

Central American Municipal Agenda

Federation of Municipalities of the Central American Isthmus
1992

Approved in 1992 by the II General Assembly of FEMICA, in Managua, Nicaragua,
and revised and ratified in the annual congresses

Legal Nature

The Federation of Municipalities of the Central American Isthmus –FEMICA–, is the Central American local governments' organization that represents the interests of the 1,197 municipalities in the region, on an equal footing and without regard for political or ideological considerations. Its *raison d'être* is the strengthening of local government, very important instrument for the democratic way of life and guarantor of citizen participation.

The Federation was founded in the City of Tegucigalpa, Honduras, on September 26th, 1991, with the purpose of looking after and representing the interests of Central American municipalities. Since then, FEMICA decided to get the municipal theme into the agenda of the highest ranking political institutions in the region, and achieved that in Central American Presidential Summit Meetings the presidents recognized and supported efforts to strengthen local governments and decentralization processes in the region.

The Federation is headed by a Board of Directors that is elected annually in a regional assembly of mayors. To be a member of FEMICA's Board the only requisite is to be a mayor put forward by the mayors of the postulating country.

Administrative Organization

FEMICA's main decision-making body is the Assembly of Mayors and Elected Municipal Authorities. A Board of Directors conformed by six regular members and the same number of substitutes, is elected by the Ordinary General Assembly, in representation of each federated country. The presidency rotates annually between member countries following an established order.

The organizational structure also has an Executive Directorate, that both politically and technically supports municipal strengthening and decentralization processes in the region.

Main Goal

FEMICA's main goal is to promote the interests of Central American municipalities, to vie for the strengthening of modern local governments, with management capacity and political power, so to impel development processes and poverty reduction strategies at the local level, and for a new political and administrative strategic reordering within countries, focused on the decentralization of power, the functions of the State and the distribution and assignment of public resources.

Specific Goals

- ≡≡ Strengthen local governments administratively, financially, politically and technically.
- ≡≡ Design and promote the development of the Central American Modern Municipality: open to a more active participation of citizenship in decision-making, in the prioritization of development areas and mainly in the idea of delegating some services on citizenry, considering the principle of greater efficiency and lower cost; more transparent, allowing social auditing; in sum, a local government that effectively governs, and has a greater capacity to influence and contribute to the economic, political and social development of its communities.
- ≡≡ Promote decentralization processes towards local governments.
- ≡≡ Strengthen national associations and constitute subnational associations within the Central American isthmus.

Components of the Agenda

Within the framework of the Federation of Municipalities of the Central American Isthmus, Central American local governments agreed by consensus to carry out a Regional Technical and Political Agenda, with the purpose of achieving greater financial autonomy and management capability, to be able to confront the challenges of sustainable development in Central America and globalization.

This Regional Agenda is the result of the consensus of the members of FEMICA and is set as a general framework, subject to revision and correction to include or eliminate actions that have been overcome or prioritized by each of the Central American countries, always keeping in mind each country's particularities.

The Federation of Municipalities of the Central American Isthmus has accepted the responsibility to work hard and tenaciously with the purpose of strengthening the processes of decentralization and municipal strengthening; as a result, FEMICA's Regional Technical and Political Agenda has been updated focusing on the following components:

On associative affairs

- ≡≡ To foster the integral creation of associations, in which organized departmental levels contribute to the strengthening of national associations,
- ≡≡ To promote horizontal cooperation and mutual assistance between the associations of the Central American countries and the Federation, with the object of coordinating joint actions to advance local development and strengthening, defend and legitimize municipal autonomy and propitiate the transfer of competencies to municipalities within the democratic, participatory and representative framework of the Central American region, and the promotion and exchange of practices and technology.

On political affairs

- ≪≪ To encourage a greater involvement of civil society in the selection of candidates, to enable greater participation of citizenship in the selection of authorities at the local level, and guarantee the existence of several options for the selection of municipal authorities.
- ≪≪ To strengthen the joint work of local governments and population in economic, political and social development, so to consolidate the Central American Modern and Participatory Municipality.
- ≪≪ To consolidate and promote mechanisms for citizen participation in local public management.
- ≪≪ To consolidate the coordination between the municipal and legislative sectors.
- ≪≪ To strengthen the dialogue with national governments.
- ≪≪ To facilitate the effective exercise of democratic and autonomous local governments actions, with the purpose of promoting stability and security for their citizens.
- ≪≪ To facilitate the dialogue and discussion between different levels of government and sectors of society, to encourage strategies to combat the poverty that affects the region.
- ≪≪ To promote the election of municipal authorities on different dates than those for presidential and legislative elections, in those countries in the Central American region that do not yet have them.
- ≪≪ To propitiate that political parties take responsibility for selecting an adequate profile for candidates for local elections.
- ≪≪ To foster actions that consolidate the role of local governments in environmental management.
- ≪≪ To promote that candidates for mayor prepare and present their Local Government Plan (programmatic vote), on which execution they should inform the public.
- ≪≪ To encourage actions to democratize political parties.

On administrative affairs

- ≪≪ To strengthen and promote adequate integral financial management systems.
- ≪≪ To foster the preparation of regional projects conducive to facilitate decentralization processes and encourage innovative mechanisms for local public management, for example, social control, methodology and instruments for participatory action, concessions, privatization, municipal bonds and others.

- ⌘ Strengthen the devolution of competencies and autonomous decision-making capacity on the destiny of each municipality, emphasizing the devolution of the services that due to comparative advantages can be more effectively delivered at the local level. Given the existing disparities between Central American countries, the most suitable mechanisms must be found to gradually and selectively devolve public services to local governments, replicating successful experiences.
- ⌘ To promote the supply of technical assistance and training services that contribute to focus the efforts of national and international entities that aid municipalities.
- ⌘ To implement an effective communications policy, applying effective information instruments, making use of information technologies as a means and facilitator of training at the regional level and to divulge activities at a global level.
- ⌘ To strengthen the administrative apparatus of local governments by channeling aid from cooperating agencies and organisms.
- ⌘ To encourage a greater use of technology to improve the efficiency and modernize municipal management systems.
- ⌘ To promote specific actions to consolidate municipal instruments on the use and ownership of land in the region.
- ⌘ To propitiate the preparation of regional projects conducive to the decentralization of municipal public services and advance regional binding mechanisms with the purpose of improving management conditions and the collection of revenues.

On legal affairs

- ⌘ To encourage a wide legal updating that endows the municipal sector with an adequate legal framework that allows its administrative modernization.
- ⌘ To promote the modernization of municipal taxes, and the autonomous approval of taxes to increase local revenues.
- ⌘ To promote the creation of an effective legal framework for cadastre control, that allows the collection of taxes, especially of the land tax.
- ⌘ To promote the modernization of purchasing and contracting laws, with the purpose of achieving greater agility and transparency.

On financial affairs

- ⌘ On fiscal affairs, it is sought that local governments have their own local tax base and share the central governments' revenue with the purpose of satisfying citizens' demands for services.

≈≈ To encourage the direct transfer of resources from the central government to local governments in the countries that do not yet have it.

≈≈ To promote at the regional level the modernization of municipal finances.

FEMICA expects local governments to be strengthened in their autonomy, in the collection and management of resources, that they have decision-making power and authority, that they be participatory, with civilian controls and be transparent, and be subject to the populations' permanent scrutiny.