DECLARATION

7th Gathering of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network

The Future of Democracy in the Digital Era

April 20, 21, and 22, 2023
Santiago, Chile

We, Parliamentarians from 18 countries[1] of the Americas and the Caribbean met on April 20, 21, and 22, 2023 in Santiago, Chile, on the occasion of the 7th Gathering of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network titled *The Future of Democracy in the Digital Era* organized with the support of the National Congress of Chile as host parliament.

The Gathering allowed us to examine with our colleagues and subject matter experts the state of digital transformation processes in the hemisphere and share reflections on the opportunities and challenges of the digital era for democratic governance and the rule of law.

During the dialogues, we exchanged good legislative practices in digital governance and connectivity, which highlighted the importance of promoting inclusive and sustainable digitalization with a gender perspective and in accordance with human rights in order to overcome the digital divide in the region.

Considering the above and,

Recognizing:

1. That digitalization and other technological innovations, while entailing enormous potential for fostering social well-being and inclusive and sustainable economic prosperity, present considerable challenges and risks for peaceful coexistence and democratic governance, as reflected, for example, in the intensification of existing inequalities, the violation of human rights, and the weakening of democracy and social cohesion.[2]

2. That the world is going through a period of decline in democratic governance that includes widespread distrust in institutions, intensified political polarization, restrictions on civil and political liberties, and mistrust in the legitimacy of electoral processes.

---

[1] Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Suriname. A parliamentary delegation representing the MERCOSUR Parliament (PARLASUR) also participated.
[2] Democracy and Digitalisation Handbook. European Commission. 2022

3. That disinformation campaigns and cyber activities aimed at undermining sovereignty and national security as well as human rights violations in digital environments —particularly those related to data protection, privacy, and the use of surveillance technologies— constitute serious threats to democratic governance and the rule of law.

4. That governments have a critical responsibility to all citizens to enable access to the opportunities offered by digitalization while mitigating its risks.

5. That digital transformation offers new opportunities to cultivate and expand citizen participation in public affairs, as well as to make parliaments, governments, and public institutions more efficient, effective, and transparent.

6. That, for all people to have equitable access to the social and economic benefits of digitalization, it is necessary to promote a digital ecosystem that is accessible, inclusive, transparent, secure, and people-centred.

7. That there are global and regional instruments and agreements to guide inclusive, sustainable, and human rights-compliant digitalization processes, such as the United Nations Global Digital Compact; the recommendations and conclusions of the 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women on education in the digital era for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls; the Regional Agenda for Digital Transformation adopted at the IX Summit of the Americas; ECLAC's Digital Agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean; the OECD's Declaration on a Trusted, Sustainable and Inclusive Digital Future; and the global call-to-action by the member countries of the Open Government Partnership.

8. That collaboration among States is essential to safeguarding national security; coordinating actions to prevent, investigate, and sanction cybercrime in all its forms; and to protecting the digital rights of individuals.

9. That the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of connectivity and digital technologies to enable interpersonal interaction during isolation measures, disseminate public health information, and facilitate the functioning of economic systems, while also exposing the deep digital gaps in the hemisphere.[3]

---

[3] According to the World Bank, "less than 50% of LAC's population has fixed broadband connectivity, and only 9.9% has high-quality fiber connectivity at home. While 87% of the population lives within range of a 4G signal, actual usage and penetration remains low (37%). And only 4 out of 10 rural Latin Americans have connectivity options compared with 71% of the population in urban areas."

10. That digital disinformation campaigns have had harmful effects that challenge national sovereignty, governance, security, and democratic stability through their impact on the integrity of electoral processes, undermining the trust of citizens in democratic institutions.

11. That the gap in access to information technologies and in the development of digital skills disproportionately affect girls, women, persons living with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, and other historically marginalized population groups, as well as those living in rural and semi-urban areas.

12. That information and communication technologies and digitalization processes are pivotal for consolidating more democratic and inclusive parliaments through strengthened transparency, citizen participation, accountability, access to public information, and ethics and probity, pillars of open parliament.

We commit to:

1. Promote inclusive, people-centred digitalization that is compliant with human rights and that fosters a trustworthy, safe, responsible, and sustainable use of emerging digital technologies and artificial intelligence.

2. Convene relevant State and non-State actors to jointly address the risks and challenges to democracy and the rule of law presented by digitalization and other technological innovations, and propose concerted actions to advance transparent, accountable, and inclusive digital governance.

3. Call on the corresponding national authorities to establish connectivity needs, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas, thus enabling the design of general connectivity plans with appropriate financing mechanisms that consider the infrastructure development needed to ensure connectivity in historically marginalized communities.

4. Promote policies that enhance connectivity; for example, by establishing subsidy programs that facilitate internet access for people in vulnerable situations, reducing taxes and tariffs for low-cost mobile devices, and endorsing regulations aimed at creating favourable legal frameworks for small-scale providers—including broadband cooperatives—through practices such as tax incentive policies and licensing of community networks and local businesses.

5. Foster collaboration between the public and private sectors to develop infrastructure for connectivity; promote productivity, entrepreneurship, and e-commerce; and encourage research and innovation.

6. Urge our governments to overcome the gaps in access to information and communication technologies, particularly those related to gender, through connectivity plans developed with special attention to groups that have been historically marginalized, discriminated against, and/or in vulnerable situations, ensuring that everyone has an equal opportunity to participate in, contribute to, and benefit from digital transformation, including through opportunities to learn, work, and innovate.

7. Promote policies for the development of digital skills and competencies so people may enjoy the benefits of digitalization in a safe, responsible, and inclusive manner, with special attention to children, adolescents, women, Indigenous peoples, persons living with disabilities, and the elderly.

8. Advocate for the need to facilitate dialogues and establish or appoint parliamentary committees to address disinformation and consider legislative actions to counteract its effects in accordance with human rights and civil and political liberties.

9. Advocate for digital transformation processes that take sustainability and zero emissions goals into account, including mitigating any negative environmental externalities and encouraging the development of digital technologies and solutions that have positive effects on the environment.

10. Monitor and conduct oversight of the implementation of the commitments established in the [Regional Agenda for Digital Transformation](#) adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the Americas and the Caribbean during the IX Summit of the Americas.

11. Continue advocating for the digitalization of the public sector in general, and of parliaments in particular, including, among other aspects, using and leveraging information and communication technologies to implement the pillars of legislative openness, taking as references the initiatives and best practices established in the ParlAmericas *[Roadmap towards Legislative Openness 2.0](#)*.

Adopted in Santiago, Chile, April 22, 2023