

A stylized globe in the background, rendered in a light gray, textured, sketch-like style. Overlaid on the globe are four thick, curved ribbons in red, yellow, green, and blue, each with a fine, parallel-line texture. The ribbons curve across the globe from the top left towards the bottom right.

YEAR IN
HIGHLIGHTS

2021



2001-2021

Photographs: Courtesy of host parliaments, ParlAmericas and partner organizations.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT PARLAMERICAS.....	4	MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE PARLAMERICAS OPEN PARLIAMENT NETWORK.....	36
MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF PARLAMERICAS.....	5	LEGISLATIVE MODERNIZATION EXPERIENCES IN LATIN AMERICA.....	37
OPERATIONS AND FINANCES.....	6	5 TH GATHERING OF THE PARLAMERICAS OPEN PARLIAMENT NETWORK.....	39
NATIONAL LEGISLATURES REPRESENTED ON OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS.....	7	3 RD FORUM OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STAFF NETWORK ON OPEN PARLIAMENT.....	48
PARTNERS.....	8	WEBINAR: INTER-AMERICAN MODEL LAW 2.0 ON ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION FOR THE PARLIAMENTS IN THE AMERICAS AND THE CARIBBEAN.....	51
COLLABORATION MECHANISMS.....	9	REVIEW AND UPDATE OF THE ROAD MAP TOWARDS LEGISLATIVE OPENNESS.....	53
2021 ACTIVITIES.....	10	MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE PARLAMERICAS PARLIAMENTARY NETWORK ON CLIMATE CHANGE.....	55
INTERACTIVE TOOLS.....	14	5 TH GATHERING OF THE PARLAMERICAS PARLIAMENTARY NETWORK ON CLIMATE CHANGE.....	56
RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS.....	16	YOUTH LEGISLATIVE IMPACT PROGRAM: BUILDING ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP.....	61
20 TH ANNIVERSARY.....	17	PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION TO COP26.....	65
18 TH PLENARY ASSEMBLY.....	18	THE PARLAMERICAS TEAM.....	67
MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE PARLAMERICAS PARLIAMENTARY NETWORK FOR GENDER EQUALITY.....	24		
BUILDING A COORDINATED CARIBBEAN POSITION FOR CSW65.....	25		
13 TH GATHERING OF THE PARLAMERICAS PARLIAMENTARY NETWORK FOR GENDER EQUALITY.....	27		
WOMEN'S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP PROJECT.....	32		

ABOUT PARLAMERICAS



ParlAmericas is the institution that promotes **PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY** in the **INTER-AMERICAN SYSTEM**



ParlAmericas is composed of the **35 NATIONAL LEGISLATURES** of the countries of North, Central and South America and the Caribbean



ParlAmericas facilitates the exchange of parliamentary **GOOD PRACTICES** and promotes **COOPERATIVE POLITICAL DIALOGUE** in pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals



ParlAmericas mainstreams **GENDER EQUALITY** by advocating for women's political empowerment and the application of a gender lens in legislative work



ParlAmericas fosters **OPEN PARLIAMENTS** by advancing the principles of transparency, accountability, citizen participation, ethics and probity



ParlAmericas promotes policies and legislative measures to mitigate and adapt to the effects of **CLIMATE CHANGE**



ParlAmericas works towards strengthening democracy and governance by accompanying **ELECTORAL PROCESSES**



ParlAmericas organizes consultations and builds **MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS** with young leaders and civil society organizations



ParlAmericas is headquartered in **OTTAWA, CANADA**



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF PARLAMERICAS



Dear colleagues,

I am pleased to have the opportunity to share with you a brief assessment of the work carried out in 2021. This has been a particularly significant year, as we celebrated the 20th anniversary of the establishment of ParlAmericas and the adoption of the Inter-American Democratic Charter of the Organization of American States, a valuable instrument created to promote democracy, peace, and development in the Americas and the Caribbean.

Both milestones are true testaments of the remarkable commitment to democracy, cooperative political dialogue, the defence of human rights, and regional integration upheld by the countries of the hemisphere.

The reaffirmation of this dedication is especially relevant today, as it becomes increasingly clear that the strengthening of democracy, promotion of cooperation, and exchange of knowledge and experiences are essential in addressing some of the great challenges of our time, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate crisis, and the growing social inequality in the region.

It is for that reason that in 2021 ParlAmericas brought together parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, subject matter experts, and representatives of civil society organizations from across the hemisphere to address a variety of issues with profound political, social, economic, and cultural implications, recognizing the diversity and increasingly complex needs of our constituents.

The activities we hosted addressed the critical issues of the fight against the effects of disinformation and computational propaganda, the need to strengthen and modernize social protection systems, achieving a just and inclusive transition in the context of efforts to combat climate change, and the rebuilding of the social contract, to name a few. It is also important to note that this year we continued to strengthen our working relationships with a variety of stakeholders, such as multilateral organizations, civil society organizations, and youth movements. This is an institutional effort made by ParlAmericas as we consider it a priority to establish a strong relationship between parliament and society.

In addition, parliamentarians had the opportunity to represent ParlAmericas at high-level regional, hemispheric, and global meetings, where they were able to share their own experiences and perspectives on legislative work.

I invite you to consult this edition of the *Year in Highlights* to learn more about the results of our work, the activities carried out by our three thematic networks, and the publications and tools that we have made available to you.

In these pages you will see how, thanks to you, ParlAmericas continues to position itself as the leading inter-parliamentary forum of the inter-American system for debates on matters of hemispheric importance, the exchange of good legislative practices, and the promotion of cooperative political dialogue.

It is my hope that we can continue to rely on your support next year, as we continue to convene in the spirit of ParlAmericas, to move forward in achieving the objective that brings us together and unites us all: to be better legislators.

Sincerely,

Blanca Ovelar

Senator, Paraguay

President of ParlAmericas

[FOLLOW ME ON TWITTER @OVELAR_BLANCA](https://twitter.com/OVELAR_BLANCA)

OPERATIONS AND FINANCES

ParlAmericas' operations and activities in the 2021 fiscal year were financed through the support of our member parliaments, our partners and the generous contributions of the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada. ParlAmericas wishes to acknowledge with sincere appreciation the invaluable support, expertise and time contributed by member parliaments, individual parliamentarians and partners to ensure the successful implementation of ParlAmericas' programming throughout the year.

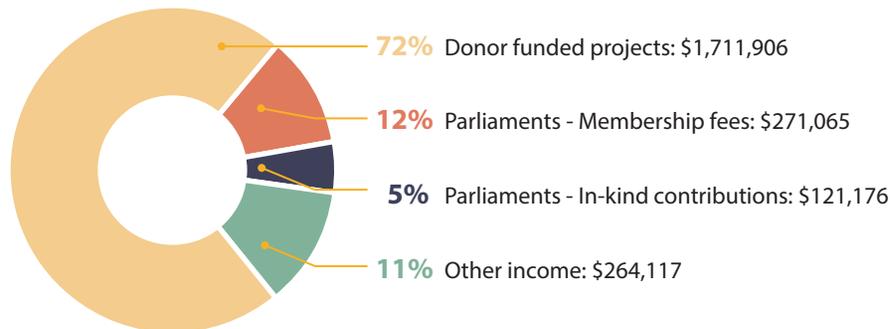
Note: The in-kind contributions included in ParlAmericas' financial statements are recorded when fair values can be reasonably estimated and supporting documentation is provided by the member parliament. We recognize that the amount shown is a fraction of the overall value of in-kind support provided by member parliaments and partners in the normal course of ParlAmericas' operations. ParlAmericas therefore also tracks and records an indicative value of the total contributions to ParlAmericas' programming.

Carbon Neutral Travel: Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, all ParlAmericas activities were delivered virtually and therefore no travel carbon offsets were purchased this year. For more information about the Carbon Neutral initiative and ways that parliaments can reduce their carbon footprint, we invite you to read the [ParlAmericas Guide on Green Parliaments: Actions to Promote Sustainable Practices within Parliaments](#).

Source: ParlAmericas' [audited financial statements](#) as of September 30, 2021, and the corresponding annual financial report prepared for the ParlAmericas Board of Directors and member parliaments

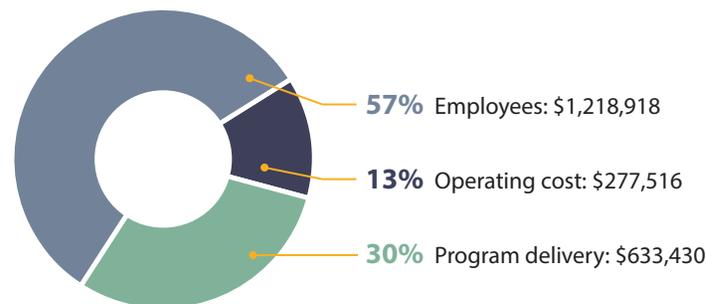
CONTRIBUTIONS

\$2,368,264



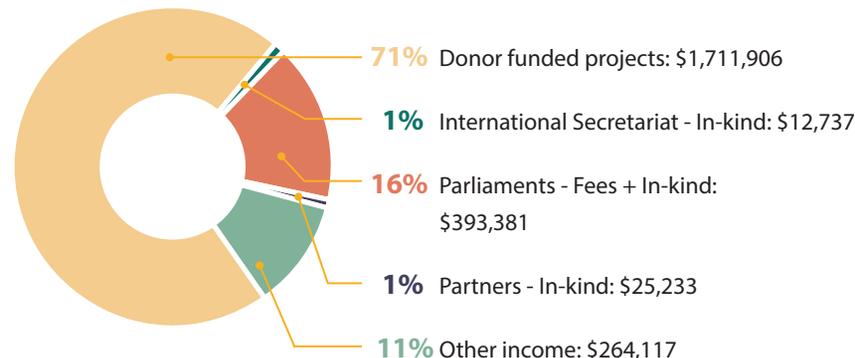
EXPENDITURES

\$2,129,864



INDICATIVE VALUE OF TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS

\$2,407,374



NATIONAL LEGISLATURES REPRESENTED ON OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Executive Committee of the Board of Directors

(November 2020 - December 2021):

Blanca Ovelar, President

Senator, Paraguay

The Honourable Bridgid Annisette-George, Vice-President

Speaker of the House of Representatives, Trinidad and Tobago

Verónica Camino Farjat, 2nd Vice-President and President of the Parliamentary

Network for Gender Equality

Senator, Mexico

Javier Macaya, 2nd Vice-President and President of the Open Parliament Network

Member of the Chamber of Deputies, Chile

The Honourable Rosa Galvez, 2nd Vice-President and President of the Parliamentary

Network on Climate Change

Senator, Canada

ParlAmericas is run by parliamentarians for parliamentarians, with a Board of Directors composed of 21 seats which represent countries from North, South, Central America and the Caribbean. In addition, the Board has ex-officio representation from the Plenary Host, the ParlAmericas Immediate Past President, the Directors of the ParlAmericas Corporation, the ParlAmericas International Secretariat, and the OAS General Secretariat. Each Network is governed by an elected Executive Committee, composed of one President and sub-regional Vice-Presidents representing North, Central, and South America, and the Caribbean.

📍 Joined the ParlAmericas Board of Directors following the 18th ParlAmericas Plenary Assembly, held on November 26 and 29 and December 10. For full election results see page 22. For more information on our Board of Directors and Executive Committees please consult the ParlAmericas website: <https://www.parlAmericas.org/en/about/board-ofdirectors.aspx>



PARTNERS

In addition to our member parliaments, over the last year ParlAmericas collaborated with multilateral and civil society organizations with a view to maximizing impacts through complementary programming efforts. We are grateful for their contributions of subject-matter expertise and resources to our project activities and look forward to building on these collaborations in support of strengthened democracy, legislative openness, gender equality, and sustainable development in the Americas and the Caribbean.



Collaboration mechanisms



The **Inter-American Task Force on Women's Empowerment and Leadership** was announced at the 8th Summit of the Americas

(Peru, April 2018). With the objective of contributing to regional progress towards SDG 5 (gender equality), the Task Force serves as a coordination mechanism that reinforces commitments and strategies to advance women's empowerment and leadership. The Task Force is composed of key inter-American and international institutions working across sectors and at multiple levels.



The **Open Parliament e-Network (OPeN)** was announced at the 5th Open Government Partnership (OGP) Global Summit (Georgia, July 2018). With

the objective of contributing to global progress towards SDG 16 (strong institutions), OPeN provides a platform for legislators who champion the issue of legislative openness through serving on the network's Parliamentary Leadership Council. OPeN builds upon the work of the OGP Legislative Openness Working Group by bringing together leading international organizations that are committed to legislative openness.



The **UNFCCC Parliamentary Group** was announced in the leadup to COP26 held in Glasgow, Scotland in October/November 2021, with the objective of supporting parliamentary participation at COP. Recognized as an informal NGO group by the UNFCCC, during COP26, the Parliamentary Group hosted daily briefings for the legislators in attendance. ParlAmericas was proud to be a founding member of the UNFCCC Parliamentary Group, along with Climate Parliament, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, InterPares / International IDEA, and Westminster Foundation for Democracy. GLOBE International serves as Focal Point for the Parliamentary Group.



2021 ACTIVITIES

Note: All activities were held virtually or in a hybrid format.

January	19	Regional meeting: "Accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda" organized with the National Assembly of Panama
	22	2 nd meeting of the Parliamentary Staff Network on Open Parliament
	29	Regional meeting: "Experiences of Legislative Modernization in Latin America" organized with NDI - Central America
February	8, 12	Regional meeting: "Building a Coordinated Caribbean Position for CSW65" organized with the UN Women Multi-Country Office - Caribbean, CARICOM, the Institute for Gender and Development Studies at the University of the West Indies, and CIWiL
	24	Participation in the launch of the initiative "Making Cities Resilient 2030" in the Americas and the Caribbean organized by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability
	24	2 nd regional meeting: "Accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda" organized with the National Assembly of Panama
March	7	ParlAmericas marks 20 years since its Inaugural Meeting, commemorated over the course of the year 2021 and with the launch of an anniversary video campaign
	8	Participation in "The Impact of COVID-19 on the Roles of Women Leaders" organized by Member of the National Assembly of Ecuador Karina Arteaga
	15, 19, and 26	5 th Gathering of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network: "Countering Disinformation to Promote Responsible Public Discourse" organized with the Parliament of Canada
	17	Participation in the 4 th Meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development organized by the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
	22	3 rd Forum of the Parliamentary Staff Network on Open Parliament
	25	Participation in the high-level CSW65 side-event "Accelerating Efforts towards the Achievement of SDG 5.5 in the Americas" organized by the Inter-American Task Force for Women's Leadership

April	19	Virtual Meeting of Caribbean Presiding Officers on Open Parliament
	20	National meeting: “Localizing the SDGs in Committee Work” organized with the National Assembly of Panama and Smartly Social Enterprise on the SDGs
	27	Participation in the “Regional Review Meeting on the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration” organized by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the International Organization for Migration
May	1	Launch of a project on women’s empowerment in Jamaica funded by the UN Women Multi-Country Office for the Caribbean through the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative
	5, 6	National meeting: “Parliament’s Role in Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda,” organized with the National Assembly of Panama, NED, IRI, and UNDP
	6	Participation in the regional meeting “The Digital Transformation of the Legislative Process” organized by Bússola Tech
	7	Regional meeting: “Inter-American Model Law 2.0 on Access to Public Information for the Parliaments of the Americas and the Caribbean” organized with the Transparency and Access to Information Network (RTA), EUROsociAL+, and the OAS
	11, 12	Participation in the international conference: “Catalysing Parliamentary Action to Fight Climate Change” organized by the INTER PARES EU Global Project to Strengthen the Capacity of Parliaments
	13	Participation in Latin America and Caribbean Climate Week
	17	Meeting of the women presiding officers of Caribbean parliaments on good practices to advance gender equality
	17	Regional multi-stakeholder meeting to review and update the <i>ParlAmericas Road Map towards Legislative Openness</i>
June	2, 3	Participation in the international meeting “Global MP Exchange” organized by the House Democracy Partnership
	9	Launch of the training initiative: “Youth Legislative Impact” organized with FONAMUPP and the National Assembly of Panama
	4, 15, and 25	5 th Gathering of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network on Climate Change, “Addressing Inequalities to Enable Climate Ambition: A Just Transition to Achieve the Paris Agreement” organized with the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago and the Senate of Mexico

July

- 12** Follow-up meeting of the women presiding officers of Caribbean parliaments on good practices to advance gender equality
- 19** 1st meeting of the Parliamentary Staff Network on Gender Equality in Latin America

August

- 18** Regional dialogue to celebrate 60 years of diplomatic relations between Canada and the Central American countries
- 19** Participation in the 2nd Session of the Caribbean NDC Support Virtual Exchange Series “Supporting the Development of Long-Term Climate Change Strategies in the Caribbean” organized by the UNFCCC Regional Collaboration Centre for the Caribbean and the NDC Partnership

September

- 13-15** Participation in international conference “LegisTech for Democracy” organized by Bússola Tech
- 13,22, and Oct. 4** 13th Gathering of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality, “Bolstering Social Protection Beyond COVID-19: What the Data Tells Us,” organized with the National Assembly of Belize and the Chamber of Senators of Bolivia
- 24** Regional meeting and report launch: “Parliaments and the Paris Agreement” organized with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, GLOBE International, and INTER PARES International IDEA
- 24** Participation in the “Co-Creation of Open Parliament Action Plans” online course organized by the National Democratic Institute and the Senate of Mexico

October	31 and Nov. 12	Participation in the UN COP26 Climate Change Conference, COP26 Legislators Summit, and the IPU COP26 Parliamentary Meeting
November	23 26, 29, and Dec. 10	<p>Participation in regional meeting “Economic Empowerment of Women as a Tool Against Discrimination and Gender Violence” organized by the Permanent Mission of the Dominican Republic and the Permanent Observer Mission of Spain to the OAS</p> <p>18th ParlAmericas Plenary Assembly, “Rebuilding the Social Contract” organized with the Senate of Chile</p>
December	2 14 14 29	<p>Presentation of the results of the “First Survey on Workplace Violence, Gender-based Violence, and Sexual Harassment,” a joint project with ParlAmericas, before the plenary sitting of the Senate of Paraguay</p> <p>Participation in the parliamentary consultation on the Model Law on Care Work organized by the Inter-American Commission of Women at the OAS</p> <p>Participation in Parliamentary Day on the margins of the Open Government Partnership Global Summit</p> <p>Participation in the Inaugural Meeting of the Saint Lucia Women’s Parliamentary Caucus</p>

INTERACTIVE TOOLS

ParlAmericas has a number of new and enhanced online tools for parliamentarians to access specialized information and resources.

ParlAmericas Podcasts

The ParlAmericas podcast is available on iTunes, Google Podcasts, and Spotify; subscribe to listen to episodes of presentations and panels recorded at activities held across the hemisphere. Each episode is also available on the ParlAmericas website at www.parlamericas.org/en/resources/podcasts.aspx.

In 2021, episodes included presentations by renowned experts and prominent political figures who shared insight on timely issues, for example:

- [5th OPN Gathering: Professor Taylor Owen unpacks disinformation tactics and strategies](#)
- [PNGE Keynote Interview: Promoting gender-responsive social protection in the Caribbean](#), featuring the Honourable Valerie Woods (Belize), Speaker of the House of Representatives; and Ms. Isiuwa Iyahen, UN Women MCO Caribbean
- [5th PNCC Gathering panel: Supporting inclusive climate action and achieving a just transition](#), featuring a panel discussion moderated by Senator the Honourable Rosa Galvez, Vice-President for North America of the PNCC



ParlGenderTools

ParlGenderTools is an online, interactive space for self-guided learning that features toolkits on gender equality issues tailored for parliamentarians. Each toolkit includes specialized resources, data, videos, and linkages to relevant international and regional frameworks. This portal is a collaboration with the UN Women Multi-Country Office - Caribbean. www.parlgendertools.org



Open Parliament Portal - ParlTools

The Open Parliament Portal is an online platform designed for parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, and parliamentary strengthening practitioners in the Americas and the Caribbean. It includes toolkits organized around the pillars and principles of legislative openness and a space to exchange knowledge and experiences from the hemisphere through videos, infographics, presentations, and external resources. www.parltools.org



Environment and Sustainability Repository

This new resource maps the strategies and plans adopted by the Governments of the Americas and the Caribbean to address specific environmental and climate change topics. It compiles and systematizes the information to improve accessibility, as well as to further familiarize parliamentarians with the action plans and initiatives being undertaken by the Executive Branch of their country and identify progress and potential gaps. <https://bit.ly/EnvironmentalRepository>



Environment and sustainability: Mapping strategies and plans of the Americas and the Caribbean

Parliaments are critical actors in the development, implementation, and monitoring of their country's environment and climate objectives which requires supporting legislation, budget allocations and oversight by the legislative branch to hold the government accountable, as well as promote strong environmental governance. To support these important functions, this resource maps the strategies and plans adopted by the Governments of the Americas and the Caribbean to address specific environmental and climate change topics. It aims to compile and systematize the information in one location to improve accessibility as well as further familiarize parliamentarians with the action plans and initiatives being undertaken by their Executive Branches and identify progress and potential gaps.

For a description of the international commitments and good practices mapped, as well as the methodology that was used to compile this information, please consult the following document:

[→ Methodology and description document](#)

This tool can be used in conjunction with the publication, *Parliaments and the Paris Agreement*, which offers actionable advice on how parliaments can strengthen the alignment of oversight, legislative, and budgetary efforts to support these plans and strategies, including providing examples of good practices and key guidance questions that parliamentarians can use to undertake this work.

[→ Publication: Parliaments and the Paris Agreement](#)

If you find there is a plan or strategy missing, please contact us at parlamericasc@parlAmericas.org so that we may update this tool.

Please select the country:

Canada

🔔 First Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) submitted 📄 Updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) submitted

First NDC submitted	Updated NDC submitted
---------------------	-----------------------

📄 Long-term climate strategy 📄 National Adaptation Plan (NAP)

Canada's Mid-Century Long-Term Strategy	A National Adaptation Strategy is in development Canada's Adaptation Communication to the UNFCCC
---	---

🔔 Initiatives to promote Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) ✅ Ratification of the Escazú Agreement

A plan in relation to ACE has not been found	The Agreement is exclusive for Latin America and the Caribbean
--	--

Parliamentary Commitment Tool

The Open Parliament Commitment Tool is an online space that allows users to visualize, compare, download, and track parliaments' progress towards the achievement of their open parliament commitments. It includes commitments presented by parliamentary delegations at the annual gatherings of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network, as well as those included in Open Parliament Action Plans and legislative commitments in Open Government Action Plans presented to the Open Government Partnership. www.parlAmericas.org/en/openparliament/parl-comm-tracker

Parliamentary Commitment Tool

Overview

Parliaments across the Americas and the Caribbean are undertaking efforts to open their institutions through the implementation of commitments adopted as part of an Open Parliament Action Plan, an Open Government Action Plan or a submission to PariAmericas.

This tool allows users to visualize, compare, download and track parliaments' progress on the achievement of their open parliament commitments using a traffic light model.

●
Information not available

●
Not started

●
Started but not achieved

●
In process or partly achieved

●
Achieved

Methodology

This tool contains commitments adopted by Member Parliaments through one of the following methods:

- Commitments in an Open Parliament Action Plan adopted by the legislature, either as a stand-alone plan or as an annex to the country's Open Government Partnership Action Plan
- Legislative commitments adopted by the legislature and included in an Open Government Partnership Action Plan
- Commitments presented by parliamentary delegations attending gatherings of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network

Progress to achieve each commitment is measured by the respective parliament and reported to PariAmericas. Commitments were taken verbatim from each parliament's official documents and translated where required.

Commitments by Open Parliament Pillar

View all parliamentary commitments by thematic area according to the pillars of the ParlAmericas Road Map towards Legislative Openness.

●
Accountability

●
Citizen Participation

●
Ethics and Probity

●
Strategic Planning

●
Transparency

Commitments by Parliament

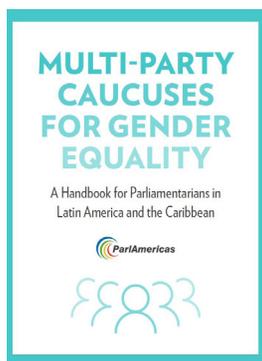
View all parliamentary commitments by country.

	Chile	2017-2018 Open Parliament Action Plan 2014-2016 Open Parliament Action Plan	Commitments Commitments
	Colombia	2018-2019 3rd Gathering of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network 2017-2018 Action Plan for and Open and Transparent Congress 2016-2017 Action Plan for and Open and Transparent Congress 2018-2019 Action plan 3	Commitments Commitments Commitments Commitments
	Costa Rica	2017-2019 Open Government Partnership Action Plan 2016-2017 Open Parliament Action Plan 2015-2016 Legislative Openness Action Plan	Commitments Commitments Commitments
	Dominican Republic	2018-2019 3rd Gathering of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network	Commitments
	Ecuador	2018-2019 3rd Gathering of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network	Commitments
	Guatemala	2016-2017 Open Parliament Action Plan	Commitments
	Paraguay	2016-2018 Legislative Openness Action Plan	Commitments
	Peru	2018-2019 3rd Gathering of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network	Commitments
	Venezuela	2018-2019 3rd Gathering of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network	Commitments

RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS

ParlAmericas creates specialized resources for parliamentarians and parliamentary stakeholders that align with hemispheric priority issues being addressed by legislatures, and with the themes of focus of ParlAmericas' networks.

A selection of the key resources utilized in this year's activities are featured below. These and many other materials can also be found on our [website](#).



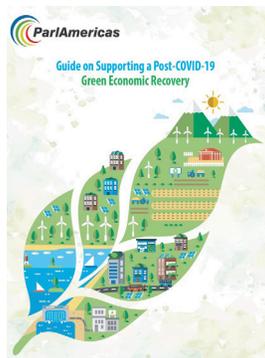
Multi-Party Caucuses for Gender Equality



Gender sensitivity in legislation



Parliaments and the Paris Agreement



Guide on Supporting a Post-COVID-19 Green Economic Recovery



The importance of parliamentary oversight during the COVID-19 pandemic

20th ANNIVERSARY

In March, ParlAmericas celebrated 20 years as the institution that promotes parliamentary diplomacy in the inter-American system. In 2001, the Parliament of Canada hosted the meeting at which the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (or FIPA, as ParlAmericas was formerly known) was formally created.

In commemoration of its anniversary, ParlAmericas conducted a series of interviews with leaders and partners who have contributed to ParlAmericas' work throughout the last two decades. It also premiered the [digital timeline](#) below, which details significant milestones in the institution's history.

The logo features a large, stylized white number '20' on the left. The '0' is composed of three concentric, curved lines that resemble a globe or a stylized 'C'. To the right of the '20' is the word 'ParlAmericas' in a bold, italicized, sans-serif font. A horizontal line is positioned below the 'ParlAmericas' text, extending from the right side of the '20'.

2001-2021



18TH PLENARY ASSEMBLY

#ParlAmericas2021

TITLE: Rebuilding the Social Contract

THEMES: Democracy, human rights, climate change, gender equality, open parliament

DATES: November 26, 29 and December 10, 2021

LOCATION: Virtual

PARTICIPANTS: More than **180** parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, representatives of civil society and youth organizations from **23** countries

HOST: Senate of Chile



These activities are in line with SDGs 5, 8, 10, 12, 13, and 16.

The Plenary Assembly brought together parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, and representatives of youth and civil society organizations from the Americas and the Caribbean to discuss the need to rebuild the social contract in the context of post-pandemic recovery efforts and in response to the demands of civil society, particularly youth movements, requiring the reinvention and transformation of governance and development models based on inclusive, sustainable, and democratic principles that leave no one behind.

The event, which coincided with the 20th anniversary of the creation of ParlAmericas and the adoption of the [Inter-American Democratic Charter of the Organization of American States](#) (OAS), took place in three sessions: an inter-parliamentary dialogue on November 26, a parliamentary dialogue with civil society and youth organizations from the Americas and the Caribbean on November 29, and a plenary session on December 10.

Throughout the sessions, panellists and other participants exchanged reflections on the importance of taking advantage of the historic opportunity offered by the post-pandemic recovery processes to renew the social contract. It was noted that this would involve undertaking systemic reforms to strengthen democratic models, overcome the serious inequalities in the region, reinforce mechanisms for citizen participation, and bolster social protection systems, among other issues that are at the core of this political agenda.

The participants agreed that a renewed social contract must be based on the unequivocal recognition of democratic principles and human rights and must address central issues of concern to the peoples of the Hemisphere, key among them social and economic inequalities.

As was highlighted in the discussions, rebuilding the social contract must be the result of a broad and diverse intergenerational dialogue that brings together the social groups that were marginalized from the historical and social processes that led to the construction of the classic social contract.

Accordingly, the parliamentarians called on all state and non-state actors to foster the necessary consensus to better respond to the growing citizen demands for social, economic, environmental, political transformations as a foundation for a renewed social contract.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SESSIONS

Opening remarks:

- Senator **Blanca Ovelar** (Paraguay), President of ParlAmericas
- The Honourable **Bridgid Annisette-George** (Trinidad and Tobago), Speaker of the House of Representatives and Vice-President of ParlAmericas
- Senator **Marcela Sabat** (Chile), representative of the host parliament of the Plenary Assembly to the Board of ParlAmericas
- Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Javier Macaya** (Chile), President of the ParlAmericas OPN
- The Honourable **Alincia Williams Grant** (Antigua and Barbuda), President of the Senate and ParlAmericas Board Member
- The Honourable Senator **Rosa Galvez** (Canada), President of the ParlAmericas PNCC

Keynote speaker:

- Mr. **Luis Almagro**, Secretary General of the OAS

Dialogues moderated by:

- Senator **Verónica Camino** (Mexico), President of the ParlAmericas PNGE
- Member of Parliament **Marc Serré** (Canada), ParlAmericas Board Member
- Member of the Legislative Assembly **María Inés Solís** (Costa Rica), ParlAmericas Board Member

Panellists:

- His Honour **Reginald Farley** (Barbados), President of the Senate
- Member of the Legislative Assembly **Paola Vega** (Costa Rica), Vice-President of the ParlAmericas PNCC Central America
- Representative **Juan Carlos Losada** (Colombia)
- Ms. **Paulina Valenzuela**, Member of the Chilean Constitutional Convention
- Mr. **Jorge Marín**, representative of the Panamanian Youth Legislative Impact project

Closing remarks:

- The Honourable **Manzoor Nadir** (Guyana), Speaker of the National Assembly and ParlAmericas Board Member
- Senator **Antares Vázquez** (Mexico), ParlAmericas Board Member

Inter-Parliamentary Dialogue (November 26)

Main reflections during the session:

- Rebuilding the social contract must be the result of a democratic, participatory, collective and inclusive exercise that brings together a broad and diverse spectrum of state and non-state actors to, leveraging existing accomplishments and achievements, build a new social contract that better responds to the needs of citizens.
- In rebuilding the social contract, it will be essential to provide spaces for the substantive participation of social groups that were marginalized from historical and social processes that led the creation of the current contract.
- Given its profound implications for human survival, the fight against climate change should be one of the main elements of the social contract of the future and needs to involve a transformation of current economic models towards more sustainable and socially just development alternatives.
- Post-pandemic recovery processes provide a window of opportunity to rebuild the social contract, build back better, and undertake some of the structural transformations demanded by communities, social movements, and civil society organizations.
- In the process of rebuilding the social contract, parliamentarians can support the facilitation of necessary political consensus and represent the will of the people, articulating new citizen demands to shape the social contract of the future.

Parliamentary Dialogue with Civil Society and Youth Representatives (November 29)

Main reflections during the session:

- The youth of the Americas and the Caribbean have been leading social movements centered on a series of issues such as the defense of human rights and social inclusion, the fight against climate change, overcoming inequality and the expansion of participation mechanisms, among others. This political agenda implies undertaking structural transformations that must be reflected in a new social contract.
- It is essential that dialogues between state and non-state actors intended to direct and shape the eventual process of rebuilding the social contract, include the substantive participation of young people: their expectations for the future and their proposals for change should inform and enrich the discussions that address the social contract of the future.
- Experiences such as the events that lead to the creation of the Chilean Constitutional Convention, show that activism, social mobilization and young peoples' participation in politics can lead to democratic and inclusive transformational processes for rethinking the social contract and renewing rights, duties, institutions, and the relationship between citizens and the state.

- It is imperative to address the lack of confidence among young people in political parties, institutions, and democracy in general, which is particularly evident in the Americas and the Caribbean. Restoring young people's confidence will involve, among other actions and initiatives, strengthening the mechanisms for advancing their participation in public affairs, developing tools for their political empowerment, and fostering an inter-generational dialogue that results in policies aimed at promoting well-being and inclusive growth.
- Parliaments need to implement strategies and programs to empower young people, promote their political leadership, and facilitate their substantive participation in public affairs, particularly in decision-making processes related to matters that affect them. The [Youth Legislative Impact](#) and [Young Women in Leadership in the Caribbean](#) projects (both supported by ParlAmericas) provide insights to guide strategies for achieving this goal.

Plenary Session (December 10)

During the session, the following parliamentary delegations presented some of the legislative initiatives that they have been undertaking in different areas, with the collaboration of civil society and young people, to rebuild the social contract: Barbados, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Saint Lucia, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.



Luis Almagro, Secretary General of the Organization of American States

"The Organization of American States has been a faithful advocate for inter-parliamentary engagement and cooperation. In fact, ParlAmericas was established by a resolution of the OAS General Assembly to promote the essential work of establishing an independent network aimed at fostering inter-parliamentary dialogue, sharing experiences, and strengthening the role of parliaments in the hemisphere's democracies, which have gathered here today to discuss the need to rebuild the social contract, the very essence of each of our communities."



Senator **Blanca Ovelar** (Paraguay), President of ParlAmericas

"This 18th Plenary Assembly coincides with the 20th anniversary of the creation of ParlAmericas. We have offered a space to address the process of rebuilding the social contract. This discussion is exceedingly relevant today, in a complex political context characterized by serious challenges to democratic governance, political polarization, and citizen distrust of institutions."



The Honourable Senator **Rosa Galvez** (Canada), President of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network on Climate Change

"It is necessary to establish a new social contract that better meets the needs and demands of citizens, which require that we strengthen the democratic model, reinforce mechanisms of participation in public affairs, bolster social protection systems, transform production and consumption models under sustainable paradigms, and address the effects of climate change."



Senator **Marcela Sabat** (Chile), representative of the host parliament of the 18th Plenary Assembly to the Board of Directors of ParlAmericas

"The extent of citizens' demands require effective and efficient action by the government to understand their needs and channel the energy and force they generate through institutional and legal channels. It is there where the institutions of popular representation must play -by definition- a leading role."



Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Javier Macaya** (Chile), President of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network

"Recently, young people have made a clear and eloquent call for the reinvention and transformation of fragile governance and development models, based on inclusive, sustainable and democratic principles. We have undertaken the responsibility to answer that call by providing a space for dialogue to listen to the youth of the Americas and the Caribbean."



The Honourable **Manzoor Nadir** (Guyana), Speaker of the National Assembly and member of the ParlAmericas Board of Directors

"Rebuilding the social contract must be, above all, the product of an intentionally democratic, collective, and inclusive process that brings together broad social actors under the guiding premise of the 2030 Agenda of leaving no one behind. A dialogue convening state and non-state actors based on the unequivocal conviction that democracy has been and will be instrumental to achieving positive change."



The Honourable **Bridgid Annisette-George** (Trinidad and Tobago), Speaker of the House of Representatives and Vice-President of ParlAmericas

"ParlAmericas, wishing to foster the consistent dialogue between state and non-state actors necessary to undertake the rebuilding of the social contract, conceived this Plenary Assembly as a space for the exchange of ideas and best practices on some of the key topics which are fundamental to this greater social conversation."



The Honourable **Alincia Williams Grant** (Antigua and Barbuda), President of the Senate and member of the ParlAmericas Board of Directors

"This 18th Plenary Assembly coincides with the 20th anniversary of the creation of ParlAmericas. We have offered a space to address the process of rebuilding the social contract. This discussion is exceedingly relevant today, in a complex political context characterized by serious challenges to democratic governance, political polarization, and citizen distrust of institutions."



Senator **Antares Vázquez** (Mexico), ParlAmericas Board Member

"The political agendas of youth organizations and movements in the Americas and the Caribbean include urgent issues that need to be a part of these social dialogues and our legislative work: the fight against the effects of climate change and the resulting transformation of current production and consumption models, the expansion of spaces for substantive citizen participation in public affairs and the strengthening of open government initiatives."

Results of the Elections for the Board of Directors of ParlAmericas 2022-2024

ParlAmericas is run by parliamentarians, for parliamentarians, with a Board of Directors composed of 21 seats, representing countries from North, South, and Central America and the Caribbean. The Board also includes *ex officio* representatives from the host country of the Plenary Assembly, the immediate past president of ParlAmericas, the directors of the ParlAmericas Corporation, the ParlAmericas International Secretariat, and the OAS General Secretariat. Board members are elected for a two-year term on a rotational basis by the member parliaments of ParlAmericas during the Annual Plenary Assembly. The following Board positions were filled during this Plenary Assembly:

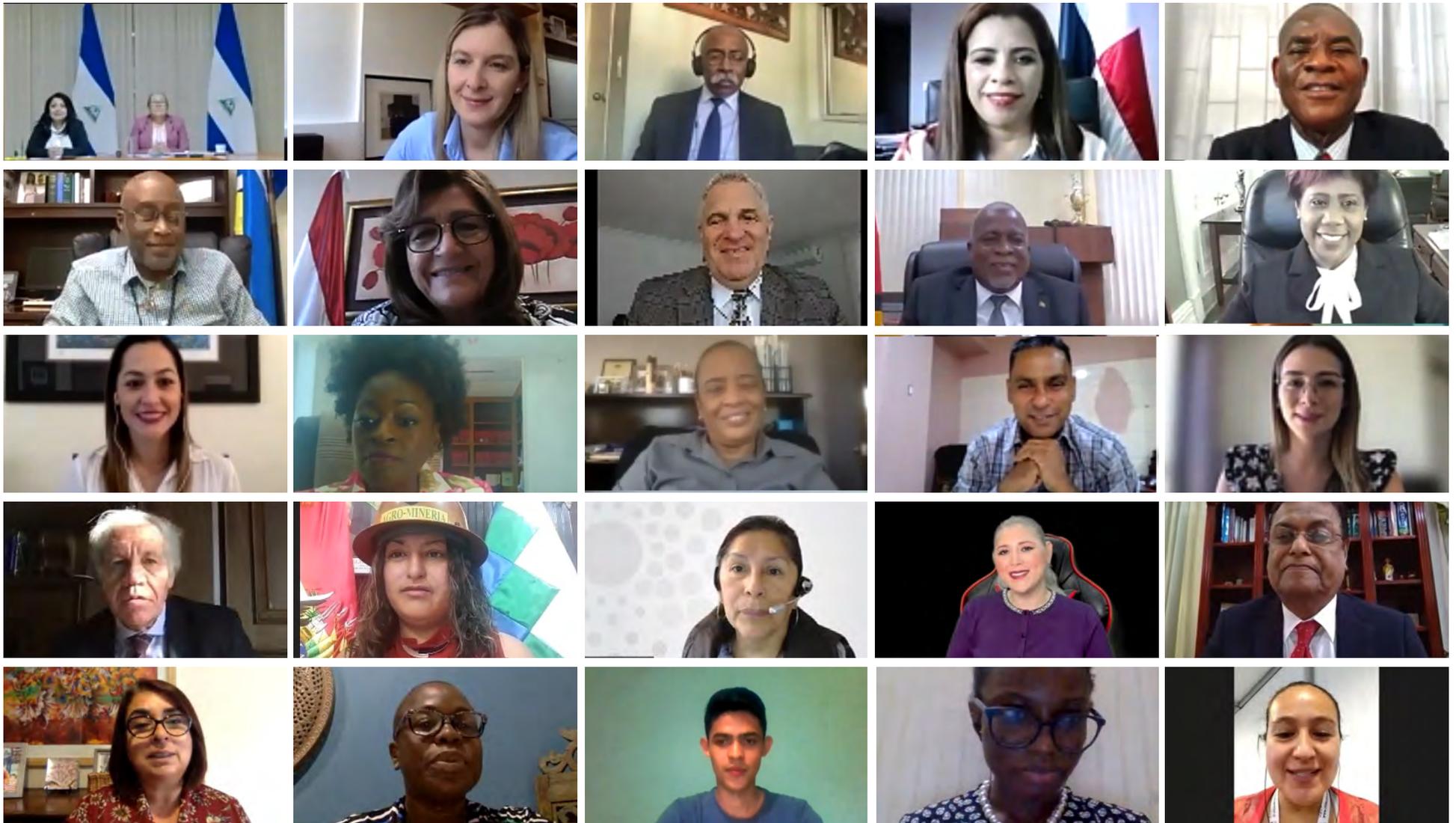
- Representatives from Central America – Belize and Panama
- Representative of South America – Chile
- Representative of the Caribbean – Saint Lucia



Declaration

The 18th Plenary Assembly concluded with the reading of the [declaration](#). The commitments made by the participating parliamentary delegations included the following:

- Take on post-pandemic recovery processes as an opportunity to rebuild the social contract, build back better and undertake urgent systemic transformations called for by various communities, social movements, and civil society organizations.
- Promote democratic and inclusive social dialogue that brings together diverse sectors of civil society, particularly those that have historically been and/or are still marginalized, to advance discussions that facilitate the consensus needed to build the social contract of the future.
- Urge our governments to ensure that the budgets for post-pandemic recovery efforts be designed according to an intersectional, intercultural, and gender-sensitive approaches that respond to the differential impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on women, particularly young women, women employed in the informal sector, pregnant women, mothers who are heads of households, as well as children and adolescents.
- Promote the importance of strengthening international governance, multilateralism, and coordinated work among countries in the hemisphere on issues such as the defense of democracy, the promotion of human rights and gender equality, the protection of migrants, and the fight against climate change based on respect, independence, sovereignty, and self-determination.



The complete agendas (November [26](#) and [29](#) and December [10](#)), [press release](#) and [videos](#) of the sessions are available on the ParlAmericas website.



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE PARLAMERICAS PARLIAMENTARY NETWORK FOR GENDER EQUALITY



Dear colleagues,

For the Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality (PNGE), 2021 was a year full of challenges and opportunities influenced above all by the need to address the grave socioeconomic impacts that COVID-19 has had on women and girls in the hemisphere and the concerning setbacks in terms of equality that we have experienced as a result of the pandemic.

To this end, we have sought to provide our members with spaces for dialogue and the exchange of good legislative practices by designing activities and tools to analyze issues like care work, gender-based violence, women's labour rights, and their access to essential social services.

I would like to highlight, in particular, the 13th Gathering of the PNGE, titled [Bolstering Social Protection beyond COVID-19: What the Data Tells Us](#). As you will see in this report, parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, civil society and youth representatives, and specialists explored strategies for strengthening social protection systems and programs in an inclusive way and from a gender perspective, in order to counteract the effects of the pandemic and address the structural causes of gender inequality and other forms of social vulnerability.

I consider one of our most significant achievements this year – and one which reflects the organization's sustained and dedicated work – to be the support that the PNGE has been providing to various member parliaments to strengthen areas related to gender equality in the legislature. In this regard, we have provided assistance to some parliaments in the launch of initiatives to support the establishment of parliamentary women's caucuses, to promote gender mainstreaming in parliamentary work, to close loopholes in procedures for reporting cases of bullying or sexual harassment in parliament, and to promote the role of men as allies for gender equality.

We were further pleased to launch the Parliamentary Staff Network for Gender Equality this year, in recognition of the value of parliamentary staff's technical work in the incorporation of gender-responsive approaches and perspectives in legislative initiatives and in making our parliaments more gender-sensitive spaces.

This progress demonstrates the institutional commitment to gender equality made by the parliaments of the hemisphere, which undoubtedly motivates and encourages us to continue our work on this agenda.

Finally, I wish to mention that, convinced of the need to support the leadership of the next generations of young women, we continue to support two multi-partisan women's organizations: the National Forum of Women in Political Parties (FONAMUPP) of Panama, and Caribbean Women in Leadership (CIWiL). In this report you will learn of some of their main achievements from this year as well, which we hope can be replicated in other countries.

I extend my sincere thanks to all of you for joining us in our initiatives and for taking on the cause of gender equality.

Sincerely,

Verónica Camino Farjat

Senator, Mexico

President of the Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality

Building a Coordinated Caribbean Position for CSW65

#ParlAmericasGEN #CSW65Caribbean

 **THEME:** CSW, women's leadership, ending gender violence

 **DATES:** February 8 and 12, 2021

 **LOCATION:** Virtual

 **PARTICIPANTS:** More than **111** parliamentarians, ministers, representatives from multilateral and civil society organizations, and national gender machinery from **14** countries and **2** territories

 **ORGANIZING PARTNERS:** The CARICOM Secretariat, UN Women Multi-Country Office for the Caribbean, Caribbean Women in Leadership (CIWiL), and the University of West Indies (UWI) Institute for Gender and Development Studies (IGDS)



This activity aligned with SDGs 5 and 17.

This two-day meeting convened ministers with responsibility for Gender Affairs, parliamentarians, heads of national gender machinery, and representatives from multilateral organizations, civil society and academics from English CARICOM countries for focused dialogue and coordination around the 65th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW65), taking place at UN Headquarters from March 15 to 26, 2021.

The sessions promoted discussions that contributed to the coordination of a unified subregional voice and advocacy strategy through the development of a CARICOM statement ahead of CSW65, that focused on two components: women's full and effective participation in public leadership and ending gender-based violence. Furthermore, participants were encouraged to devise strategies that amplified Caribbean leadership and experiences while responding to the region's current preoccupations.

Throughout the meeting, there was a robust discussion on strategies to increase women's representation in decision-making and the application of gender-responsive approaches to all legislation and policy. Additionally, participants highlighted the importance of national and regional action on COVID-19 taking a gender-responsive approach that builds on, values, and recognizes the contributions of women leaders, considering inequalities have been visibilized and exacerbated by the pandemic.

Resources to access data on themes of women's leadership and gender-based violence in the Caribbean:

[Caribbean Women Count: Ending Violence against Women and Girls Data Hub](#), CDB, CARICOM, and UN Women, webpage

[Women in Political Leadership in the Caribbean](#), UN Women, 2018

[IPU Parline Database on Women in Politics](#), Inter-Parliamentary Union, webpage

AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS

Welcome remarks by:

- Dr. **Hilary Brown**, Programme Manager, Culture and Community Development, CARICOM Secretariat
- Lady **Anande Trotman-Joseph**, President of CIWiL
- Dr. **Tonya Haynes**, Interim Head and Coordinator of Graduate Programmes, IGDS Nita Barrow Unit, UWI Cave Hill
- The Honourable **Bridgid Anisette-George** (Trinidad and Tobago), Speaker of the House of Representatives and Vice-President of ParlAmericas
- Ms. **Tonni Brodber**, Representative, UN Women Multi Country Office - Caribbean

Opening address by:

- Ms. **Roberta Clarke**, Regional Director, UN Women Eastern and Southern Africa

Moderator:

- Ms. **Ann-Marie Williams**, Deputy Programme Manager, Gender and Development, CARICOM Secretariat

Expert presentation on CSW Negotiations by:

- Dr. **Rosina Wiltshire**, Gender and Development Specialist, CIWi

Panel on the Impact of Women's Leadership

Panellists:

- The Honourable **Penelope Beckles** (Trinidad and Tobago), Minister of Housing and Urban Development
- The Honourable **Vindhya Persaud** (Guyana), Minister of Human Services and Social Security

Moderator:

- Senator the Hon. **Ranard Henfield** (The Bahamas)



The following are a few of the actions that the various stakeholders committed to:

- Establish targets, action plans and timelines to achieve gender parity for all executive, legislative and administrative positions, as well as in public commissions, tasks forces and negotiations teams;
- Implement gender responsive budgeting (GRB), bringing together the inter-related issues of gender equality and public finance, to integrate socio-economic dimensions into the process of budget planning and financing;
- Resource specialized gender equality committees or commissions and women's caucuses, and networking forums, as well as institutional capacity-building on gender equality in parliaments, ministries and public administration;
- Increase the quality and quantity of funding available to support women in public life through the creation and financing of specific funds that prioritize direct funding to women's organizations and feminist movements;
- Facilitate the entry of women into the political pipeline through capacity-building and training and awareness raising, and provide targeted support to women facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination to participate in public life and politics;
- Increase young women's representation and participation in public life through community outreach, mentoring, capacity development programmes and early exposure to legislative and policymaking spaces.

Learn more about negotiating in regional and international gender equality forums like CSW by listening to [this ParlAmericas Podcast episode](#) featuring Dr. Rosina Wiltshire, recorded at a 2020 multi-stakeholder meeting ahead of CSW64.

13th Gathering of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality

#ParlAmericasGEN

TITLE: Bolstering Social Protection Beyond COVID-19: What the Data Tells Us

THEMES: Social protection, universal health, COVID-19, gender mainstreaming, inclusion, intersectionality

DATES: September 13, 22 and October 4, 2021

LOCATION: Virtual

PARTICIPANTS: More than **210** parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, civil society, and government representatives from **31** countries

HOSTS: The National Assembly of Belize and the Chamber of Senators of Bolivia



This activity aligned with SDGs 1, 3, 5, 10, and 17

The 13th PNGE gathering consisted of three sessions: an inter-parliamentary dialogue, a dialogue with civil society and youth representatives, and a plenary session. These meetings provided a space for productive exchanges on strategies to strengthen social protection systems and programs in inclusive and gender-responsive ways in order to redress the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and structural causes of gender inequality and other forms of social vulnerability. Ensuring access to disaggregated data to guide these actions was also a cross-cutting focus.

The gathering's [keynote interview](#) provided a foundation for the dialogues, introducing the concept of social protection and how this can be an effective tool for advancing gender equality. The conversation also focused on good social protection practices and approaches in the region, highlighting how inclusive design and implementation practices facilitate responses to the differentiated needs of the public.

Throughout the virtual sessions, participants and presenters emphasized that reaping the full range of benefits of social protection – including poverty reduction, greater social inclusion, and enhanced economic growth – requires that decision makers apply a gender lens in their work, drawing on available data and tools and taking into account intersectionality.

Participants further affirmed in the dialogues that such an approach is necessary for the complex and ongoing pandemic response and recovery process. Exchanges occurred on initiatives that had been successful and where gaps remained in this regard. COVID-19 recovery processes were seen to provide an opportunity to renew the social contract if decision makers could effectively respond to the most pressing needs of the population, and especially those that have historically faced, and continue to face, exclusion and inequality.

Among the key references and documents presented during the gathering were:

- [COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker](#), UNDP and UN Women, 2021
- [Social Panorama of Latin America 2020](#), ECLAC, 2020
- [Mainstreaming Gender into Social Protection Strategies and Programmes](#) UN Women and UNICEF, 2021
- [Summary Status of Women and Men Report - The Impacts of COVID-19](#) UN Women Caribbean, 2021
- [The Economic Autonomy of Women in a Sustainable Recovery with Equality](#) ECLAC, 2021

AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS

Opening remarks by:

- The Honourable **Valerie Woods** (Belize), Speaker of the House of Representatives
- Senator **Gladys Alarcón Farfán** (Bolivia), 1st Secretary of the Chamber of Senators
- Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Maya Fernández Allende** (Chile), President PNGE 2019-2021
- The Honourable **Kevin Bernard** (Belize), Minister of Youth, Sports and E-Governance

Panel on social protection beyond COVID-19:

- Senator **Natalie Campbell-Rodrigues** (Jamaica), Vice-President for the Caribbean of the ParlAmericas PNGE
- Mr. **Carlos Maldonado** (ECLAC)
- Ms. **Zahrah Nesbitt-Ahmed** (UNICEF, Office of Research - Innocenti)
- Ms. **Claudia Brito Bruno** (FAO)

Presentations on parliamentary experiences in promoting inclusive social protection during COVID-19 by:

- Honourable Representative **Jeزمi Barraza** (Colombia), Vice-President for South America of the PNGE
- The Honourable Senator Dr. **Marie-Françoise Mégie** (Canada)
- Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Jimena López** (Argentina)
- The Honourable Minister Dr. **Adis King** (Dominica)
- Honourable Member of the National Assembly **Kayra Harding** (Panama)
- Member of the National Assembly **Isabel Henriquez** (Ecuador)
- Member of the National Assembly **Irma Dávila** (Nicaragua)

Closing remarks by:

- The Honourable **Bridgid Annisette-George** (Trinidad and Tobago), Speaker of the House of Representatives and Vice-President of ParlAmericas
- The Honourable **Alicia Williams Grant** (Antigua and Barbuda), President of the Senate and member of the Board of ParlAmericas

Key takeaways from the inter-parliamentary dialogue (September 13)

- The pandemic has worsened a situation of low economic growth and social instability in the region, deepening structural gaps, and inequalities. In response, social protection measures must be expanded to provide universal access to services that mitigate the pandemic's impact.
- Poverty rates are increasing, especially among women, and extreme poverty is on the rise. Unemployment is similarly increasing, with women again more greatly impacted. These gaps require focused attention through social protection programs and policies.
- It is important to proactively consider risks factors to create more resilient public policies. With health measures, overcrowding and limited access to basic services, are negative factors for those living in poverty and must be considered alongside interventions in other areas.
- An intersectional gender lens must be applied when analyzing social issues and implementing solutions. During the COVID-19 pandemic, children, youth, older adults, women, migrants, informal workers, domestic workers, individuals with disabilities, individuals in situations of homelessness, and rural, Indigenous, and Afro-descendant populations have all been among the population groups disproportionately impacted.
- The pandemic's health impacts and related containment measures, as well as challenges with accessing care services due to coverage, resources, and infrastructure, have had a disproportionate impact on women. Care responsibilities have been assumed primarily by women, in line with traditional and unequal gendered divisions of labour. Investing in the care economy can help to correct these imbalances.
- Increased incidence of gender-based violence and food insecurity and undernourishment are further issues that have particularly rural, Indigenous, and Afro-descendant women

- Social protection programs can be accelerators in the region's recovery process as investments in human capital and human dignity. Investing financially in women and girls in particular, and with a whole-of-life approach, has enormous value.
- The [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) are an effective tool for evaluating data, designing programs, and ensuring that efforts are focused where needs are greatest.
- The [Santiago Commitment](#), which seeks to prioritize the strengthening of the national machinery for the advancement of women and gender mainstreaming at different levels, can provide useful policy guidance and an impactful starting point for recovery efforts.
- It is important to adopt a flexible, responsive, and data-driven approach when designing and implementing new programs. Decision makers must work alongside women and gender experts to create transformative initiatives.
- Social protection must be complemented by interventions on issues like violence prevention and education in order to achieve its objectives. Governments must also create a supportive macroeconomic environment to enable the allocation of sufficient resources to these programs.

Key takeaways from the parliamentary dialogue with civil society and youth representatives (September 22)

- The pandemic has amplified the need for ongoing dialogue with the population in order to ensure that the diverse needs of the public are understood and tackled directly. The central focus must be placed on those who are most vulnerable in a given context.
- Young people must be among those who are included in decision making processes. In addition to creating avenues for their meaningful involvement, parliaments can also create opportunities and programs to foster youth leadership.

- Both quantitative and qualitative data (including stories and individuals' lived experiences) are valuable and necessary inputs for the creation of high-quality laws, policies, and programs.
- Access to resources and services related to mental health and reproductive health must be an essential part of healthcare considerations in all crisis contexts, including during COVID-19. Emphasis must also be placed on ensuring access to vaccines and support for healthcare professionals.
- Crises both illustrate and exacerbate inequalities, which means some individuals have become more vulnerable during the pandemic. For example, those at risk of experiencing domestic violence prior to the pandemic have become even more vulnerable during stay-at-home restrictions associated with COVID-19.
- Closing the digital gap is important. Unequal access to the internet or necessary electronic devices has affected education and employment
- Sustainable programs and supports that foster youth access to employment, education, and financing, along with other resources, can all be explored. Agriculture and entrepreneurship were two areas of particular interest.
- Strong international relationships that allow for the sharing of knowledge and good practices can contribute to the identification and successful implementation of new social programs.
- Effective collaborations between governments and civil society organizations, and between the public and private sectors, contribute to improved access to information and can enhance policy design and implementation processes.



The Honourable VALERIE WOODS (Belize), Speaker of the House of Representatives and co-host of the gathering

Adopting a gender-responsive approach to strengthening our social protection systems ... requires access to, and the effective use of high-quality information on the population's lived experiences, supporting tools like international agreements, and disaggregated data - all of which provide essential guidance for legislative and policy work on social protection that addresses both immediate needs and helps us to build long-term resilience, overcoming some of the root causes of vulnerability.



Senator GLADYS ALARCÓN FARFÁN (Bolivia), 1st Secretary of the Chamber of Senators and co-host of the gathering

The pandemic has had differentiated impacts on women, with an increase in violence and gender-based economic and social inequalities ... It is essential [to respond to this challenge] to apply an intersectional gender lens in analysis, and to include women and youth in decision making to ensure that measures respond to the differentiated needs of the groups most affected.



The Honourable BRIDGID ANNISSETTE-GEORGE (Trinidad and Tobago), Speaker of the House of Representatives and Vice-President of ParlAmericas

The strengthening of our social protection systems could not be more deserving of our attention as legislators and policy makers. This pandemic continues to throw unexpected challenges our way. We must ensure that we are guaranteeing the basic protections, services, and rights that are due to each and every individual, and specifically to women and girls.



Member of the Chamber of Deputies MAYA FERNÁNDEZ ALLENDE (Chile), President of the PNGE (2019-2021)

The complex crisis we are experiencing must be seen as a historic opportunity to strengthen social protection programs and systems under an inclusive paradigm, recognizing that well-designed, user-centered, and evidence-based social protection systems not only reduce poverty and inequality, but can also positively impact democracy, social cohesion, and sustainable economic growth.



The Honourable ALINCIA WILLIAMS GRANT (Antigua and Barbuda), President of the Senate and member of the ParlAmericas Board of Directors

If we are to build back for a stronger future, one that is more resilient despite the many uncertainties we can expect to face, we will need more diverse perspectives and inputs. Inputs on equitable health care, on ending gender violence, on training and education, on workplace protections, on income security, and so much more. And we must all approach these conversations with a mind that is open to differing viewpoints we may not have contemplated. This makes our democracies stronger.



Senator VERÓNICA CAMINO FARJAT (Mexico), President of the PNGE (2021-2023)

This is a very important dialogue ... The problems our youth experience are not only limited to those of students; we are also talking about young workers, mental health problems, and domestic violence ... We must accept the challenge put to us by young people so that we can make things better and work from our parliaments in creative ways, supported by our knowledge of the legal frameworks of each of our countries.

Executive of the Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality

Following the elections held during the plenary session of the gathering, the Executive Committee of the PNGE now consists of:

President

- Senator **Verónica Camino Farjat** (Mexico)

Vice-President - North America

- The Honourable **Mobina Jaffer**, Senator (Canada)

Vice-President - The Caribbean

- Senator **Natalie Campbell-Rodrigues** (Jamaica)

Vice-President - Central America

- Honourable Member of the National Assembly **Kayra Harding** (Panama)

Vice-President - South America

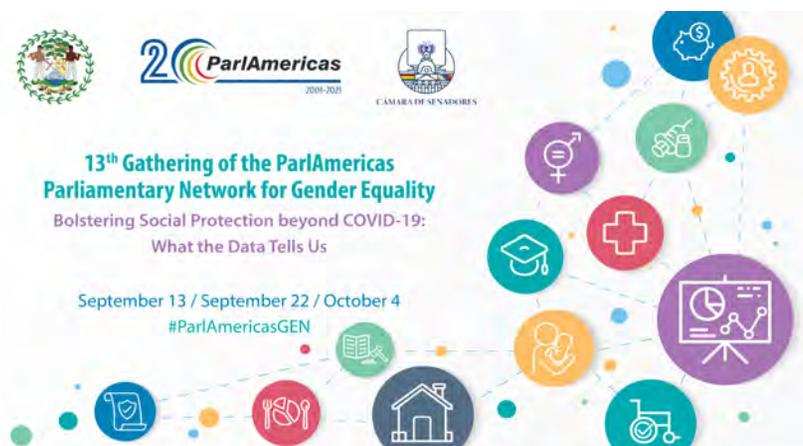
- Honourable Representative **Jezmi Barraza Arraut** (Colombia)

Declaration

The gathering's plenary session (October 4) concluded with a reading of the [declaration](#).

Among the commitments adopted by the convened parliamentary delegations are:

- Defend the principles of universality and of solidarity of social protection grounded in human dignity and social inclusion, with special attention to the population groups that have historically faced difficulties in accessing social protection, recognizing the centrality of non-discrimination, gender equality, and the importance of meeting the specific needs of the most vulnerable people.
- Continue the necessary expansion of existing social protection programs for children, facilitating access to nutrition, education, and health services for girls, boys, and adolescents, recognizing these as human rights; and incorporating childcare services and the provision of universal parental leave, in order to prevent and reduce child poverty and eradicate child labor.
- Insist on the need to facilitate access to social protection systems and programs, making use of new technologies whenever possible, and addressing the risks of exclusion associated with characteristics such as gender, disability, ethnicity, and employment status.
- Require competent authorities to collect disaggregated data, as well as quantitative and qualitative first-hand testimonials and information, particularly from women, Indigenous, Afro-descendent, and Indo-descendant peoples, and other groups that are traditionally underrepresented in decision-making processes, for use in the creation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of social protection systems and programs.
- Maintain constant dialogue on social protection with the relevant institutions and civil society to inform our legislative actions with regard to these issues and ensure that existing programs and benefits are widely known, understood, and accessible by the beneficiary population.
- Defend and guarantee the annual increase of public spending on social protection programs, including in the context of austerity measures and fiscal contraction caused by the economic effects of crises, such as that stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic.





The complete agendas (September [13](#), [22](#), and October [4](#)), [press release](#), keynote interview podcasts ([English](#) and [Spanish](#)), [video recording playlist](#), and [presentations](#) from this activity can be accessed on the [ParlAmericas website](#).

WOMEN'S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP PROJECT



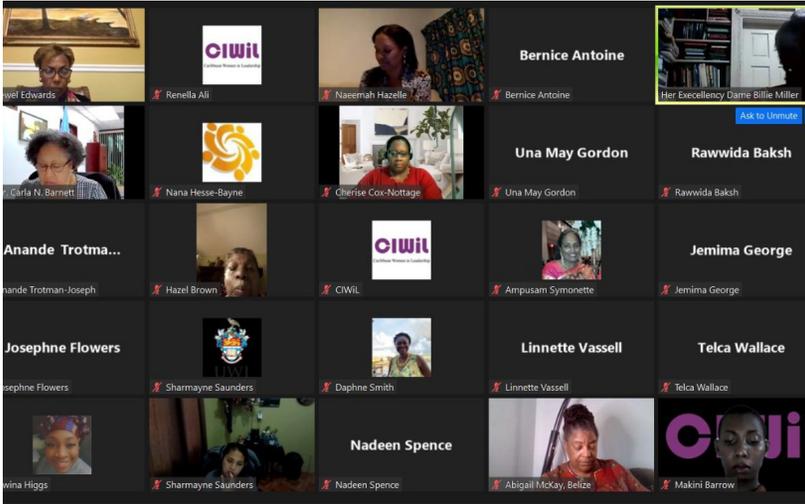
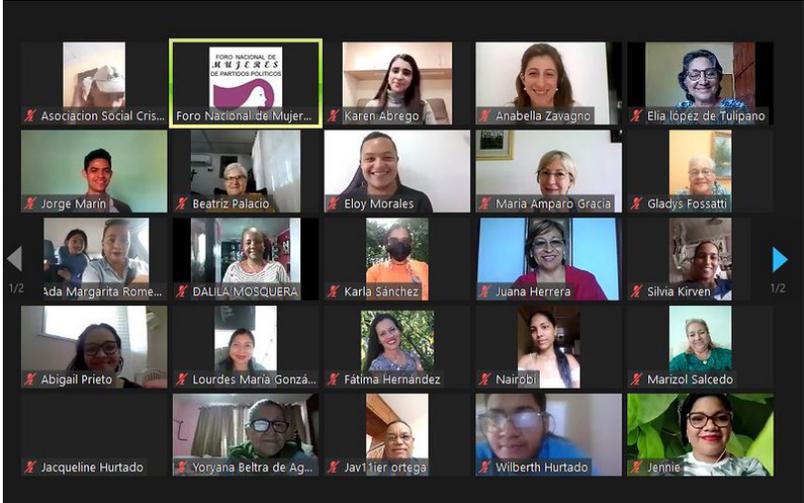
In 2018, ParlAmericas launched a project to promote women's political leadership in Latin America and the Caribbean. The project supports multi-partisan women's organizations in their delivery of programming that builds environments which enables women's leadership in politics and other sectors where they are underrepresented. The project's activities also strengthen the institutional capacities of these organizations as they fulfill their work in collaboration with national parliaments, gender bureaux, multilaterals, and other regional and local civil society organizations.

Through this project, ParlAmericas has been accompanying [Caribbean Women in Leadership](#) (CIWiL) and the [National Forum of Women in Political Parties](#) (FONAMUPP) in Panama. The joint initiatives carried out with these organizations build on the successes of ParlAmericas' work on gender mainstreaming and civil society engagement.

In the ongoing context of the COVID-19 pandemic, CIWiL, FONAMUPP, and other project partners continue to successfully adapt and transition their activities to online or hybrid formats.

In 2021, project activities included:

- webinars to encourage and support electoral candidacies by women;
- online training initiatives to promote gender-responsive youth leadership;
- the strengthening of local chapters of the partner organizations;
- national and regional online knowledge exchanges; and
- the production of communications and advocacy tools.



FORO NACIONAL DE
M U J E R E S
DE PARTIDOS POLÍTICOS



The Forum of Women in Political Parties (FONAMUPP) of Panama is a non-governmental, non-profit organization with the objective of promoting the political participation of Panamanian women with equal opportunities and conditions. FONAMUPP has been active for 25 years and has played a strong role in advocating for electoral reforms in favour of parity.

Summary of 2021 activities

- 75+ libraries, schools, and other organizations in Panama received copies of *Elena and the Ants: A Team to the Rescue*
- 14 training and awareness-raising sessions held on the importance of women’s leadership and gender equality
- 74 youth reached through programs to promote gender-responsive leadership
- 433+ women beneficiaries of project activities

In the words of FONAMUPP’s training beneficiaries

“My experience in the advocacy program has helped me grow personally and professionally, since now I’m more confident about speaking in public. It has also motivated me to better inform myself on what is happening in the country.”

“I feel proud about the results of the projects, like Brújula Mujer; Panama is at the forefront of young women’s political leadership.”

“We are never done learning; there is even more to listen to than to say. Political leadership is what builds success out of the struggles for equality.”





Caribbean Women in Leadership

Caribbean Women in Leadership (CIWIL) is a flagship networking organisation committed to advancing transformational leadership and to increasing the numbers of women in leadership and decision-making in political and civic life, proportionate to the female population in Caribbean countries. CIWIL is a non-political, non-partisan, and independent institution and a leading advocate to increase the participation of women in leadership and decision-making within the Caribbean.

CIWIL works with activists, women parliamentarians, development professionals, and national gender machineries to train and support women across the region as they seek elected office or assume other positions of leadership. The vision of CIWIL is to promote the sustainable development of Caribbean societies embracing transformational leadership principles including gender equality, equity, economic and social justice and environmental sustainability.



“While the challenges over the last year have made us all acutely aware of the specific vulnerabilities of women, at the same time, it has underscored why gender equality lies at the very heart of sustainable development ... This commitment [to gender equality] requires elevating women’s voices in decision-making spaces everywhere, supporting their involvement in public life, and investing in developing young women and girls who are leading the way to social transformation.” – **Dylis McDonald**, CIWIL Project Coordinator

Summary of 2021 activities

- 4 virtual pre-electoral training sessions held to support women candidates and their campaign teams
- 6 regional webinars held to foster dialogue on priority gender equality themes
- 1 participatory process undertaken to update the organization’s multi-year strategic plan
- 670+ women beneficiaries of project activities





MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE PARLAMERICAS OPEN PARLIAMENT NETWORK



Dear colleagues,

The year 2021 has been especially productive for the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network (OPN) thanks, in part, to the growing significance attributed to the legislative openness agenda within parliaments.

We are increasingly aware that taking action to improve transparency and access to public information, strengthening accountability, fostering citizen participation in decision-making, and promoting ethics and probity in parliamentary work are vital tasks for, among other things, restoring our citizens' confidence in parliament. This objective is, and should be, a priority for the legislatures of the Americas and the Caribbean.

In this context, and in order to provide our members with the best tools to move forward on this path, we undertook the ambitious process of updating the Road Map towards Legislative Openness, a document that has served as a reference for parliaments in the hemisphere to develop their own open parliament plans and commitments.

Thus, taking into account the progress made and the lessons learned since its publication in 2016, the Road Map was reviewed and updated through a broad, participatory consultation process that included parliamentarians and parliamentary staff, as well as subject matter experts and representatives of civil society organizations from 29 countries in the hemisphere. Thanks to your contributions, we were able to consolidate a new version of the [Road Map towards Legislative Openness](#), which will be launched at our Network's next annual meeting, and which we firmly believe will continue to guide the efforts made by parliaments in the hemisphere with regard to these matters.

In addition, I would also like to highlight that we held the 5th Gathering of the OPN this year, which brought together more than 200 participants from 30 countries to analyze the serious effects of disinformation and computational propaganda on democracy, institutions, and social dialogue. This is an issue of

great interest to our members due to its complex and profound implications. I invite you to consult its activity report, where you will find presentations by guest experts, supplementary resources, and the declaration signed during the gathering.

In parallel with the 5th Gathering of the OPN, we held the 3rd Meeting of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Staff Network on Open Parliament, which addressed technological innovation in parliamentary work and included themes such as artificial intelligence and cybersecurity. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the parliamentary staff of the hemisphere for their dedication and commitment to legislative openness.

Furthermore, it is important to highlight the efforts made by our Network to facilitate resources, tools, the exchange of experiences between different parliaments, and collaboration with various relevant stakeholders on this agenda, including civil society organizations and public institutions like information enforcement bodies, with whom we analyzed the new Model Law on Access to Public Information developed by the OAS, as well as international organizations, with whom we led Open Parliament Day, as part of the Open Government Partnership Global Summit.

Thank you for supporting the OPN's work in 2021. We hope to be able to rely on your continued support next year.

Sincerely,

Javier Macaya Danús

**Member of the Chamber of Deputies of Chile
President of the Open Parliament Network**

.....
 FOLLOW ME ON TWITTER @JAVIER MACAYA

Legislative Modernization Experiences in Latin America

#ParlAmericasOPN #NDI

THEMES: Legislative modernization, innovation, citizen participation

DATES: November 13, 2020 & January 29, 2021

LOCATION: Virtual

PARTICIPANTS: More than **50** parliamentarians and parliamentary staff from **7** countries

ORGANIZING PARTNER: National Democratic Institute (NDI) - Central America



These activities aligned with SDG 16.

This series of virtual meetings was designed for parliamentarians and parliamentary staff from Northern Central America, namely: El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Its objective was to provide practical knowledge on legislative modernization through the exchange of experiences and to establish a subregional, inter-parliamentary agenda on advancing these modernization processes. The outcomes of the meetings will be used as a reference to develop work plans and guide the programming of NDI and ParlAmericas in support of the established agenda in these three countries.

Meeting 1: Strengthening Parliamentary Function

The first meeting of the series explored the concept of legislative modernization and its role in strengthening parliaments. Participants shared information about initiatives undertaken to move towards virtual parliamentary sessions and other open parliament efforts related to transparency, open data, and public integrity. The dialogue also considered the challenges of adaptation faced by the region's parliaments due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Meeting 2: Innovation and Citizen Participation in Parliamentary Processes

The second meeting focused on legislative modernization from the perspective of innovation and citizen participation mechanisms. Through their exchanges, participants discussed the implications of such mechanisms in the context of evolving political contexts. It was also evident that in addition to adapting the parliament's functioning to the circumstances of the ongoing pandemic, planning is necessary for disasters, such as the recent case of Hurricane Eta.

Both sessions included open dialogue to share reflections and identify issues that could be linked to a sub-regional agenda for further learning and collaboration.

Among the references shared were:

- [Protocol for Remote Parliamentary Work of the Chamber of Deputies](#) (Argentina)
- [Citizen Participation Regulation](#) (Chile) *in Spanish*
- [National Agricultural Parliament](#) (Costa Rica) *in Spanish*
- [Institutional Policy on Open Parliament](#) (Costa Rica) *in Spanish*
- [Reform of the Organic Law of the Legislative Function](#) (Ecuador) *in Spanish*

AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS

Opening remarks by:

- Member of the National Assembly **Elizabeth Cabezas** (Ecuador), President of ParlAmericas
- Member of the Legislative Assembly **Cristina Cornejo** (El Salvador), ParlAmericas Board Member
- Mr. **Eduardo Nuñez Vargas**, Director of NDI's Regional Program for Central America

Panel on reforms for institutional strengthening featuring:

- Ms. **Pamela Lozano**, specialist in legislative openness
- Vice-President of the National Assembly **César Solórzano** (Ecuador)
- Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Daniela Vilar** (Argentina)

Presentations on progress in legislative modernization by:

- Member of the Legislative Assembly **Anabel Belloso** (El Salvador)
- Member of Congress **Cornelio García** (Guatemala)
- Member of Congress **Enrique Yllescas** (Honduras)
- Member of Congress **Victor Martínez** (Honduras)
- First Vice-President of the Congress **Sofía Hernández** (Guatemala)

Panel on Latin American experiences:

- Member of the Legislative Assembly **Ana Lucía Delgado** (Costa Rica)
- Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Vlado Mirosevic** (Chile)

Closing remarks by:

- Mr. **Alejandro Urizar**, Director, NDI - Honduras
- Ms. **Natalí Casanova**, Senior Program Officer - Open Parliament, ParlAmericas

Interparliamentary Dialogue

Among the topics highlighted was the importance of being able to hold virtual sessions, not only in the context of the pandemic, but also in disastrous situations. For example, Honduras mentioned challenges in traveling from the different districts to parliament after the recent Hurricane Eta. In terms of citizen participation, the importance of expanding beyond only providing information to also incorporating interaction and feedback between the parliament and citizens was highlighted.

Regarding the adoption of new technologies to advance legislative modernization in all forms, important challenges ahead were highlighted. This included achieving political consensus among different parties to adopt new methods and transparent legislative procedures that generate trust of the population as well as ensure that the tools are secure, accessible and easy to adopt for both citizens and legislators.

INTERPARLIAMENTARY AGENDA FOR LEGISLATIVE MODERNIZATION

Use of ICTS	Active mechanisms for citizen participation	Which actions are considered important?
<p>Citizen participation. Generate spaces for two-way interaction.</p>	<p>Co-creation of open parliament commitments. Discussion and exchanges with different sectors in society.</p>	<p>Sectorial and sub-regional agendas in relevant themes such as migration.</p>
<p>Representation. Connect with other sectors in society.</p>	<p>Lawmaking process. In the stages of drafting, reviewing, socialization and approval (through citizen votes) of the content of the law.</p>	<p>Networking between legislators. Strengthen subregional relationships within existing parliamentary networks.</p>
<p>Lawmaking process. In the phases of socialization and approval (plenary vote) of the content of the law.</p>	<p>Development and use of applications.</p>	

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR LEGISLATIVE MODERNIZATION IDENTIFIED IN SESSIONS

- Legislative modernization efforts require: strong bipartisan agreements; stable and committed multi-partisan committees; a long-term outlook; and citizen participation.
- Legislative reform and modernization processes can be useful in addressing citizen distrust of democratic institutions, particularly if they involve expanding opportunities for effective citizen participation.
- In the region's parliaments, legislative modernization processes focus mainly on the organizational structure (administrative processes). It is important to complement this progress by further strengthening the institutional dimension, that is, the principles, values, and rules that guide legislative work.
- The adoption of ICTs in the legislative processes during a pandemic presents various challenges but it also represents opportunities for modernization in terms of streamlining tools that can overcome the challenges associated with the pandemic and that can be incorporated on a permanent basis.
- Legislative modernization is not only focused on the implementation of ICTs. It also involves betting on reforms and efforts in favour of legislative openness, thus strengthening parliamentary work in agreement with the Sustainable Development Goals.

The agendas ([session 1](#) & [session 2](#)) in Spanish, [press release](#), and [presentations](#) from these two activities can be accessed on the ParlAmericas website.

5th Gathering of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network

#ParlAmericasOPN

TITLE: Countering Disinformation to Promote Responsible Public Discourse

THEMES: Gender and disinformation, ethical algorithms, data protection, electoral integrity

DATES: March 15, 19, and 26, 2021

LOCATION: Virtual

PARTICIPANTS: More than **200** parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, experts, and representatives of civil society organizations and youth organizations from **30** countries

HOST: Parliament of Canada



These activities aligned with SDG 16.

The 5th OPN gathering consisted of two working sessions, each with a series of thematic breakout groups, and an interactive panel and plenary session. These meetings brought parliamentarians together with diverse stakeholders from across the hemisphere to discuss some of the most critical issues related to the effects of disinformation and computational propaganda on democracy, institutions, and social dialogue.

Starting from the understanding that disinformation is multifaceted, globalized, and systemic, the gathering's working sessions were designed to analyse the

multiple manifestations of disinformation from different perspectives, including its gendered dimensions, the protection of personal data, electoral integrity, the role of the media, and ethics in algorithms.

To set the stage for the breakout group discussions, each of the working sessions was inaugurated by a keynote address from a subject matter expert who contextualized the disinformation phenomenon, shared their reflections on its primary effects on democracy and social dialogue, and offered insights on the actions parliamentarians can take to mitigate its consequences.

The plenary session explored the critical issues related to new information and communication technologies, digital disinformation, and computational propaganda. Participants exchanged on the inherent complexity of several of the main aspects of these issues, such as the tension that exists between content moderation and freedom of expression; the magnitude, power and decentralized nature of large technology companies; the primary considerations that legislation must take into account to counteract the effects of disinformation and regulate digital platforms and applications; the worrisome prevalence of online violence against women and girls; among others.

Among the key references and documents presented in the gathering were:

- [Guide to guarantee freedom of expression regarding deliberate disinformation in electoral contexts](#). Organization of American States – OAS, 2019.
- [Social media guide for parliaments and parliamentarians](#). Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021.
- [Creating a Data Protection Framework: a Do's and Don'ts Guide for Lawmakers](#). Access Now, 2018.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SESSIONS

Opening remarks by:

- The Honourable **Anthony Rota** (Canada), Speaker of the House of Commons
- Senator, the Honourable **Pierrette Ringuette** (Canada), Speaker Pro Tempore of the Senate
- Senator, the Honourable **Rosa Galvez** (Canada), President of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network on Climate Change
- Member of Parliament **Bruce Stanton** (Canada), Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons
- Senator **Blanca Ovelar** (Paraguay), President of ParlAmericas

Dialogues moderated by:

- Senator **Bertha Alicia Caraveo Camarena** (Mexico)
- Senator, the Honourable **Ranard Eric Henfield** (The Bahamas), Vice-President of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network for the Caribbean

Panellists:

- Ms. **Catalina Botero Marino**, Member of the Facebook Oversight Board
- Ms. **Lucina Di Meco**, Gender Equality Expert and Co-founder of #ShePersisted Global
- Member of Parliament **Nathaniel Erskine-Smith** (Canada), International Grand Committee on Disinformation

Closing remarks by:

- Member of Parliament **Marc Serré** (Canada), ParlAmericas Board Member
- Member of the National Assembly **Maritza Espinales** (Nicaragua), ParlAmericas Board Member
- Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Javier Macaya Danús** (Chile), President of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network

Key takeaways from the thematic working groups (March 15 and 19)

Breakout group themes included: Gender and disinformation; collaborating with the news media sector; promoting ethical algorithms; ensuring privacy and the protection of personal data and securing electoral integrity.

- 1) Gender disinformation seeks to negatively alter public perception of the career paths of women politicians in order to obtain immediate political benefits and discourage their involvement in public affairs.
- 2) Legislators can shed light on this phenomenon, for example, by raising public awareness of its consequences and establishing support networks for women who have been affected. It is likewise important to promote public literacy programs with a specific emphasis on gender disinformation that evaluates the impact of new technologies and applications in order to have better tools for decision making.
- 3) The disruptive nature of digital communication, the globalized nature and influential capacity of major technology companies, as well as the very characteristics of the digital market, require that the laws and regulations governing the telecommunications industry be revised and updated to better respond to the challenges of a new and complex reality and to avoid any type of censorship.
- 4) Public authorities need to acknowledge the importance of independent journalism and the diversity of the media ecosystem and civic spaces as allies in mitigating the effects of disinformation and computational propaganda. In addition, there is a pressing need to promote media and information literacy among users and journalists to counter digital disinformation.

5) Due to their complexity, ubiquity, and specific effects on people's lives, it is necessary to consider policies and regulations to promote algorithmic literacy, and the transparency and oversight of algorithms and their consequences on people's lives.

6) It is imperative that parliaments advance discussions that convene government and private sector representatives to promote democratic, transparent, inclusive and ethical paradigms in the design of artificial intelligence and computational algorithms.

7) Regulations that seek to protect personal data must be based on the right of all individuals to know, update, and rectify any information collected about them in public and private databases or files, as well as in the applications and social media platforms with which they interact.

8) It is important that the laws that are implemented or updates made to the existing regulatory frameworks for data protection, follow the highest international standards in this area and include the principles of quality, lawfulness, purpose, and proportionality in the collection, transfer, and use of personal data, and communicate to citizens in a transparent manner their rights and guarantees.

9) In the Americas and the Caribbean, disinformation campaigns deployed through social networks and digital messaging systems tend to exacerbate political polarization, and target minorities (particularly migrants), political dissidents and women (both politicians and voters).

10) To counteract the effects of digital disinformation and computational propaganda in electoral processes, it is necessary to contemplate a series of actions that may include moderating online content and behaviour during

campaigns and elections (in observance of freedom of expression rights); promoting transparency during campaigns and elections; strengthening campaign finance regulations to promote fairness; and facilitating the dissemination of transparent and reliable information during campaigns and elections.



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WORKING GROUPS

Keynote address:

- Professor **Taylor Owen**, Beaverbrook Chair in Media, Ethics and Communications at the Max Bell School of Public Policy at Canada's McGill University
- Mr. **Marco Aurelio Ruediger**, Director of Public Policy Analysis at the Getulio Vargas Foundation of Brazil

Thematic working group presentations by:

- Ms. **Amalia Toledo**, Consultant on gender and technology
- Ms. **Sandra Pepera**, Director for Gender, Women and Democracy, National Democratic Institute
- Ms. **Elena Gil González**, lawyer, doctoral candidate and professor at the Instituto de Empresa Law School
- Ms. **Estelle Massé**, Senior Policy Analyst and Global Data Protection Lead, Access Now
- Mr. **Pedro Vaca Villarreal**, Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR)
- Mr. **Daniel Arnaldo**, Advisor for Information Strategies, National Democratic Institute
- Ms. **Victoria Welborn**, Program Manager for the Technology and Innovation Program, National Democratic Institute
- Ms. **Laura Zommer**, Executive Director, Chequeado
- Ms. **Nazima Raghubir**, First Vice President of the Association of Caribbean Media Workers
- Ms. **Micaela Mantegna**, Professor at the Center for Technology and Society, University of San Andrés, and Affiliate Researcher at Harvard's Berkman Klein Center

Good Legislative Practices

The working groups also provided an opportunity to exchange good legislative practices related to different aspects of disinformation, online violence, electoral integrity, and data protection.

Disinformation and Fake News

Representative **Cecilia Bottino Fiuri** (Uruguay), Chair of the Committee on Constitution, Codes, General Legislation, and Administration, presented the Ethical Pact against Disinformation, an initiative signed by Uruguay's political parties to combat the creation and dissemination of disinformation campaigns and fake news. Among other commitments, the signing parties agreed "not to generate or promote fake news or disinformation campaigns targeting political adversaries."

Consult the text of the pact [here](#) (in Spanish).

Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Orlando Silva** (Brazil) presented *Comprove*, a tool developed by the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies which, through a WhatsApp channel, allows citizens to clarify information about parliamentary work and verify the veracity of information and news about the Chamber disseminated through social networks.

Consult everything related to *Comprove* [here](#) (in Portuguese).

Online Gender Violence

Senator **Martha Lucía Micher Camarena** (Mexico), Chair of the Senate Committee for Gender Equality, presented the professed "Olimpia Law," a set of reforms to the General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence that criminalize digital violence and punish crimes that violate the sexual intimacy of individuals through digital media.

Consult all of the details and background of the law [here](#) (in Spanish).

Electoral Integrity

The Honourable Senator **René Cormier** (Canada) presented some of the updates introduced to the Canada Elections Act. The amendments, which were designed to boost voter participation, make voting more accessible, and improve the transparency and security of electoral processes, included aspects such as adjusting limits on third-party financial contributions and tightening restrictions on the political activities of foreign individuals and organizations.

Consult the law introducing amendments to the Canada Elections Act [here](#).

Artificial Intelligence and Algorithms

Senator **Kenneth Pugh Olavarría** (Chile) shared some of the interesting and pioneering experiences being advanced by the Chilean Congress on issues related to [neurorights](#) (in Spanish), ethics in algorithms, the role of artificial intelligence in governance, and data protection.

Consult the Artificial Intelligence for Chile report, prepared by the Senate of Chile, [here](#) (in Spanish).

Data Protection

Member of the National Assembly **César Solórzano** (Ecuador), Vice-President of the National Assembly, presented some of the main highlights of the Organic Law on the Protection of Personal Data, including, for example, the recognition of proactive responsibility as the central element and the incorporation of some of the highest standards regarding the treatment of personal data: lawfulness, transparency, legitimacy, purpose, and relevance, as well as proportionality of the treatment, consent, confidentiality, quality, conservation, and security of such data.

Consult the text of the law [here](#) (in Spanish).

His Honour **Reginald Farley** (Barbados), President of the Senate, presented the Data Protection Act, which was passed in 2019. This law, inspired in large part by the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), has been recognized as one of the most advanced privacy laws in the Caribbean as it incorporates some of the highest international standards in the field.

Consult the text of the law [here](#).

Dialogues moderated by:

- Senator **Natalie Campbell-Rodrigues** (Jamaica)
- Member of Congress **Andrea Villagrán** (Guatemala)
- Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Ramiro Gutiérrez** (Argentina)
- His Honour **Reginald Farley** (Barbados), President of the Senate
- Member of the National Assembly **Elizabeth Cabezas** (Ecuador), President of ParlAmericas (2019-2020)
- Member of the House of Representatives **Juan David Vélez** (Colombia)
- Senator **Antares Vázquez** (Mexico), Member of the Board of Directors of ParlAmericas
- The Honourable **Alincia Williams Grant** (Antigua and Barbuda), President of the Senate and Member of the Board of Directors of ParlAmericas



Senator, the Honourable PIERRETTE RINGUETTE (Canada), Speaker Pro Tempore of the Senate

Disinformation campaigns during an election can have a range of harmful impacts. For example, the disinformation spread through such concerted campaigns can obscure legitimate information for voters, polarize social discourse, and weaken confidence in the electoral process.



Member of the Chamber of Deputies JAVIER MACAYA DANÚS (Chile), President-elect of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network

We are experiencing the multiple ways in which disinformation is affecting democracy and the fundamental values and principles we share by allowing national and foreign actors to spread harmful narratives, exacerbate social and political polarization, and instigate anti-democratic visions among the citizenry.



Senator BLANCA OVELAR (Paraguay), President of ParlAmericas

Mitigating the effects of disinformation and computational propaganda, responding to the consolidation of monopolistic models in the information and communication technologies sector, and promoting the use of ethical and inclusive algorithms are initiatives of such magnitude that they are only viable if they are developed jointly.



The Honourable ANTHONY ROTA (Canada), Speaker of the House of Commons

Disinformation during a global pandemic can endanger public health and safety, especially if people believe false prevention measures or treatments, or if their trust in health services and public institutions is undermined.



Member of Parliament MARC SERRÉ (Canada), ParlAmericas Board Member

We can learn from the national initiatives and innovative legislative practices being implemented around the world. We learned about a few of them today. In Canada, for example, we are developing the [Digital Citizen Initiative](#), a multi-component strategy that aims to support democracy and social cohesion by building citizen resilience against online disinformation and building partnerships to support a healthy information ecosystem.



Senator, the Honourable RANARD ERIC HENFIELD (The Bahamas), Vice-President of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network for the Caribbean

Facing the multifaceted, globalised and systemic nature of disinformation requires addressing its multiple expressions from different perspectives. This gathering will provide an opportunity to engage in dialogues around some of those pressing issues and to share innovative legislative practices to curb their effects, keeping in mind that promoting legislative openness is a great way to contribute to combating disinformation.

Presentation of the results of open parliament commitments adopted at the 4th Gathering of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network, and new commitments.

Parliamentarians across the Americas and the Caribbean are undertaking openness efforts through the implementation of commitments adopted as part of an Open Parliament Action Plan, an Open Government Action Plan submitted by countries to the OGP (Open Government Partnership), or through other initiatives reported to ParlAmericas during the annual gatherings of the OPN.

The [ParlAmericas Open Parliament Commitment tool](#) allows users to visualize, compare, download and track parliaments' progress on the achievement of the legislative openness commitments presented, using a traffic light model. The commitments can be viewed by country and by Open Parliament Pillar (transparency, accountability, citizen participation, strategic planning, and ethics and probity).

The following parliaments presented updates to commitments made during the 4th gathering: [Canada](#), [Chile](#), [Colombia](#), [Costa Rica](#), [Ecuador](#), [Paraguay](#), [Suriname](#), and [Trinidad and Tobago](#).

NEW COMMITMENTS TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN 2021-2022

Country	Pillar	New Commitments
Canada	 Strategic Planning	<p>Presentation of the road map for developing an Open Parliament Action Plan in the Parliament of Canada</p> <p>Present before the Senate and House of Commons the Road Map for Developing an Open Parliament Action Plan, as adopted by the Executive Committee of the Canadian Section of ParlAmericas, and undertake the necessary efforts to implement the concrete actions established therein.</p>
Chile	 Strategic Planning	<p>Co-creation of the legislative commitments of the 5th Open Government Action Plan 2020-2022 (in Spanish)</p> <p>Co-create new open parliament commitments with civil society, which will be included in the 5th Open Government Action Plan 2020-2022.</p>
Honduras	 Strategic Planning	<p>Capacity-building for parliamentarians and parliamentary staff concerning open parliament, with a goal of developing the next Open Parliament Action Plan</p> <p>Development of capacity-building sessions in which parliamentarians and parliamentary officials can deepen their knowledge of open parliament, legislative transparency and citizen participation.</p>

NEW COMMITMENTS TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN 2021-2022

Country	Pilar	New Commitments
Costa Rica	 Citizen Participation	<p>Implementation of the legislative commitments of the Open State Action Plan 2019-2021</p> <p>Co-create a comprehensive, innovative, and multi-channel strategy for citizen participation for the Legislative Assembly, based on the opening of collaborative spaces and processes. Additionally, establish an Open State Civic Forum that brings together citizens and civil society organizations to evaluate existing regulations on transparency, access to information, accountability and citizen participation, and promotes new proposals and reforms to existing legislation. These proposals will be presented to the Members of the Legislative Assembly for their evaluation and possible adoption.</p>
Ecuador	 Strategic Planning	<p>Presentation of the Regulations for Implementing Open Parliament in the National Assembly (in Spanish), approved by the Legislative Administration Council</p> <p>Submit to the Assembly the regulations, whose proposal includes principles of open parliament and open government, as well as international best practices in the matter. The proposal was formulated in conjunction with civil society, through a process of co-creation of regulations, with a consulting team with national and international experience in the promotion of Open Parliament policies, and National Assembly officials involved in the operation of open parliament in the institution.</p>
Colombia	 Strategic Planning	<p>Implementation of the 5th Action Plan for an Open and Transparent Congress 2020-2021 (in Spanish)</p> <p>Implement the commitments of the 5th Action Plan co-created with civil society organizations around 5 pillars: citizen participation; technological innovation; transparency and the fight against corruption; accountability and austerity; and corporate ethics and morality.</p>

NEW COMMITMENTS TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN 2021-2022

Country	Pilar	New Commitments
Paraguay	 Strategic Planning	<p>Co-creation of the legislative commitments of the 5th Open Government Action Plan 2021-2023 (in Spanish)</p> <p>Co-create new open parliament commitments with civil society, which will be included in the 5th Open Government Action Plan 2021-2023.</p>
Trinidad and Tobago	 Citizen Participation	<p>Strengthening citizen participation and accountability</p> <p>Promote youth participation by restructuring the National Youth Parliament to allow for hybrid debates that facilitate participation. In addition, Parliament intends to recommend to the Executive that the presentations and perspectives of young people in the debates be taken into account in the drafting of legislation. It also seeks to improve the use of survey tools in all committees to allow for greater citizen participation. Lastly, it seeks to ensure better financial accountability through continuous, real-time monitoring of the annual budget by the Civil Service and Budget Committee through the submission of timely and detailed quarterly reports of all allocations and expenditures of the various Department and Agency heads.</p>
Nicaragua	 Citizen Participation	<p>Strengthening the Policy of Protagonism of the People in Parliamentary Activity (in Spanish)</p> <p>Strengthen the mechanisms and spaces for public participation in parliamentary work by fostering dialogue between citizens and their representatives in parliament, through visits by elementary, high school and university students, social organizations and State institutions; providing lectures or talks in and outside of the National Assembly on the laws and their contents, the structure and functioning of the National Assembly, etc.; conducting visits and tours of the "Carlos Núñez Téllez" Legislative Complex; welcoming visits from foreign delegations interested in learning about the National Assembly; and explaining the media and social networks used by the National Assembly to disseminate and publicize the legislative and institutional work of Parliament.</p>

Executive of the Open Parliamentary Network

Following the elections held during the plenary session of the gathering, the Executive Committee of the Open Parliament Network now consists of:

President

- Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Javier Macaya Danús** (Chile)

First Vice-President - North America

- Senator **Bertha Alicia Caraveo Camarena** (Mexico)

Second Vice-President - North America

- The Honourable **René Cormier**, Senator (Canada)

Vice-President - The Caribbean

- The Honourable **Ranard Eric Henfield**, Senator (The Bahamas)

First Vice-President - Central America

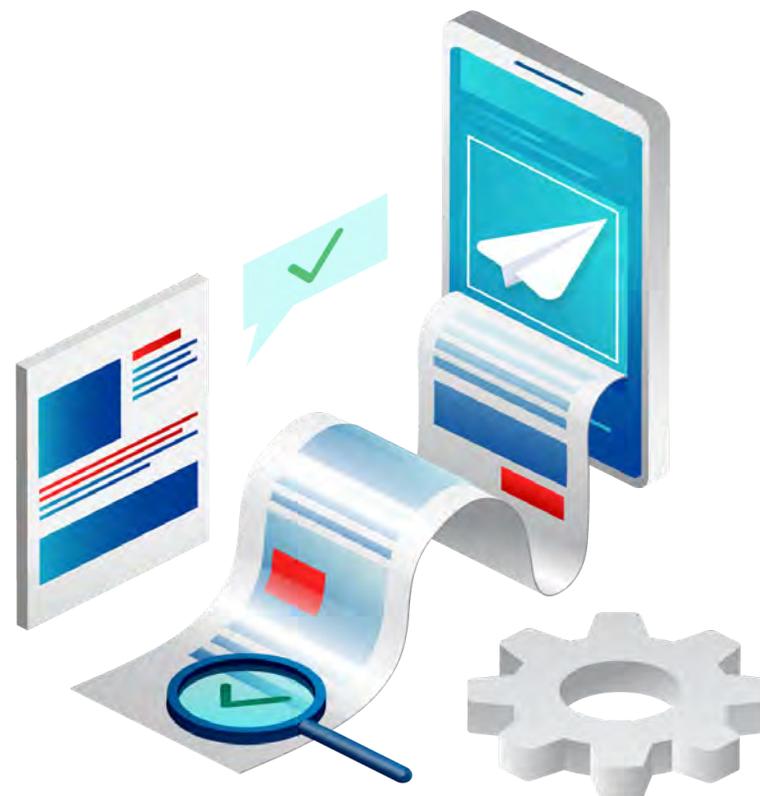
- Member of the Legislative Assembly **Ana Lucía Delgado Orozco** (Costa Rica)

Second Vice-President - Central America

- Member of the National Assembly **Corina Cano Córdoba** (Panama)

Vice-President - South America

- Member of the National Assembly **Wilma Andrade Muñoz** (Ecuador)



Declaration

The gathering's plenary session (March 26) concluded with a reading of the [declaration](#). Among the commitments adopted by the convened parliamentary delegations are:

- Convene our governments, the media, civil society organizations, social movements, and technology companies to agree on actions to safeguard the integrity and transparency of the electoral processes in our countries, bearing in mind the increasingly sophisticated strategies of digital disinformation and computational propaganda and in adherence to international standards for freedom of expression— a fundamental right in democratic societies.
- Promote international collaboration among the Governments of our region and, particularly among the legislative branch, to enable coordinated responses that include recent advances in cybersecurity and data protection, in light of the globalized and systemic nature of disinformation and the actors and platforms involved.
- Insist on the need to promote debates and establish or designate legislative committees dedicated to addressing the phenomenon of disinformation, raising public awareness of its consequences, and developing policies and legislative measures to counteract these consequences.
- Reaffirm our duty to promote responsible public discourse in our parliaments and in our in-person and virtual public interactions, employing respectful, inclusive, and tolerant communication practices that foster constructive dialogue and recognize the value of political plurality in our societies.



The complete agendas (March [15](#), [19](#), [26](#)), [press release](#), video-recording [playlist](#), the podcast of the [key note address](#) and [presentations](#) from this activity can be accessed on the ParlAmericas website.

3rd Forum of the Parliamentary Staff Network on Open Parliament

#ParlAmericasOPN

THEMES: Technological innovation, artificial and collective intelligence, cybersecurity, disinformation

DATES: March 22, 2021

LOCATION: Virtual

PARTICIPANTS: More than **90** parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, specialists and representatives of civil society and multilateral organizations from **20** countries

ORGANIZING PARTNER: In Collaboration with the Parliamentary Association of the Commonwealth of Great Britain (CPA-UK) in the working groups

HOST: Parliament of Canada



This activity aligned with SDG 16.

Technological innovation in parliaments

The panel of specialists emphasized the importance of publishing legislative information, verifying parliamentary processes prior to their digitalization, and understanding the needs of users when transitioning to digital parliaments. They also focused on the use of technological tools and online platforms that can contribute to legislative processes, as well as support communication with citizens and citizen engagement in parliamentary work.

In addition, they highlighted that the protection of parliamentary information is essential to preventing cyberattacks, preserving public information, and protecting legislators who are public figures and may become targets of cyberattacks.

In this transition towards the digitalization of parliament, they encouraged the use of artificial and collective intelligence in the production and distribution of disaggregated data to analyze the contributions made by citizens through virtual platforms, among other uses. They also recognized the importance of creating information technology (IT) tools and services with ethical and accountability criteria that limit discrimination, for example, in tools that use facial recognition.

Working groups

The parliamentary staff members were organized in working groups to encourage in-depth discussion on distinct thematic areas that aim to strengthen technological innovation in parliaments to continue improving the efficiency of legislative work. Technological innovation is essential for legislative openness, as it can be used to make public information transparent, engage continuously with citizens, and ensure effective accountability for parliamentary work.

AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS

Opening remarks by:

- Senator **Silvia Giacoppo** (Argentina), ParlAmericas Board Member
- Mr. **Blair Armitage** (Canada), Clerk Assistant, Committees, Senate

Panel on technological innovation in parliaments:

- Dr. **Tiago Carneiro Peixoto**, Senior Public Sector Specialist, Governance Global Practice, World Bank
- Ms. **María Paz Hermosilla**, Director of the Public Innovation Lab (GobLab), School of Government, Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez, Chile
- Mr. **Diego Subero**, Consultant, Cybersecurity Program, Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (CICTE), Organization of American States (OAS)
- Mr. **Chris Beall**, Policy Lead, Platform Governance, Centre for International Governance Innovation

Presentation on the Open Data Center by:

- Ms. **Patricia Almeida** (Brazil), Coordinator of Innovation and Digital Strategy of the Chamber of Deputies and Coordinator of the Open Data Center

After the working groups addressed topics related to parliamentary innovation, the meeting was adjourned.

Closing remarks by:

- Mr. **Luis Rojas** (Chile), Deputy Secretary General of the Chamber of Deputies

This meeting allowed parliamentary and other stakeholders to analyze how technology and innovation can contribute to legislative openness and parliamentary strengthening. The topics discussed, such as A.I. and cybersecurity, were considered in relation to modernization and digital transformation processes, taking into account the challenges posed by disinformation that public institutions are currently facing.

Working groups on issues related to parliamentary innovation:**Working group 1: Artificial intelligence in parliaments**

- Moderator: Mr. **Soufiane Ben Moussa** (Canada), Chief Technology Officer of Parliament
- Mr. **Cristián Carrión** (Chile), Deputy Head of the Department of Information Technologies of the Senate
- Ms. **Patricia Almeida** (Brazil), Coordinator of Innovation and Digital Strategy of the Chamber of Deputies

Working group 2: Maximizing resources to modernize parliament

- Moderator: Mr. **Garreth Ferguson** (Trinidad and Tobago), ICT Director of Parliament
- Mr. **Jonathan King** (Isle of Man), Deputy Clerk and Clerk of the Tynwald Legislative Council

Working group 3: Cybersecurity in parliaments

- Moderator: Ms. **Sonia Vezzaro** (Argentina), Head of Multilateral Parliamentary Diplomacy of the Chamber of Deputies
- Mr. **Pablo Torrealba** (Chile), Information Systems Adviser to the Chamber of Deputies

Working group 4: Virtual sittings and digital transformation in parliaments

- Moderator: Mr. **Claudio Prieto** (Ecuador), Coordinator General for IT of the National Assembly
- Mr. **Juan Manuel Cheppi** (Argentina), Secretary General of the Chamber of Deputies
- Ms. **Anabel Dávila** (Peru), Head of the Department of Rapporteurship and Agenda of the Congress

**KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INNOVATION AND THE TRANSITION TOWARDS THE DIGITALIZATION OF PARLIAMENTS:**

- Use of artificial intelligence to promote engagement between parliaments and citizens, as well as to collect data for parliamentary investigations, and present and publish public information.
- Use of information and communications technology (ICT) tools to strengthen and improve the efficiency of legislative work, and to provide support in the event of parliamentary staff limitations.
- The incorporation of cybersecurity mechanisms is essential for protecting private data, as well as for safeguarding the information and content of parliamentary institutions.
- The exchange of experiences and lessons learned from the parliaments of Argentina, Ecuador, and Peru, one year after their respective transitions to virtual legislative work, is important for providing guidance as other parliaments adopt similar practices for the modernization of parliamentary institutions to meet current needs.



The complete [agenda](#), [press release](#), and [presentations](#) from this activity can be accessed on the ParlAmericas website.

Webinar: Inter-American Model Law 2.0 on Access to Public Information for the Parliaments in the Americas and the Caribbean

#ParlAmericasOPN

 **THEMES:** Transparency, access to information

 **DATES:** May 7, 2021

 **LOCATION:** Virtual

 **PARTICIPANTS:** More than **100** parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, experts, and representatives of enforcement bodies from the Americas and the Caribbean

 **ORGANIZING PARTNERS:** Organization of American States (OAS), Transparency and Access to Information Network (RTA), and EUROsociAL+



This activity aligned with SDG 16.

This meeting offered a presentation of the new OAS Inter-American Model Law 2.0 on Access to Public Information and created a space for strengthened collaboration between parliaments and enforcement bodies in the Americas and the Caribbean to address access to information and transparency issues. The session was based on an understanding that these are fundamental democratic principles which are further essential to achieving the 2030 Agenda.

Presentation of Inter-American Model Law 2.0 on Access to Public Information

The presentation of Model Law 2.0 provided an account of its background, the extensive consultation process undergone for its development, its main concepts and characteristics, and some of the most important advances it introduces; for example, the principle of active transparency and the recommendation that the legislature be a binding subject of the law. The presentation also addressed issues related to access to information in the context of political oversight functions as well as aspects concerning the institutional design that guarantees the autonomy and independence of the enforcement body.

Panel: Reflections on National Experiences

The discussion offered a space to exchange good national practices on transparency and access to information, to learn about the institutional structure and main functions of the enforcement bodies operating in some countries of the hemisphere, and to promote collaboration between enforcement bodies and parliaments with the aim of advancing the agenda of access to information in the Americas and the Caribbean.

Among the key references and documents presented in the gathering were:

- [Inter-American Model Law 2.0 on Access to Public Information](#). Organization of American States – OAS, 2021.
- [Inter-American Model Law on Document Management](#). Organization of American States – OAS, 2021.
- [Application Guide for the Inter-American Model Law on Document Management](#). Organization of American States – OAS, 2021.
- [Legislative Transparency Toolkit](#). ParlAmericas, EUROsociAL+, and Transparency and Access to Information Network, 2020.
- [The Importance of Parliamentary Oversight during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). ParlAmericas, 2021.

AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS

Opening remarks by:

- Senator **Bertha Alicia Caraveo Camarena** (Mexico), Vice-President of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network for North America
- Mr. **Felice Zaccheo**, Head of Unit for Mexico, Central America, Caribbean and Regional Operations, DG International Partnerships, European Commission
- Mr. **Gabriel Delpiazzo Antón**, President of the Transparency and Access to Information Network

Presentation of the Inter-American Model Law 2.0 on Access to Public Information:

- Mr. **Dante Negro**, Director of the Department of International Law, OAS

Panel on reflections of national experiences:

- Moderator: Ms. **María José Méndez**, consultant, EUROsociAL+

Panellists:

- Ms. **Caroline Maynard**, Information Commissioner of Canada
- Ms. **Gloria de la Fuente**, President of the Council for Transparency of Chile
- Senator, the Honourable **Ranard Eric Henfield** (The Bahamas), Vice-President of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network for the Caribbean

Closing remarks by:

- Mr. **Borja Díaz Rivillas**, Head of Good Governance, EUROsociAL+, FIIAPP
- Mr. **Adrián Alcalá Méndez**, Executive Secretary of the Transparency and Access to Information Network
- Member of the Legislative Assembly **Ana Lucía Delgado** (Costa Rica), VicePresident of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network for Central America

About the Inter-American Model Law 2.0 on Access to Public Information of the OAS

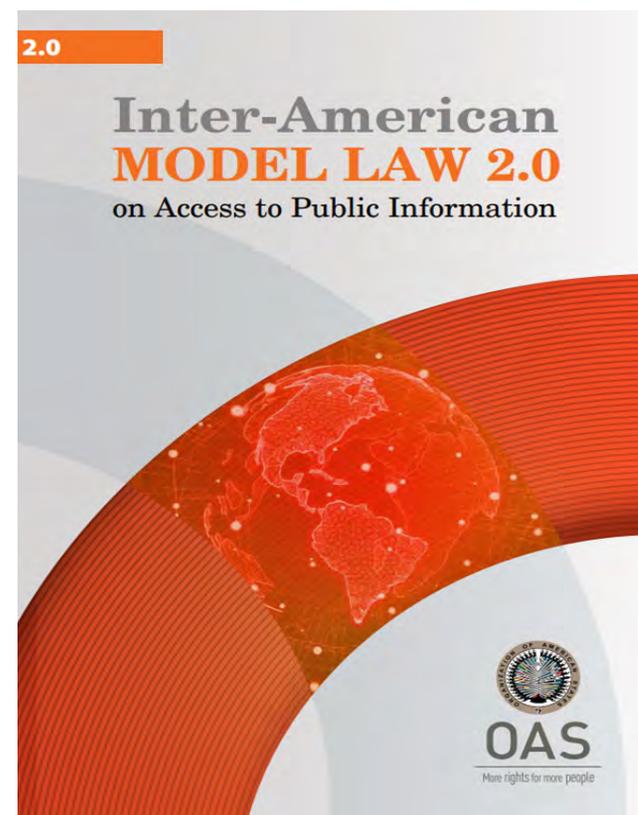
The OAS General Assembly approved the Inter-American Model Law 2.0 on Access to Public Information in October 2020, during its 50th Regular Session.

The development of this law included an extensive consultation process with enforcement bodies, legislators, academics, civil society representatives, and other stakeholders.

The document, which consists of eight chapters, addresses key aspects for promoting access to information, such as measures to promote openness, the process for requests for access to information held by public authorities, exception regimes, appeals, the main characteristics and functions of an enforcement body, and advancement and enforcement measures.

It is worth noting that Model Law 2.0 is one of the first legal instruments of the Inter-American System to incorporate a gender-based perspective in its design.

This law offers OAS member states an advanced frame of reference that integrates the most important international standards on transparency and access to public information.



MAIN CONCLUSIONS:

- Transparency and access to public information are fundamental democratic principles for the fight against corruption, encouraging citizen participation in public affairs, and promoting accountability and the strengthening of public management.
- Strengthening legislative frameworks for access to information is crucial to the effectiveness of parliamentary political control, particularly during crisis situations such as that caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- As parliaments adopt or amend legislative frameworks for access to information, it is crucial that enforcement bodies be guaranteed the autonomy, independence and budgetary muscle necessary to carry out the functions within their competence in accordance with the standards contained in the Model Law.
- Strengthening the practices of access to information in accordance with the recommendations of the Model Law requires the advancement of modernization processes, both technological and archival, that serve to improve the management and conservation of documents to help respond adequately to the rights of citizens.

The complete [agenda](#), [press release](#), [podcast](#) of the Model Law presentation (in Spanish) and [presentations](#) from this activity can be accessed on the ParlAmericas website.

Review and Update of the Road Map towards Legislative Openness

#ParlAmericasOPN #RoadMap

 **THEMES:** Open Parliament, transparency, accountability, citizen participation, integrity, ethics

 **DATES:** December 2020 to May 2021

 **LOCATION:** Virtual

 **PARTICIPANTS:** More than **160** parliamentarians, parliamentary staff and representatives of civil society from **29** countries

 **ORGANIZING PARTNERS:** Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK Branch and Latin American Network for Legislative Transparency



This activity aligned with SDGs 16.

ParlAmericas convened a series of activities soliciting inputs to update and expand its [Road Map towards Legislative Openness](#). Published in 2016, this document was co-created by legislatures and civil society representatives from across the Americas and the Caribbean, and its pillars of transparency, accountability, citizen participation, and ethics have inspired and shaped open parliament commitments and action plans at national levels.

Online Survey

The review process started with an online survey which was distributed in December 2020 to identify which topics and aspects should be included in the new edition of the Road Map. Representatives of parliaments and civil society from 24 countries contributed to the findings.

Inter-Parliamentary Meetings

Once the submissions of the survey were organized, virtual meetings were held to discuss the concrete changes and updates that would be included in the new edition, taking into account the experiences and work priorities identified by representatives of parliaments and civil society organizations in the hemisphere, in favour of promoting legislative openness.

The meetings included the following:

- Session in the [Caribbean Clerks Programme](#), organized by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK Branch (CPA-UK) (January 14)
- [2nd Meeting of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Staff Network on Open Parliament](#), which was attended by 96 representatives of legislative branches from 16 Latin American countries (January 22)
- [Working Meeting of Caribbean Presiding Officers on Open Parliament](#), which brought together 22 representatives from 10 countries (April 19)
- [Co-creation meeting between parliamentarians and representatives of civil society organizations](#) who are members of the Latin American Network for Legislative Transparency, which was attended by 18 representatives from 10 countries (May 17)

AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS

Session in the Caribbean Clerks Programme:

- Ms. **Esmalene Cox-Jn Louis**, Deputy Clerk of Parliament (Saint Lucia)
- Mr. **Eddie Webster**, Clerk of the National Assembly (Belize)

2nd Meeting of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Staff Network on Open Parliament:

- Senator **Blanca Ovelar** (Paraguay), President of ParlAmericas
- Mr. **Waldir Bezerra Miranda** (Brazil), Deputy Secretary General of the Governing Board, Federal Senate
- Ms. **María Liz Sosa** (Paraguay), Director General of Legislative Strengthening and External Cooperation of the Chamber of Senators
- Mr. **Juan Carlos Chavarría** (Costa Rica), Director of the Department of Citizen Participation of the Legislative Assembly
- Ms. **Rocío Noriega** (Chile), Adviser to the Bicameral Transparency Group of the National Congress
- Mr. **Mauricio Sarabia** (Ecuador), General Coordinator of Planning of the National Assembly

Working Meeting of Caribbean Presiding Officers:

- The Honourable **Bridgid Annisette-George** (Trinidad and Tobago), Speaker of the House of Representatives and Vice-President of ParlAmericas
- The Honourable Senator **Ranard Eric Henfield** (The Bahamas), Vice-President for the Caribbean of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network

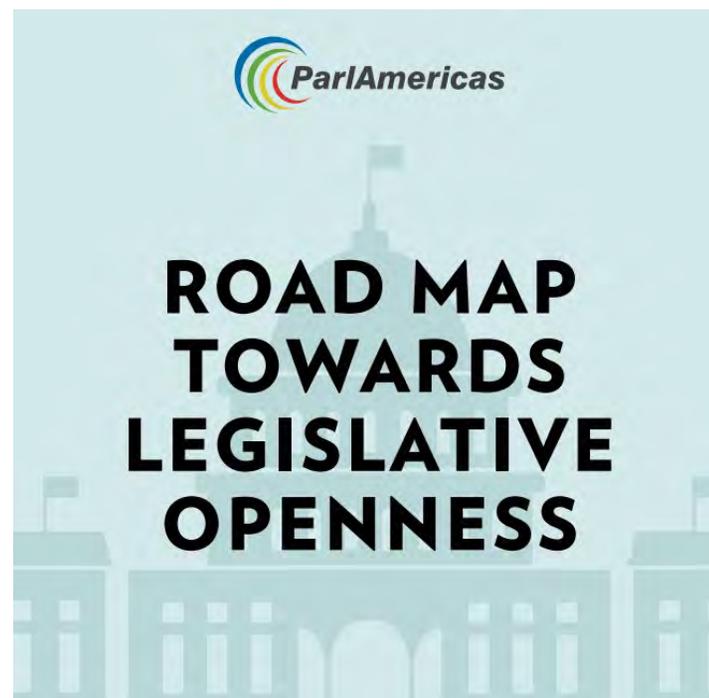
Co-creation meeting between parliamentarians and representatives of civil society organizations:

- Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Javier Macaya** (Chile), President of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network
- Senator **Berta Caraveo** (Mexico), Vice-President for North America of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network
- Member of the Legislative Assembly **Ana Lucía Delgado** (Costa Rica), First Vice-President for Central America of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network
- Member of the National Assembly **Corina Cano** (Panama), Second Vice-President for Central America of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network

Next Steps

Following the organization of the contributions received at each of the meetings, a draft of the new Road Map will be posted online for the submission of additional comments. Afterwards, the Executive Committee of the Open Parliament Network will approve the final version before its official launch. The new edition of the Road Map will include the updated definition of open parliament, emphasizing the value and importance of co-creation processes, a re-organization of the key aspects in each pillar, as well as new concepts added to the glossary.

A new edition of the [Legislative Transparency Index](#) will also be launched this year, based on a [new methodology](#) that was presented at one of the meetings in the Road Map review process. This Index was prepared by civil society organizations that are part of the Latin American Network for Legislative Transparency and measures policies for legislative openness in place since 2011 by evaluating regulations, work, budgets and administrative management, as well as citizen participation. The new index will be in line with the pillars of open parliament, in order to cover a greater number of topics.



MAIN CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ROAD MAP TOWARDS LEGISLATIVE OPENNESS

- The incorporation of and emphasis on co-creation as a central aspect of open parliament and its promotion in commitments and action plans
- The incorporation of technological innovation across all pillars of open parliament, taking into account the digital transformation processes in legislative branches related to the transition to virtual sittings
- The consolidation of mechanisms for parliamentary oversight, including the comprehensive monitoring of progress with regard to issues that are national priorities, such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the fight against corruption
- The strengthening of spaces and mechanisms for inclusive citizen participation that take into account vulnerable populations
- The adoption of public integrity systems to ensure compliance with codes of ethics and lobbying laws, and the provision of technical support to parliamentarians and parliamentary staff with regard to these issues

The agendas and presentations of these activities are available on the [Our Work](#) section of the ParlAmericas website, and the updated version of the Road Map will be posted on the [Open Parliament](#) section.



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE PARLAMERICAS PARLIAMENTARY NETWORK ON CLIMATE CHANGE



Dear colleagues,

We have concluded a year that will be decisive in the fight against climate change. The agreements signed at COP26 unequivocally recognize that we are running out of time to

mitigate the effects of climate change and that every nation must do more to prevent a catastrophic temperature increase.

Aware of the need to provide parliamentarians from the Americas and the Caribbean with spaces to exchange innovative legislative practices informed by scientific evidence, the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network on Climate Change (PNCC) developed a series of activities and publications designed to support legislative work on climate change and the advancement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

I wish to highlight in particular the 5th PNCC Gathering, which was dedicated to exploring a just and inclusive transition. On that occasion, 190 participants, including parliamentarians, specialists, and representatives of civil society and youth organizations from 29 countries in the hemisphere, discussed the importance of ensuring that short-term and long-term climate plans are prepared with an intersectional lens and are compatible with the goals of the Paris Agreement.

We also launched the publication *Parliaments and the Paris Agreement*, which was created with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, INTER PARES, and GLOBE International. The publication shares a series of good practices from the Americas and the Caribbean and other regions of the world to guide and strengthen the alignment between the climate efforts underway in our parliaments and the national climate commitments made by governments.

The PNCC further conducted important work to promote participation by

parliamentarians in COP26 and its side events. One significant avenue for this was through the PNCC's incorporation as a founding member into the UNFCCC parliamentary group; this group is responsible for the coordination of parliaments' participation in such spaces.

A final highlight I wish to share is the Youth Legislative Impact project that was implemented with the National Assembly of Panama. Through this initiative, youth from Panama were accompanied by ParlAmericas and the National Forum of Women in Political Parties (FONAMUPP) in the conceptualization and drafting of an ecotourism bill that applies a social inclusion perspective. The bill was later presented to the National Assembly and serves as yet another example of young people's leadership and dedication in efforts to promote sustainable development, reduce environmental degradation, and foster economic and social growth.

Next year, we look forward to continuing our commitment to foster the exchange of good legislative practices, contribute a parliamentary voice to major climate events, and share with you the latest scientific and political advances in the fight against climate change.

We appreciate your support in our efforts to confront the great challenge of our time: the climate and environmental crisis that affects us all.

Sincerely,

The Honourable Rosa Galvez

Senator, Canada
President of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network on Climate Change

.....
 FOLLOW ME ON TWITTER @SENROSAGALVEZ

5th Gathering of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network on Climate Change

#ParlAmericasCC

TITLE: Addressing Inequalities to Enable Climate Ambition: A Just Transition to Achieve the Paris Agreement

THEMES: Inclusive climate action and sustainable development

DATES: June 4, 15, & 25, 2021

LOCATION: Virtual

PARTICIPANTS: More than **190** parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, civil society and government representatives from **29** countries

HOSTS: Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Senate of Mexico



These activities aligned with SDGs 1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 13, and 16.

The 5th PNCC gathering consisted of an inter-parliamentary dialogue, a dialogue with civil society and youth representatives, and a plenary session. These meetings allowed participants to identify legislative strategies to ensure that short and long-term climate plans are developed with an intersectional lens and are compatible with the goals of the Paris Agreement, including promotion of a just transition.

The gathering's sessions built from the understanding that individuals facing inequalities are differentially impacted by climate change, and that it is therefore essential to incorporate intersectional, intercultural, and gender-responsive approaches into climate strategies and legislation. When these are designed in an inclusive way, implementation is less likely to result in any undesirable effects or exacerbate existing inequalities.

The keynote address of the gathering established the link between conserving biodiversity and reducing poverty, and described the urgency to increase the ambition of climate targets and ensure corresponding plans are implemented promptly. It emphasized the value of climate governance and the role that parliamentarians and other stakeholders beyond the ministries of environment play.

Across the various sessions, the participants emphasized the importance of achieving gender-responsive climate policy; promoting public participation in decision making to prevent environmental conflicts and ensure climate action is conducted in a manner that respects human rights; and the creation of decent and clean work for all, with a view to achieving a just transition.

Among the key references and documents presented in the gathering were:

- [Parliaments and the Paris Agreement](#), the draft of the forthcoming ParlAmericas and WFD publication
- [Action for Climate Empowerment](#) (ACE), UNFCCC
- [Declaration on Children, Youth, and Climate Action](#), UNICEF
- [Bill to establish a new target for the Nationally Determined Contribution under the UNFCCC](#), Brazil
- [Net-Zero Emissions Accountability Act](#), Canada
- [Bill to establish a Framework Law on Climate Change](#), Chile

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SESSIONS

Opening remarks by:

- The Honourable **Bridgid Annisette-George** (Trinidad and Tobago), Speaker of the House of Representatives and Vice-President of ParlAmericas
- Senator **Nancy de la Sierra** (Mexico)
- Senator **Blanca Ovelar** (Paraguay), President of ParlAmericas
- Senator **Yokymma Bethelmy** (Trinidad and Tobago)
- Senator **Beatriz Paredes** (Mexico)

Keynote address by:

- Ambassador **Luis Alfonso de Alba**, Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General for the 2019 Climate Summit

Dialogues moderated by:

- Senator the Honourable **Rosa Galvez** (Canada), Vice-President for North America of the PNCC
- Member of the Legislative Assembly **Paola Vega** (Costa Rica), Vice-President for Central America of the PNCC
- The Honourable **Carolyn Trench-Sandiford** (Belize), President of the Senate

Panel presentations by:

- Dr. **Enrico Botta**, Coordinator for the Green Growth and Global Relations division, OECD
- Ms. **Claudia de Windt**, Founding Partner & CEO, Inter-American Institute on Justice and Sustainability
- Ms. **Samantha Smith**, Director, Just Transition Centre, International Trade Union Confederation
- Mr. **Eduardo Uribe-Botero**, Director, Energy Group of Bogota
- Mr. **Carlos Ruiz-Garvia**, Regional Lead of the Regional Collaboration Centre for Latin America, UNFCCC
- Mr. **Vintura Silva**, Regional Lead of the Regional Collaboration Centre for the Caribbean, UNFCCC
- Mr. **Rafael Jimenez Aybar**, Environmental Democracy Adviser, Westminster Foundation for Democracy
- Senator **Kátia Abreu** (Brazil)
- Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Iván Flores** (Chile)

Closing remarks by:

- Member of Parliament **Marc Serré** (Canada), ParlAmericas Board Member
- Member of the National Assembly **Maritza Espinales** (Nicaragua), ParlAmericas Board Member

Key takeaways from the inter-parliamentary dialogue (June 4)

- 1) Individuals who are subject to inequalities due to diverse demographic characteristics are differentially impacted by climate change, making it essential to incorporate intersectional strategies and legislation. This will help to ensure that they are inclusive and prevent implementation from having any undesirable effects that may exacerbate these inequalities.
- 2) There is a need to transform current production and consumption patterns towards more sustainable and socially just options that favour low-carbon and circular economies. As green technologies emerge or become more popular, they will continue to consume certain natural resources. It is therefore important that, for example, extractive sectors, have resource efficient and sustainability protocols in place.
- 3) The benefits of a transition from economies dependent on unsustainable industries towards a green economy should be shared widely, alongside solutions to support the countries, regions, communities, industries, and particularly the workers - formal and informal - who will be impacted by these transformations.
- 4) A just transition must not only consider the needs of those who will lose their jobs, but also the impact it will have on communities dependent on unsustainable industries. This will be a challenge for the communities in the hemisphere that depend on extractive industries.
- 5) It is important that regional and local perspectives are considered when developing legislation or overseeing policies in a way that recognizes the socio-economic and cultural particularities of each context, which in some cases may require decentralized solutions.
- 6) A just transition will require a strengthening of welfare policies to support those who will be affected by these transformations towards green economies.

- 7) Gender perspectives should be integrated in the design of policies and legislation to support a just transition and measures to promote women's participation in new green jobs by promoting, for example, their education in STEM fields.
- 8) It will also be essential to raise labour standards in jobs where women are often over-represented, such as those related to the care economy, as initiatives to support green and sustainable development should aim to increase everyone's standards of living, not only those involved in environmentally friendly industries.
- 9) One of the essential mechanisms to ensure a just and inclusive transition is to establish a social dialogue between governments, the private sector, workers, and Indigenous peoples, where applicable, based on the recognition of workers' human and labour rights. Parliamentarians can facilitate such a dialogue through the legislative process and call on their governments to do so as they develop climate plans and legislation.
- 10) Parliamentarians have a role in monitoring the implementation of international climate commitments made by their governments, e.g., by advocating for increased ambition in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and ensuring that these include provisions to support a just transition, are gender responsive, and support the needs of vulnerable populations.

Key takeaways from the parliamentary dialogue with civil society and youth representatives (June 15), organized with the support of the Regional UNFCCC and UNICEF Offices for Latin America and the Caribbean

- 1) The empowerment of the public is fundamental for climate action, as supported by the concept of ACE which refers to Art. 6 of the UNFCCC and Art. 12 of the

Paris Agreement to promote the understanding and capacity of all members of society to enhance their commitment to climate action through the strengthening of public policies in: education, training, public awareness, public participation, public access to information, and international cooperation.

- 2) Climate plans need to include people with disabilities; a dimension often overlooked when it comes to inclusive climate action.
- 3) Gender approaches should be integrated into climate plans and legislation, such as providing access to sexual and reproductive health in the context of extreme weather events.
- 4) Environmental education should be incorporated and/or strengthened in education legislation, as well as in the national or regional curricula for elementary and secondary education.
- 5) Capacity-building sessions on climate and environmental issues are valuable tools to fortify parliamentarians' effective representation of citizens on these matters, and to advance this agenda.
- 6) Open government, access to information, and transparency in the context of the fight against the effects of climate change is essential to re-gain the public's trust in political institutions and better inform the general public on the environmental issues that the country is facing and the manner in which the government is addressing them.
- 7) Participatory spaces should be systematically offered to young people in decision making processes on climate issues, in which their perspectives are meaningfully listened to and incorporated. The [Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action](#) promotes and recognizes the agency and leadership capacity of children and youth in relation to climate change.



**The Honourable BRIGID ANNISSETTE-GEORGE (Trinidad and Tobago),
Speaker of the House of Representatives, Vice-President of ParlAmericas,
and co-host of the gathering**

As we are compelled to move forward towards production and consumption models that favour resilient, low-emission economies, let us foster democratic and inclusive spaces for our citizens to meaningfully participate in the discussions and decisions to change course.



**President of the Senate EDUARDO RAMÍREZ (Mexico),
co-host of the gathering**

The urgent fight against the effects of climate change requires that legislators incorporate intersectional and gender-responsive approaches into our parliamentary work ... to ensure that climate plans and just transition processes toward resilient, zero-emission economies meet their needs and do not exacerbate existing inequalities.



**Senator BLANCA OVELAR (Paraguay), President of
ParlAmericas**

We have fostered spaces for dialogue with civil society organizations, especially environmental and youth-led organizations, with the understanding that citizen participation is imperative for the development of climate policies and plans that respond to the needs of the population, especially historically marginalized groups.



**Senator the Honourable ROSA GALVEZ (Canada),
Incoming President of the PNCC**

Our defence and adaptation facing climate change has a direct link with the two other pillars of ParlAmericas: open parliament and gender equality. As every government in the world is raising their climate ambition and promising billions of dollars to fund climate solutions, we need transparency, accountability, and proper management more than ever.



**Ambassador LUIS ALFONSO DE ALBA, Special Envoy of
the UN Secretary General for the 2019 Climate Summit**

Parliamentarians have a limited space to participate in the COPs, it is something that should be reviewed; parliamentarians should be allowed to have a greater incidence in the decision-making process than they currently have. Regarding the transformation of a development model, I do not see a single parliamentary issue that is not relevant in the fight against climate change.

Executive of the Parliamentary Network on Climate Change

Following the elections held during the plenary session of the gathering, the Executive Committee of the PNCC now consists of:

President

- The Honourable **Rosa Galvez**, Senator (Canada)

Vice-President - North America

- Senator **Raúl Bolaños-Cacho Cué** (Mexico)

Vice-President - The Caribbean

- Senator **Anthony Vieira** (Trinidad and Tobago)

Vice-President - Central America

- Member of the Legislative Assembly **Paola Vega Rodríguez** (Costa Rica)

First Vice-President - South America

- Member of the National Assembly **Luis Bruno Segovia Mejía** (Ecuador)

Second Vice-President - South America

- Member of the National Assembly **Radjendrekoeemar Debie** (Suriname)



Declaration

The gathering's plenary session (June 25) concluded with a reading of the [declaration](#). Among the commitments adopted by the convened parliamentary delegations are:

- To ensure follow-up and political oversight of the design and implementation of the binding commitments signed by our governments in the Paris Agreement and in the NDCs, making certain that they have the necessary budget allocation and ensuring that they are ambitious, developed in a participatory manner, include plans for a just transition, and take into consideration the impacts on different population groups.
- To incorporate intersectional, intergenerational, intercultural, and gender approaches into legislative work to ensure that environmental and climate policies and plans are inclusive and respond to the multiple inequalities that affect the most vulnerable populations in a way that complies with the spirit of the 2030 Agenda of leaving no one behind and ensures that the costs and benefits associated with the policies are equitably shared.
- Promote the implementation of the Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) approach, fostering the creation of spaces for citizen participation in the discussion of issues related to the fight against the effects of climate change, ensuring legal frameworks for access to information on climate change, and urging our governments to strengthen education and public awareness on climate change and its effects.
- To foster the integration of gender and human rights perspectives in climate plans and include just transition strategies that contain measures to raise labour standards for jobs in which women are often overrepresented, such as those in the care economy.



The complete agendas (June 4, 15, 25) [press release](#), video-recording [playlist](#), podcast of the [inter-parliamentary dialogue](#) and [keynote presentation](#), and [presentations](#) from this activity can be accessed on the ParlAmericas website.

Youth Legislative Impact Program: Building Active Citizenship

#ParlAmericasGEN

THEMES: Citizen participation, youth leadership, gender equality, inclusion, intersectionality, environmental sustainability

DATES: June 9 to September 15

LOCATION: Virtual

PARTICIPANTS: More than **45** young leaders from Panama, former members of the Youth Parliament and graduates from the Brújula Mujer leadership program

ORGANIZERS: ParlAmericas, National Forum of Women in Political Parties (FONAMUPP) and the National Directorate for the Promotion of Citizen Participation of Panama



This activity is aligned with SDGs 5, 8, 10, 12 and 16.

The Youth Legislative Impact program trained more than 45 young people in Panama in inclusive, political leadership. The program ended with the co-creation and presentation of a citizens' initiative based on the principles of gender equality, environmental sustainability, and intersectionality. It promotes all three of ParlAmericas' programmatic pillars, namely gender equality, climate action and legislative openness, by fostering youth civic engagement.

In the first phase of the program, the young leaders participated in three interactive webinars held on June 9, 16 and 23, to learn from parliamentarians, civil society organizations, and other experts. In the second phase, the young leaders worked together to develop a citizens' initiative for regulating ecotourism in Panama, in which they incorporated what they had learned during the first phase. The citizens' initiative, which was presented to the National Assembly on September 15, 2021, on the International Day of Democracy, takes into account local communities, Indigenous peoples, youth, and women in the development of ecotourism, to contribute to an inclusive post-pandemic recovery in Panama.

The following resources were developed through the program:

- [Graphic recording: "Effective and Inclusive Leadership for the Environment."](#) Amazink!, 2021
- [Graphic recording: "Intersectionality in Decision-Making."](#) Amazink!, 2021
- [Graphic recording: "Citizens' Initiative for Ecotourism."](#) Amazink!, 2021
- [Intersectionality exercise: Privilege Walk.](#) ParlAmericas, 2021
- [Instructions for the Legislative Analysis Workshop.](#) ParlAmericas, 2021

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WEBINARS

First webinar: "Effective Leadership" (June 9)

- Honourable Member of the National Assembly **Fernando Arce** (Panama), member of the Board of Directors of ParlAmericas
- Dr. **Juana Herrera**, President of FONAMUPP
- Mr. **Jan Icaza**, Advisor, International Relations Unit of the National Assembly of Panama
- Ms. **Ana Belén Marín**, engineer, politician, and former Member of the National Assembly (Ecuador)
- Member of the Chamber of Deputies **José Horacio Rodríguez** (Dominican Republic)
- Ms. **Laura Duhuignidili Huertas**, Indigenous rights activist and environmentalist
- Honourable Member of the National Assembly **Corina Cano** (Panama), Second Vice-President for Central America of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network

Second webinar: "Intersectionality in Decision-making" (June 16)

- Honourable Member of the National Assembly **Petita Ayarza** (Panama)
- Mr. **Jan Icaza**, Advisor, International Relations Unit of the National Assembly of Panama
- Ms. **Rosina Pérez**, Project Coordinator at UNDP – Panama
- Member of Congress **Andrea Villagrán** (Guatemala)

Third webinar: "Public Policy Analysis Workshop" (June 23)

- Honourable Member of the National Assembly **Juan Diego Vásquez** (Panama)
- Honourable Member of the National Assembly **Emelie García Miró** (Panama)

KEY CONCEPTS

- **Citizen's initiative:** A citizens' initiative is a mechanism of political participation that allows Panamanian citizens to submit a bill to the National Assembly to be evaluated by technical staff and presented to a legislative committee.
- **Gender perspective in decision-making:** Effective and inclusive leaderships were defined in the program as those that incorporate a gender perspective in decision-making processes. This approach helps to ensure that laws and policies take into account the unique experiences of women, using a greater range of perspectives and voices to guide their development and increase their effectiveness.



Honourable Member of the National Assembly Fernando Arce (Panama), member of the Board of Directors of ParlAmericas

“The purpose of this initiative for citizen participation is to train young leaders so that they can contribute their diverse experiences and talents to Panama’s economic, social, and environmental development, either in political spheres or as part of our country’s civil society.”



Honourable Member of the National Assembly Petita Ayarza (Panama)

“Every political decision must be based on the recognition of the diversity of people’s life experiences. They must specifically take into account the differentiated ways in which people have access to opportunities, due to factors that are part of their identity.”

Exchanges with parliamentarians and national and international experts

The program provided an opportunity for the exchange of experiences between the young leaders and national and international experts:

- At the June 16 webinar, a town-hall style discussion was held with Member of Congress **Andrea Villagrán** (Guatemala) on strategies for promoting women’s leadership in politics.
- At the July 14 meeting, Mr. **Luis Escobar** and Mr. **Víctor Morales**, advisers to the National Directorate for the Promotion of Citizen Participation of Panama, delivered a workshop to train young people in the creation and presentation of a citizens’ initiative.
- At the August 18 meeting, Member of the Legislative Assembly **Paola Vega** (Costa Rica) shared her parliamentary experiences in environmental legislation, providing feedback and good practices that the young leaders incorporated in the development of the citizens’ initiative.
- The young leaders spoke with Indigenous leaders like Ms. **Laura Duhuignidili Huertas**, a women’s rights activist and environmentalist, and Ms. **Sara Omi Casamá**, a lawyer and representative of the Emberá-Wounaan region.

Development and presentation of a citizens’ initiative for ecotourism

Twenty-three participants from the first phase of the program committed to working together to develop and present a citizens’ initiative on ecotourism. With the support of Ms. **Ana Gilza Córdoba**, the Public Policy Advisor for this project, the group of young leaders held five working sessions from July to September 2021, and modelled good legislative practices such as stakeholder consultations, research, the use of quality data, and building consensus through dialogue, using innovative digital tools for exchanging ideas.

Through a prioritization exercise, the young leaders defined four priorities to guide the development of the citizens’ initiative on ecotourism:

- Equality, gender, and communities
- Comprehensive environmental education
- Environmental sustainability and protection
- Governance and partnerships

 **HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MEETINGS**

Meeting: “Strategies for the Process of Creating a Law” (July 14)

- Mr. **Luis Escobar** and Mr. **Víctor Morales**, Legal Advisers to the National Directorate for the Promotion of Citizen Participation of Panama
- Ms. **Samantha Arosemena**, Advisor to the Population, Climate, and Development Committee of the National Assembly of Panama
- Ms. **Michelle Caballero**, specialist in protected areas, Ministry of Environment of Panama
- Mr. **Diwigdi Valiente**, Indigenous activist and expert in sustainable tourism
- Ms. **Libertad Arosemena**, Director of the Abriendo Camino, Forjando Futuro Foundation

Meeting: “Consultations with Specialists for the Development of the Citizens’ Initiative” (August 18)

- Member of the Legislative Assembly **Paola Vega** (Costa Rica), Vice-President for Central America of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network on Climate Change
- Ms. **Aída Michelle Maduro**, manager of SUCASA-PANEXPORT
- Ms. **Sara Omi Casamá**, representative of the Emberá-Wounaan Region

Impacto Legislativo Joven: Construyendo una Ciudadanía Activa

ANTEPROYECTO DE LEY
"Por la cual se dictan disposiciones para el desarrollo inclusivo y sostenible del Ecoturismo en la República de Panamá"



Panamá, 15 de septiembre de 2021

Once these collective priorities had been established, participants were divided into four working groups to conduct research, discuss, and make proposals in relation to their respective priority areas. These were later presented to the entire group and evaluated according to criteria such as viability and level of impact. These priorities and proposals are reflected in the following provisions of the final version of the citizens' initiative:

- Inclusion, environmental sustainability, social mobility, ethnic and cultural diversity, public-private partnership, and gender sensitivity are established as its guiding principles;
- Ecotourism is proposed to be incorporated into formal and informal education, including teaching resources based on Indigenous traditional knowledge;
- Training is proposed to promote the professionalization and increase the competitiveness of ecotourism in Panama, with a focus on engaging women and vulnerable populations;
- The participation of communities that offer tourism services is encouraged in ecotourism planning, implementation, and promotion; and
- The creation of a tourism quality certificate is suggested, to be given to individuals or legal entities that provide ecotourism services with consideration to factors such as inclusion, gender equality, and community development.

The citizens' initiative was presented by a group of the young leaders to the National Directorate for the Promotion of Citizen Participation of the National Assembly of Panama on September 15, 2021, as part of activities organized for the International Day of Democracy. The Directorate of Legal Affairs of the National Assembly ruled that the citizens' initiative is viable on October 25, 2021, and it is now in the process of becoming a draft bill. The final version of the citizens' initiative is [available here](#).

Media appearances

As part of the presentation of the citizens' initiative, the young leaders participated in several interviews in Panamanian media, including radio and television programs. In these interviews, they highlighted the importance of young people's participation in democracy, the need to apply a gender and inclusivity lens in laws and public policies, and the objectives of the citizens' initiative for ecotourism, which aims to promote social and economic benefits for vulnerable populations.

Jonathan Pimentel, program participant

"With this legislative proposal, we want to emphasize the importance of youth by making specific proposals that help make our country greater. Today we are building democracy."

Marinés Tapiero, program participant

"It is important to strengthen our laws to highlight women's contributions in the sectors where tourism activities are carried out."

Isabel Marín, program participant

"We wanted to present a legislative proposal that would protect and preserve the environment, in addition to supporting everyone whose livelihoods depend on tourism, either because they live in the protected area or because they frequently carry out this type of activity."





Parliamentary delegation to COP26

#ParlAmericasCC #COP26

TITLE: 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

THEME: Together for our planet

DATES: October 31-November 13

LOCATION: Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom

HOST: Government of Scotland and United Kingdom in partnership with the Government of Italy



These activities aligned with SDGs 1, 4, 5, 8, 10, 13, and 16.

This year's COP26 to the UNFCCC convened negotiators, government representatives, parliamentarians, civil society, and the private sector -- as well as official observer organizations such as ParlAmericas -- under the presidency of the UK and in partnership with Italy, to generate commitments for more ambitious and inclusive climate action to achieve the Paris Agreement. ParlAmericas was represented by Senator the Honourable **Rosa Galvez** (Canada), President of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network

on Climate Change (PNCC) and Senator **Raúl Bolaños-Cacho Cué** (Mexico), Vice-President for North America of the PNCC who participated in his capacity as member of the national delegation of Mexico.

On the margins of COP26, Senator Galvez participated in the COP26 Legislators Summit hosted by GLOBE and the Scottish Parliament, a gathering to facilitate the exchange of innovations and good practices among legislators from across the world, held virtually and in-person November 5 - 6, 2021 in Edinburgh, UK ([day 1](#) and [day 2](#) recordings). As part of her involvement, she spoke in the panel alongside Dr. Marcelo Carvalho de Andrade, Founder of ProNatural and Co-Founder of Earth Capital (global), and Professor Dan Etsy from Yale University about addressing the financial realities of achieving national net zero decarbonization, investing in climate change adaptation, and reconciling loss and damage in the face of COVID-19 and debt recovery. The Senator discussed the need to ensure that businesses and investors align themselves with and support the achievement of climate commitments through legislative innovation in climate finance.

Senator Galvez likewise [presented](#) at the Inter-Parliamentary Union COP26 Parliamentary Meeting to share her expert opinion on climate change and a clean recovery, informed by the key findings from her white paper on [Building Forward Better: A Clean and Just Recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic](#).

During the 4th session of the Parliamentary Webinar Series, hosted by GLOBE International, E3G, and the World Resources Institute, Senator Galvez presented ParlAmericas' interactive resource [Environment and Sustainability: Mapping the Strategies and Plans of the Americas and the Caribbean](#).

Senator Bolaños held several bilateral meetings with subject-matter experts on climate change, with whom he shared the reforms that have been passed by the Senate of Mexico, such as raising the care of the environment to a constitutional rank and the [Circular Economy Law](#), a key thematic area for ParlAmericas since hosting the [17th Plenary Assembly: Towards a Circular Economy](#).

Finally, ParlAmericas was pleased to be a founding member of UNFCCC's parliamentary group, which aims to promote the strengthening of parliamentary participation in the COP process and UNFCCC meetings.

Among the key references and resources shared by ParlAmericas during COP were:

- [Executive Summary: Parliaments and the Paris Agreement](#)
- [Environment and Sustainability: Mapping the Strategies and Plans of the Americas and the Caribbean](#)
- [ParlAmericas 1st COP26 Newsletter](#): Enabling Virtual and In-person Parliamentary Action during COP26
- [ParlAmericas 2nd COP26 Newsletter](#): Promoting Parliamentary Action Post-COP26

KEY ACTION POINTS FOR PARLIAMENTARIANS AFTER COP26

COP26 concluded with the adoption of the [Glasgow Climate Pact](#), as well as several other [high-level outcomes](#) (summarized in [ParlAmericas 2nd COP26 Newsletter](#)). The main message was clear: **to combat climate change, and save the world from catastrophic impacts, words must be put into action.**

Legislators, as representatives of diverse communities, are key actors who can ensure that the climate commitments made at COP26 by the executive branch are fulfilled. **The following are some recommended legislative actions that can be taken post-COP26:**

- Check whether your country has submitted an updated Nationally Determined Contribution, Long-Term Climate Strategy, and National Adaptation Plan, if they are compatible with the goals of the Paris Agreement, and how these contribute to meeting national development priorities
 - Consult the ParlAmericas [repository](#) to see if your country has a plan in place on these topics, as well as other environmental issues.
- Request that government officials, the national negotiation team, and/or the parliamentary delegation to COP26 present the commitments made at COP26 to the appropriate committees (i.e., those responsible for environmental matters, finance, gender, among others), recalling that climate change cannot be addressed effectively in silos.
- Hold public hearings to gather input and reflections from experts and civil society representatives on climate change commitments.
 - Request progress reports on the implementation of environmental and climate commitments made at COP26. Consider:
 - creating a working group to follow the climate commitments made at COP;
 - assigning relevant parliamentary committees the responsibility to follow up on the commitments; and/or
 - organizing periodic meetings with the responsible parliamentary committee(s) and ministry to follow up on the implementation of policies necessary to comply with what was agreed in the framework of COP26.
- Examine how the commitments made at COP26 can be cemented and promoted through existing or new legislation and adequate budget allocation.
- Examine how the commitments made at COP26 can be integrated in the country's plan to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- In preparation for COP27 in Egypt, work on creating mechanisms to promote and facilitate parliamentary involvement. Consider working within the framework of the designated working group or committee to collaboratively contribute to the national position that will be taken to the COP, for example by holding working spaces between negotiators and legislators.

For more guidance on how you can help support the implementation of the Paris Agreement and environmental commitments, see the [executive summary](#) of the publication *Parliaments and the Paris Agreement*.



As summit signs continue to signal the need for urgent change, this publication, *Parliaments and the Paris Agreement*, aims to highlight the important role of parliamentarians in advancing solutions to the climate crisis and ensuring that there is continued long-term political support for such international agreements and their implementation nationally beyond electoral cycles. The [IPCC Special Report](#) released in August 2021 billed by the UN as the 'code red' report, sounded the alarm further with its confirmation of the widespread and intensifying nature of climate impacts, and the need for rapid and large-scale greenhouse gas emissions reductions to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C.

The publication in its entirety provides background information on the Paris Agreement and its various components, as well as other relevant international multilateral environmental agreements and treaties. The publication then proceeds to highlight global good parliamentary practices for the development and adoption of national climate commitments and provides guidance to strengthen the alignment of parliament's oversight, legislative, and budgetary efforts to these national climate commitments and broader objectives of the Paris Agreement. This executive summary serves as an overview of the key points and recommendations provided in the publication and includes guiding questions for parliamentarians. The reader is invited to consult the complete publication for the greater repository.



Thank you

for being part of ParlAmericas in 2021.

We look forward to building on these successes with your continued support!

THE PARLAMERICAS TEAM

Alisha Todd

Álvaro Terán

Anabella Zavagno

Christian Navarro

Deborah Novaes

Eilish Elliott

Emilie Lemieux

Emilio Rodríguez

Jack Melamed

Jenniffer Bonilla

Kerronia Thomas

Lisane Thirsk

Maria Boada

Mariajosé Aguilera

Mateusz Trybowski

Michelle Volpin

Natalí Casanova



ParlAmericas International Secretariat
703 - 155 Queen St., Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 6L1 Canada
Telephone: + 1 (613) 947-8999
www.parlamericas.org | info@parlamericas.org

