequal countries, dominated by political and economic elite.

#### Human rights

In 2019, Honduras had the highest homicide rate of human rights defenders per capita in the world. Honduras also represents a dangerous place for journalists and LGBTI people. The human rights situation in general is worrying, too; the overall homicide rate is very high and there is extreme violence against women. Rights of indigenous people are affected by mining projects, hydroelectric power plants, and the cultivation of palm oil. Relations with trade unions in the country resemble a war, especially in rural areas. Private enterprises are leading a constant fight against trade union representatives. According to civil society representatives, 98 % of crimes remain unpunished. Civil Society called for better protection measures for vulnerable groups.

#### Climate change

Climate change is a huge challenge for Honduras and dry periods are increasing dramatically leaving large swaths of land without access to water. In his meeting with the delegation, President Orlando deplored that Honduras is not receiving funding from the Green Climate Fund (Fondo Verde del Clima, FVC), which was set up by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2010. He asked for the EU’s support to get access to the Green Fund.

## NICARAGUA:

As the Nicaraguan government refused to authorise a Delegation visit to the country, DCAM members met with representatives of the Nicaraguan opposition in San Salvador instead. The Nicaraguan opposition presented their common road map to free, transparent and fair elections adopted on 21 February 2020. They were very sceptical about a new dialogue with the Ortega regime on an agreement for fair and transparent elections, as two attempts for such talks have already failed. President Ortega knows that he would lose fair elections and therefore will do everything to impede electoral reform. The Nicaraguan opposition maintained that only sanctions by the USA and the EU could exercise enough pressure to make Ortega change his mind. These sanctions should preferably target government members, the military and enterprises, which work with the government and the military. They gave a dire description of the situation in Nicaragua where persecutions and killings of opponents of the Ortega regime are going on. The day after the meeting with the EP Delegation, the Nicaraguan opposition announced that they would run a joint list for the elections at the end of 2021.

*Annex I: Final programme of the delegation visit*

## Visit to El Salvador and Honduras

23 to 28 February 2020

### Final programme

Sunday, 23 February 2020

Europe - San Salvador

- Late afternoon Individual arrival of Members of the European Parliament delegation at Monseñor Óscar Arnulfo Romero International Airport
- Welcome by: EU Head of Delegation will meet the Chair Tilly Metz at the airport
- Transfer to the hotel:  
Sheraton Presidente San Salvador Hotel  
Ave. La Revolucion, Col. San Benito  
San Salvador, El Salvador  
+503 2283 4000
- 21.00-22.00 Meeting with EU Head of Delegation (HoD) and Security Officer on programme, logistics and security measures  
EP Staff only  
Venue: Hotel Sheraton

Monday, 24 February 2020

San Salvador

- 08.00-09.30 Working breakfast hosted by Ambassador Andreu Bassols, EU Head of Delegation in El Salvador with the Ambassadors (4) of EU Member States in El Salvador  
Venue: Hotel Sheraton
- 09.45-10.45 Transfer to Ciudad Mujer
- 11.45-12.45 Transfer to the lunch venue
- 13.00-14.30 Working lunch hosted EP with the Minister of Foreign Affairs Alexandra Hill Tinoco  
Venue: Il BonGustaio (San Benito) (private room for 28pl), Bulevar Del Hipodromo 605, San Salvador
- 14.35-14.40 Transfer to Hotel Sheraton
- 14.40-16.40 Meeting hosted by EP with the Nicaraguan opposition  
Venue: Hotel Sheraton
- 16.45-16.55 Transfer to Presidential Palace

- 17.00-19.30 Meeting with H.E. Nayib Bukele, President of El Salvador  
Venue: Presidential Palace
- 19.30-19.45 Transfer to Hotel Sheraton
- 19.45-21.00 Free Time for dinner

Tuesday, 25 February 2020

San Salvador/Tegucigalpa

- 08.00-10.30 Meeting hosted by EP with Civil Society Organisations and Representative of the International Organization for Migration (IOM)  
Venue: Hotel Sheraton
- 09.00-10.00 Meeting Tilly Metz, DCAM Chair, with H.E. Mario Ponce, President of the Legislative Assembly  
Venue: Legislative Assembly
- 10.30-11.00 Press Conference  
Venue: Hotel Sheraton
- 11.45-12.30 Meeting with H.E. Felix Ulloa, VP El Salvador; H.E. Guillermo Castillo, VP Guatemala; and H.E. Ricardo Álvarez, VP Honduras  
Venue: Hotel Sheraton
- 12.40-12.50 Transfer to Hotel Barceló
- 13.00-14.30 Working lunch hosted by Ambassador Andreu Bassols, EU Head of Delegation in El Salvador, with Mr Vinicio Cerezo Secretary General of SICA  
Venue: Hotel Barceló
- 14.30-14.45 Transfer to Hotel Sheraton
- 15.00-15.30 Transfer to CICIES
- 15.30-17.00 Meeting with Ambassador Ronalht Ochaeta, Representative of the International Commission against Impunity in El Salvador (CICIES)  
Venue: Edificio Insigne, CICIES
- 17.00-17.45 Transfer to airport San Salvador
- 20.00 Departure flight AV 481 San Salvador-Tegucigalpa
- 21.00 Arrival flight AV 481 to Tegucigalpa airport and transfer to the hotel:
- INTERCONTINENTAL REAL TEGUCIGALPA  
Av. Roble Frente Mall Multiplaza  
Tegucigalpa, 21222122, Honduras  
Tel.: +(504) 2290-2700 - CEL + (504) 3392-5406



- 08.30-10.30 Working breakfast hosted by Ambassador Alessandro Palmero, Head of EU Delegation in Honduras and Ambassadors of EU Member States accredited in Honduras: briefing on the political, economic and social situation.  
Venue: Hotel Intercontinental, Salón El Roble
- 10.30-11.00 Transfer to the Presidential Palace
- 11.00-12.15 Meeting with President of the Republic H.E. Juan Orlando Hernández and Minister for Foreign Affairs H.E. Lisandro Rosales  
Venue: Palacio Presidencial
- 12.15-12.30 Transfer to Hotel Marriott
- 12.30-15.00 Lunch hosted by EP with Businessmen. CCIT, Daniel Fortin. CCIC, Pedro Barquero. COHEP, Juan Carlos Sikaffy  
Venue: Hotel Marriot, Salón La Ronda
- 15.00-17.00 Meeting hosted by EP with Civil Society Organisations and lawyers of human rights defenders  
AJD (Juny Choi). Arcoiris (D. Reyes +J. Córdoba)  
ASONOG (J. R. Ávila). Casa Alianza (G. Ruelas) COPINH/MADJ (V. Fernández)  
Diakonia (R. Rivera) FESTAGRO (M. Sánchez) FOSDEH (I. Zepeda)  
Oxfam (G. Redman) Trócaire (H. Bund)  
Venue: Hotel Marriot, Salón Guanacaste
- 17.00-19.00 Meeting hosted by EP with Registro Nacional de las Personas. Rolando Kattán, Roberto Brevé, Oscar Rivera, Tribunal de Justicia Electoral. Consejo Nacional Electoral. Kelvin Aguirre, Ana Hall  
Venue: Hotel Marriot, Salón Guanacaste
- 19.00-21.00 Cocktail offered by Ambassador Alessandro Palmero, Head of EU Delegation  
Venue: Hotel Intercontinental, Salón Real

- 09.30-10.00 Transfer from hotel to the National Congress
- 10.00-11.30 Meeting with 1<sup>st</sup>. Vice President Antonio Rivera, Directive Board and Heads of the Political Groups in the National Congress  
Venue: National Congress
- 11.30-12.00 Transfer to Hotel Intercontinental
- 12.00-14.30 Working lunch hosted by EP with representatives of Organization of American States (OAS) Claudia Barrientos, UFERCO, Abog. Luis Javier Santos. Coalition for the extension of MACCIH – Fatima Mena, Consejo Nacional Anticorrupción (CNA)

Venue: Hotel Intercontinental, Salón El Roble

- 14.30-15.00      Transfer to the EU-co-funded project
- 15.00-18.00      Visit and assessment of EU-co-funded project: Access to Justice and Full  
Citizenship for LGBTI People in Honduras  
Venue: tbc
- 18.00-18.30      Transfer to Hotel Intercontinental
- 18.30-19.30      Meeting with representatives of the United Nations High Commissioner for  
Refugees (UNHCR), Mr Andrés Celis  
Venue: Hotel Intercontinental, Salón El Roble
- 19.30-20.30      Press Conference  
Venue: Hotel Intercontinental, Salón El Roble

Friday , 28 February 2020

Tegucigalpa - Europe

- 08.00              Check-out
- 08.30              Transfer to airport and return to Europe

## *Annex II: List of participants*

European Parliament

2014-2019



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*Delegation for relations with the countries of Central America*

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### **Delegation visit to El Salvador and Honduras**

**From 23 to 28 February 2020**

#### **Final list of participants**

##### **Members**

Ms	Tilly	METZ (Greens/EFA, LU), Chair
Mr	Javier	NART (Renew, ES), First Vice-chair
Mr	Juan Ignacio	ZOIDO ALVAREZ (EPP, ES)
Mr	Caterina	CHINNICI (S&D, IT)
Mr	Teuvo	HAKKARAINEN (ID, FI)
Mr	Ignazio	CORRAO (Greens/EFA, IT)

##### **Secretariat of the Delegation**

Mr	Helmut	WEIXLER, Administrator
Mrs	Frédérique	ALBERT, Assistant

##### **Political advisors**

Mr	Juan	SALAFRANCA, Deputy Secretary General EPP group
Ms	Gaby	KÜPPERS, Greens/ALE
Mr	Saraki	LINDEN, ID

##### **Interpreters**

Diego	GARZÓN NUÑES	Spanish booth- team leader
Fernanda	VILA KALBERMATTEN	Spanish booth
Sinead	DORAN	English booth
Lorraine	REGAN	English booth
Aija Hanna	KIVISAARI-MARTINEZ	Finnish booth
Susanna	MATTILA	Finnish booth

List of the political groups:

*Greens/EFA: The Greens/European Free Alliance*

*S&D: Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats*

*EPP: Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)*

*Renew: Renew Europe Group (liberals)*

*ID: Identity and Democracy*

*NI: Non Inscrpts Group*