



**DECLARATION OF THE CENTRAL AMERICAN  
MILITARY FORUM  
FOR THE CULTURE OF PEACE**

We, the Ministers of National Defence, Commanders-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and armies of the countries of Central America, acting on the invitation of the Director-General of UNESCO, Mr. Federico Mayor, and thanks to the hospitality of the people and Government of El Salvador, extended by His Excellency the President, Dr Armando Calderón Sol, and the Minister of National Defence, Major General Jaime Guzmán Morales, met in San Salvador, El Salvador, on 26 and 27 June 1996 to analyse the role to be played by the armed forces and armies of the Central American area in support of the consolidation of democracy, the rule of law, development, Central American integration and the culture of peace in the present international and regional context.

As the result of our deliberations, we have decided to issue the following:

**DECLARATION**

1. The democratic process has achieved major and significant progress in the- Central American area. mainly in peace and reconciliation in our societies. tasks to which our institutions have made a decisive contribution. The internal armed struggles in Nicaragua and in El Salvador have finished and peace negotiations are making progress in Guatemala. We can thus state that a firm and lasting peace is being consolidated and that conditions for sustainable human development have improved.
2. We are convinced that a firm and lasting peace must be based on social Justice, solidarity and equity, which is not possible without economic and social development, as reflected in the improvement of the quality of life of all sectors of society. Thus, if Central America is to become a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development, it must also be an area where inequalities are, overcome and the human rights of all its inhabitants are fully respected.
3. Since democratic security is necessary for the inhabitants to enjoy freedom, health, culture, economic well-being and social justice, the military institutions that we represent have a great responsibility to contribute to the attainment of the objectives pursued by our governments, so as to guarantee justice, security under the law and security of public welfare for the inhabitants of the countries of the isthmus.
4. At the root of the conflicts that are now affecting societies in various parts of the world it is possible to identify such causes as poverty, social injustice, corruption, drug trafficking, money laundering, and the degradation of the environment; these causes require appropriate responses through the machinery of the law, and the identification of mechanisms of negotiation and conciliation that will enable these problems to be solved with the help of all sectors of society in a climate of dialogue, negotiation and co-operation.

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5. Within this context, our armed forces and armies have an essential role to play as an integral part of society by taking a leading role in encouraging the consolidation of the processes of peace and democracy and sustainable human development, which the Central American countries are now promoting.

6. In keeping with the policy of the governments of Central America and the commanders-in-chief of the armed forces and armies of the area to make the region a 'peace- zone', we have examined and analysed the question of measures to encourage openness, co-operation and mutual trust between our military institutions, in conjunction with the 'Culture of Peace' in Central America promoted by UNESCO, and we support these measures as being the fundamental principles that take pride of place in relations between our institutions.

7. Accordingly, we declare our intention of assisting in the consolidation in Central America of a culture of peace considered as a combination of all the ethical values, customs, and behaviour patterns that reflect and are inspired by: respect for life and for human beings, their dignity and their rights; rejection of violence; recognition of the quality of the rights of men and women, and support for the principles of democracy, freedom, justice, solidarity, tolerance, acceptance of differences and understanding, not only between nations and countries, but between ethnic, religious, cultural and social groups and also between individuals. This concept of a culture of peace also implies a spirit of mutual respect and acceptance between different cultures. ideologies and beliefs.

8. Accordingly, we agree to arrange a plan of activities that will enable us to pursue the discussions initiated in this Forum.

San Salvador, on the twenty-seventh day of the month of July of the year one thousand nine hundred and ninety-six.

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of the Republic of Guatemala

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