



YEAR IN
HIGHLIGHTS
2020



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

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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,

It is a pleasure to address you as we release our Year in Highlights for 2020. Although this year has been full of challenges and obstacles, especially because of the COVID-19 pandemic, at ParlAmericas we were able to adapt immediately to a new way of working in order to support legislators and parliamentary staff in the performance of their legislative functions throughout this profound crisis. During this period, ParlAmericas worked toward fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDGs 5, 13, 16, and 17.

In this regard, ParlAmericas developed information technology tools and resources for the transition to online platforms under the new rules and restrictions set forth to reduce the spread of the pandemic; we also provided recommendations on legislative actions and policies to eradicate violence against women; shared suggestions and examples of best practices for strengthening parliamentary oversight; and presented specialized tools for informing legislative work on a gendered understanding of climate resilience.

Regarding our work with civil society organizations—an area we consider vital to our mission—ParlAmericas has been working on a project financed by the Government of Canada to support the strengthening of civil society organizations dedicated to women's empowerment in Latin American and Caribbean politics, including the National Forum of Women in Political Parties (FONAMUPP) in Panama and Caribbean Women in Leadership (CIWiL). We have also had the opportunity to work with young people and join discussions with their organizations on issues that are central to their political agendas, such as combatting climate change, the future of job markets, and the importance of care work. Going forward, it is essential that we continue to create intergenerational discussion forums that offer young people in the Americas and the Caribbean a chance to have their voices heard.

We have also had the opportunity to offer parliamentary perspectives at regional and global forums associated with the pillars of our work—gender equality, open parliament, and climate change—for example, through active membership in the Inter-American Task Force on Women's Leadership and the Open Parliament e-Network (OPeN), and through our observer status at the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Working online has allowed us to strengthen high-level ties with influential organizations in the region, such as CARICOM, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), among others, as well as bring the region's parliaments closer.

In closing, I would like to note that the pandemic and the efforts made to contain and overcome its impact have highlighted our global interconnectedness and interdependence. Given this context, multilateral political dialogue and coordinated action are crucial.

With this in mind, and in line with its role as an institution that promotes parliamentary diplomacy in the Inter-American system, ParlAmericas will continue to call upon parliamentarians in the hemisphere to promote an informed debate on relevant topics, foster the exchange of best practices, and strengthen cooperative political dialogue.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Cabezas

**Member of the National Assembly, Ecuador
President of ParlAmericas (2019-2020)**

[FOLLOW ME ON TWITTER @ELIZCABEZAS](#)

OPERATIONS AND FINANCES

ParlAmericas' operations and activities in the 2020 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, time and travel contributed by member parliaments, individual parliamentarians, and partners to ensure the successful implementation of ParlAmericas' programming throughout the year.

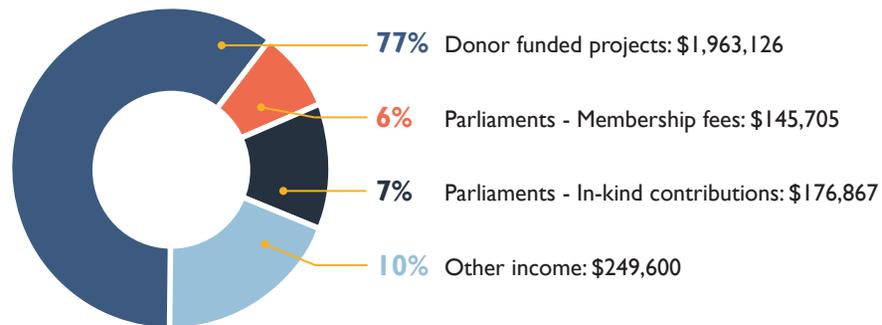
Note: The in-kind contributions included in ParlAmericas' financial statements are recorded when fair values can be reasonably estimated and supporting documentation is provided by the member parliament. We recognize that the amount shown is a fraction of the overall value of in-kind support provided 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: During the 2020 ParlAmericas fiscal year (October 1, 2019 – September 30, 2020), ParlAmericas staff voluntarily purchased a total of 88 tonnes of carbon offsets to compensate for all International Secretariat staff travel for ParlAmericas activities, and ParlAmericas purchased an additional 170 tonnes of carbon offsets to compensate for all other flights purchased by ParlAmericas for the implementation of our programmes.

Source: [ParlAmericas' audited financial statements](#) as of September 30, 2020, and the corresponding annual financial report prepared for the ParlAmericas Board of Directors and member parliaments.

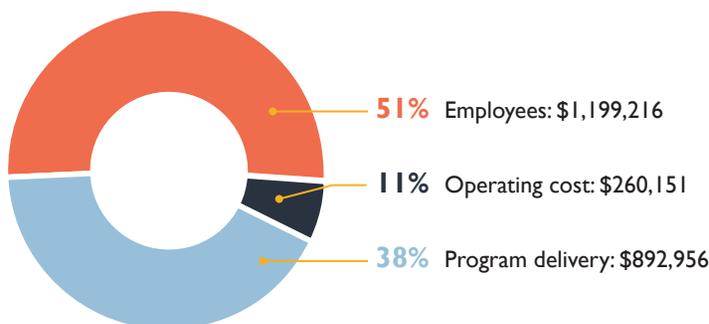
CONTRIBUTIONS

\$2,535,298



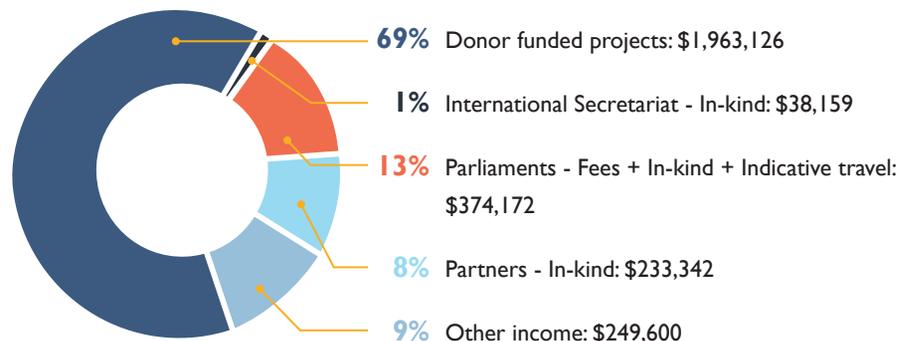
EXPENDITURES

\$2,352,323



INDICATIVE VALUE OF TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS

\$2,858,399



NATIONAL LEGISLATURES REPRESENTED ON OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Executive Committee of the Board of Directors

(October 2019 - November 2020):

Elizabeth Cabezas, President

Member of the National Assembly, Ecuador

Maya Fernández Allende, 2nd Vice-President and President of the Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality

Member of the Chamber of Deputies, Chile

Blanca Ovelar, 2nd Vice-President and President of the Open Parliament Network
Senator, Paraguay

Ana Belén Marín, 2nd Vice-President and President of the Parliamentary Network on Climate Change

Member of the National Assembly, Ecuador

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.

 Countries joining the ParlAmericas Board of Directors following the 17th ParlAmericas Plenary Assembly, held on November 27, 2020. For full election results see page 5. For more information on our Board of Directors and Executive Committees please consult the ParlAmericas website: 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.



April 2020 marked one year since the ParlAmericas International Secretariat signed the pledge to join [Climate Neutral Now](#), an initiative for diverse stakeholders to reduce their GHG emissions through a three-step method of measuring, reducing, and compensating their carbon emissions. The ParlAmericas International Secretariat has actioned various measures to reduce its carbon footprint, ranging from reducing and reusing materials to offsetting emissions from work-related travel via the [UNFCCC's Carbon Offset Platform](#). For parliaments and parliamentarians wishing to learn more about how to become Climate Neutral, we invite you to read our [Guide on Green Parliaments](#), or contact the ParlAmericas Climate Change Programme at parlAmericasCC@parlAmericas.org.



In 2020 ParlAmericas continued to support two strategic 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.

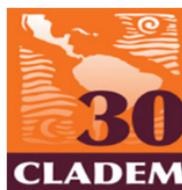


The **Open Parliament e-Network (OPeN)** was announced at the 5th Open Government Partnership (OGP) Global Summit (Georgia, July 2018). With the objective of contributing to global progress towards

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.



Red Latinoamericana por la Transparencia Legislativa



2020 ACTIVITIES

January

- 21-22 Participation in the workshop “Enhancing Democracy through Public and Civil Society Engagement in the Legislative Process” organized by Sisters for Change and Equality & Justice Alliance (Castries, Saint Lucia)
- 21-23 Participation in the Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committees Regional Workshop Series: Caribbean (Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago)
- 23-24 Participation in the 11th Session of the Inter-Parliamentary Follow-up Commission of the Pacific Alliance (Valparaiso, Chile)
- 25-31 Participation in ECLAC’s XIV Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (Santiago, Chile)

February

- 10-11 Regional meeting: “Building a Coordinated Position for Caribbean Negotiations on Beijing+25” organized in collaboration with the UN Women Multi-Country Office - Caribbean, the Institute for Gender and Development Studies at the University of the West Indies - Cave Hill, CIWiL, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, CARICOM, and the Parliament of Barbados (Bridgetown, Barbados)

March

- 5-6, 9 Training initiative: “Young Women in Leadership (YWIL) - Trinidad and Tobago” organized in collaboration with CIWiL and the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago (Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago)
- 16 Launch of the technical accompaniment project with the Congress of Colombia on gender-sensitive parliaments

Note: All activities mid-March onwards were held virtually.

April

- 16 Regional meeting: “Organizing Virtual Parliamentary Sessions during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Latin America”
- 29 National meeting: “Open Parliament: Experiences of Latin America” organized in collaboration with IRI - Panama and the National Assembly of Panama
- 30 Signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between ParlAmericas and the Senate of Paraguay to conduct a technical accompaniment project on gender-sensitive parliaments

May

- 1 Regional meeting: “Virtual Parliamentary Sittings during the COVID-19 Pandemic” organized in collaboration with the CPA
- 8 Regional meeting: “Legislative Actions for the Prevention of Violence against Women during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Latin America”
- 8 International meeting: “Parliaments and Pandemics: Going Virtual and Staying Open in the COVID-19 Era” organized in collaboration with OPeN
- 19 Participation in the meeting “Respond, Restructure, Recover: Women and the COVID-19 Response in the Caribbean” organized by CIWiL
- 21 Participation in the meeting “COVID-19: Why Can Women’s Leadership Make the Difference in the Response? Challenges and Opportunities in the Americas and Caribbean Beyond the Emergency” organized by the Inter-American Task Force on Women’s Leadership
- 27 Participation in the meeting “Integrating Gender Perspectives in Political Decision-Making” organized by IRI - Panama
- 27 Participation in the “Andean Forum of Women Parliamentarians Confronting the COVID-19 Pandemic” organized by the Centre for Leadership and Innovation for Women of the Americas

June

- 5 Regional dialogue among presiding officers of parliaments with ECLAC Secretary General Alicia Barcena: “Legislating for Post COVID-19 Economic Recovery in Latin America”
- 8 Participation in the dialogue “Legislation, Representation, and Political Oversight in the New Normal” organized by the National Assembly of Ecuador, IPU-GRULAC, and the OAS
- 11 Regional meeting: “Sustainable Responses for a Post COVID-19 Economic Recovery in the Caribbean”
- 12 Participation in the meeting “The Importance of Addressing Political Violence in the [Latin American] Region” organized by IRI’s Women’s Democracy Network

July

- 3 Participation in the national meeting “The National Assembly, Transparency, and the Pandemic” organized by the Foundation for the Development of Citizen Freedom, Panama
- 6 National meeting: “Open Parliament: Experiences in Latin America” organized in collaboration with OPeN and the Senate of Mexico
- 9 National meeting: “Laying the Foundations for the Caucus of Women Parliamentarians and Alternate Parliamentarians of Panama” organized in collaboration with IRI - Panama and the National Assembly of Panama
- 10 Parliamentary staff meeting: “Protocols for Action in Cases of Sexual Harassment in Latin American Parliaments”
- 10 Regional meeting: “Build Back Better: A Green and Sustainable Economic Recovery” organized in collaboration with the Chamber of Deputies of Chile
- 13 Participation in committee session about a proposed partial reform of the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador to create a bicameral parliamentary system
- 17 Participation in the forum “Parliaments in the Americas: Post-COVID-19 Experiences and Challenges” organized by the Congress of Peru
- 22 Regional meeting “Gender-Responsiveness and Disaster Resilience during the COVID-19 Crisis” organized with the UN Women Multi-Country Office - Caribbean and the Parliament of Saint Lucia

August

- 17 Regional meeting: “Legislative Actions for the Conservation of Marine Biodiversity in the Coastal Waters of the South Pacific” organized in collaboration with the National Assembly of Ecuador
- 20 Participation in the meeting “Ethics and Parliamentary Conduct” organized by the Centre for Leadership and Innovation for Women of the Americas
- 21 Regional meeting: “Strengthening Oversight of Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic in Latin America” organized in collaboration with the Chamber of Representatives of Uruguay
- 28 Participation in the meeting “Regional Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation for Digital Transformation” organized by Bussola Tech, Brazil

September

- 2 Regional roundtable: “Supporting the National Adoption of Gender-Responsive Disaster and Crisis Planning” organized in collaboration with the UN Women Multi-Country Office - Caribbean and the Parliament of The Bahamas
- 5 Regional meeting: “The Road to Political Parity” organized in collaboration with FONAMUPP
- 15 Participation in the meeting “LegisTech for Democracy on the occasion of the International Day of Democracy” organized by Bussola Tech, Brazil
- 23 Participation in the “8th Dialogue on Action for Climate Empowerment in the Americas and the Caribbean” organized by UNFCCC
- 23, 25, and Oct. 2 12th Gathering of the ParlAmericas PNGE, “Designing Inclusive Futures in Partnership with Youth,” organized in collaboration with the Congress of Colombia and the Parliament of Grenada
- 24 Participation in the regional forum “Legislative Openness: Experiences and Challenges over the Upcoming Decade” organized by NDI - Colombia
- 28, 30 Participation in the international symposium “Transparency and Access to Public Information in Pandemic Times: Perspectives and Challenges” organized by the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica

October

- 1 Regional meeting: “Transparency is not in Quarantine: Launch of the Legislative Transparency Toolkit in Latin America” organized in collaboration with EUROsociAL+ and the Network on Transparency and Access to Information (RTA)
- 27 Participation in “LegisTech Forum 2020: Global Conference on Digital Transformation in the Legislatures” organized by Bussola Tech, Brazil
- 27 Participation in the training “Gender and Citizen Participation” organized by FONAMUPP for the Brújula Mujer youth leadership program
- 27, 28, 29 Participation in the “First Virtual Congress of the Youth Assembly of Panama” organized with the National Assembly of Panama in collaboration with FONAMUPP
- 29, through Nov. 13 Training initiative: “Young Women in Leadership (YWIL) - Antigua and Barbuda” organized in collaboration with CIWiL and the Parliament of Antigua and Barbuda (Saint John’s, Antigua and Barbuda)
- 30 International meeting: “Working Towards an Open State” on the occasion of the Global Legislative Openness Week (GLOW) organized in collaboration with OPeN

November

- 3** Launch of the survey on experiences of sexual and/or labour harassment, as part of the project with the Senate of Paraguay to promote gender-sensitive parliaments
- 12** Participation in the national meeting “Launch of the 5th Action Plan for an Open and Transparent Congress of Colombia: Legislating as a Task for All” organized by the Chamber of Representatives of Colombia
- 13** Regional meeting: “Experiences of Legislative Modernization in Latin America: Strengthening the Parliamentary Function” organized in collaboration with NDI - Central America
- 13** Participation in the III Andean Gathering organized by Ibero-American Youth
- 16, 20, 27** 17th ParlAmericas Plenary Assembly, “Towards a Circular Economy,” organized in collaboration with the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica
- 23** Regional meeting: “Nelly Talks: Extraordinary Women” organized in collaboration with the Canadian Embassy in Panama and IRI - Panama
- 25** Participation in the regional meeting “Building a Regional Women Parliamentarian Agenda” on the occasion of International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, organized by Member of Congress Arlette Contreras (Peru)
- 25** Launch of the parliamentary video campaign for 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence, in collaboration with UN Women, FONAMUPP, and CIWiL

December

- 3** Participation in the international seminar “The Role of the Legislative Power in the Evaluation of Public Policies” organized by the Chamber of Deputies of Brazil
- 7** Participation in the international seminar “Constitutional Justice and Open Parliament” organized by the National Institute of Transparency, Access to Information, and Protection of Personal Data of Mexico

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 2020, episodes included presentations by renowned experts and prominent political figures who shared insight on timely issues, for example:

- [PNGE Keynote Interview: Supporting Women's Political Leadership through Intergenerational Partnerships](#), with the Hon. **Jean Augustine** and CIWiL-Trinidad and Tobago chair Ms. **Ashlee Burnett**
- [Sustainable Responses for a Post COVID-19 Economy Recovery: Online Meeting for Parliamentarians of the Americas and the Caribbean](#), with regional experts and Ambassador **Irwin LaRoque**, CARICOM Secretary General
- [Transforming Societies through the Progress of Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals](#), with UNDP Administrator Mr. **Achim Steiner**



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. The portal also allows for parliamentarians to share effective practices being applied in their parliament related to toolkit topics, facilitating knowledge exchange across the region.

Current toolkits are available in all of ParlAmericas' languages and focus on: caucuses for gender equality, gender-responsive budgeting, male allies for gender equality, ending sexual harassment in the workplace, and parental leave. Additional toolkits will continue to be added in response to priority issues identified by parliamentarians.

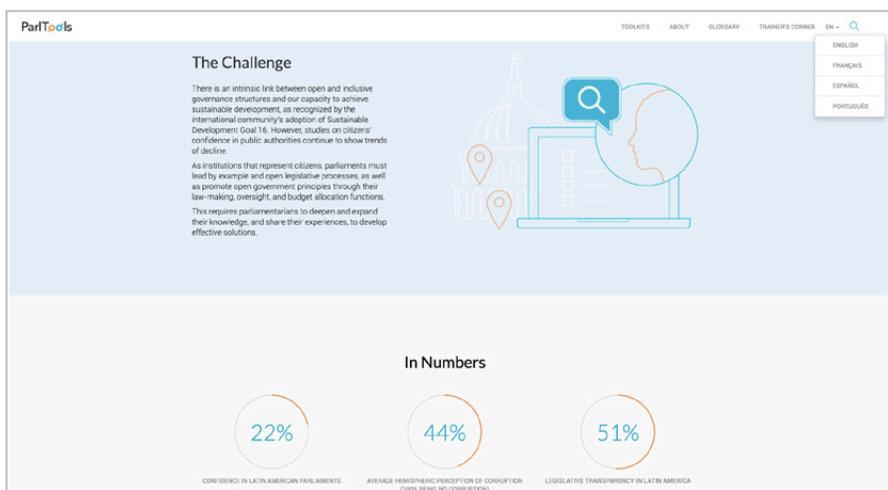
The portal is a collaboration with the UN Women Multi-Country Office - Caribbean, and its content in English is specially designed under this partnership for parliamentarians from the Anglophone Caribbean. www.parlgendertools.org



Open Parliament Portal

The Open Parliament Portal is an online platform designed for parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, and parliamentary strengthening practitioners in the Americas and the Caribbean. It provides information on legislative openness and a space to exchange knowledge and experiences from the hemisphere through videos, infographics, presentations, and external resources. This portal includes toolkits developed by ParlAmericas to support the implementation of open parliament principles, organized in accordance with the pillars of ParlAmericas' Road Map towards Legislative Openness: transparency and access to public information, accountability, ethics, and public participation -- which is the first of these toolkits now available online. It provides useful resources for anyone looking for inspiration or guidance to develop and implement an Open Parliament Action Plan or specific openness initiatives. Features also enable users to share openness practices and mechanisms currently in place within the region as well as consult a glossary defining important concepts.

www.parltools.org



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. Commitments can be explored by countries and by open parliament pillars: transparency and access to information, accountability, public participation, and ethics. Progress towards each commitment is reported by parliaments and displayed through a traffic light system, along with a description of the actions that have been completed to date and links to additional information. This tool showcases the significant efforts undertaken by parliaments across our hemisphere to strengthen their institutions, encourages the adoption of new commitments to promote openness, and serves as guidance by providing examples and ideas of new initiatives. www.parlamerica.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 ParlAmericas.

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 ParlAmericas. 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.

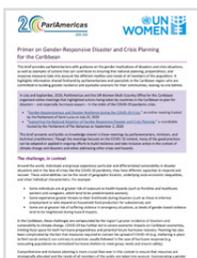
Chile	2017-2018 Open Parliament Action Plan 2014-2016 Open Parliament Action Plan	Commitments Commitments
Colombia	2018-2019 3rd Gathering of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network 2017-2018 Action Plan for and Open and Transparent Congress 2016-2017 Action Plan for and Open and Transparent Congress 2018-2019 Action plan 3	Commitments Commitments Commitments
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 that align with topics addressed by each of its networks and its activities. These materials are made available at our meetings and through our website.

GENDER

Primer on Gender-Responsive Disaster and Crisis Planning for the Caribbean

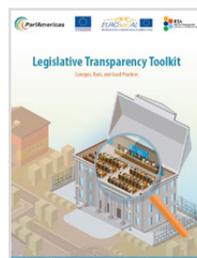


COVID-19: An Analysis of the Legislative Agenda and the Centering of Gender Equality in Legislative Responses



OPEN PARLIAMENT

Legislative Transparency Toolkit



Strengthening Accountability through Fiscal Openness: A Toolkit for Parliamentarians in the Americas and the Caribbean



CLIMATE CHANGE & SUSTAINABILITY DEVELOPMENT

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



Guide on Green Parliaments: Actions to Promote Sustainable Practices within Parliaments



COVID AND PARLIAMENTS

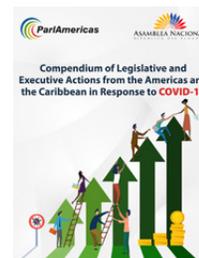
Guide on Supporting a Post-COVID-19 Green Economic Recovery



COVID-19: The Challenge of Adapting and Strengthening the Role of Parliaments



Compendium of Legislative and Executive Actions from the Americas and the Caribbean in Response to COVID-19



COVID-19 and Parliament's Role During a Pandemic



17TH PLENARY ASSEMBLY

#ParIAmericas2020

THEME: Circular Economy

DATES: November 13, 16, 20, and 27

LOCATION: Online, hosted by the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica

PARTICIPANTS: More than 110 parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, youth delegates, and representatives of civil society and multilateral organizations from more than 25 countries

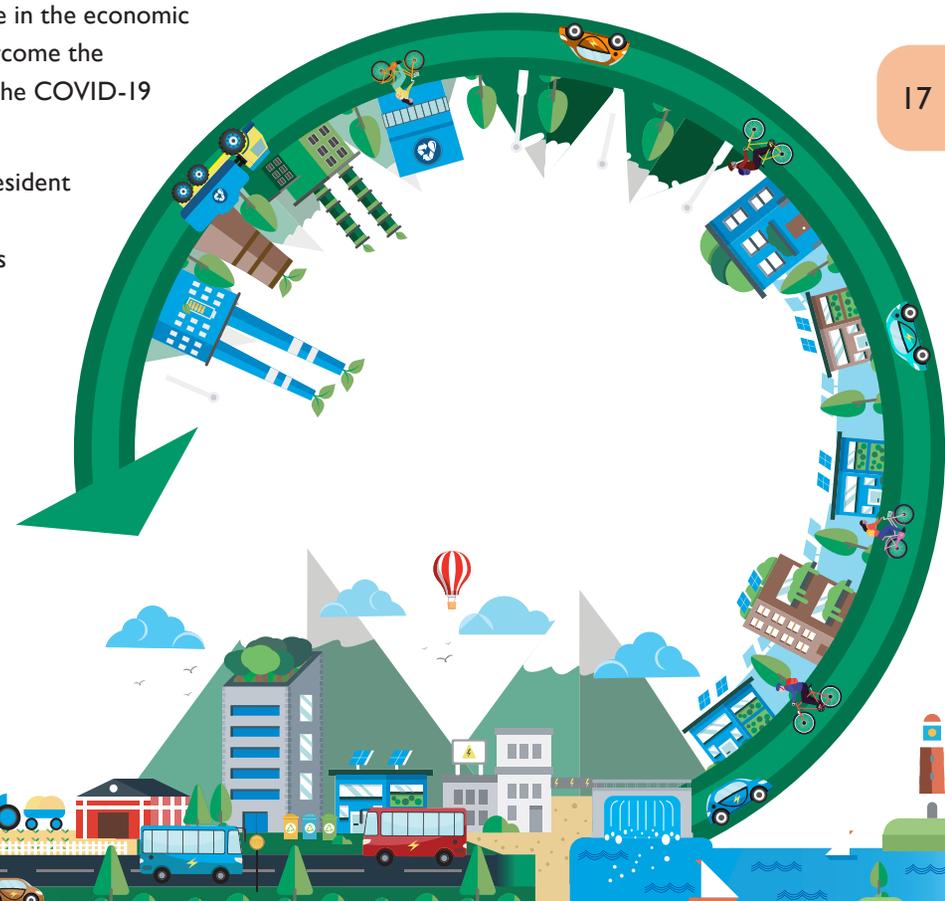


This activity is aligned with SDGs 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, and 14.

The 17th ParlAmericas Plenary Assembly, [Towards a Circular Economy](#), hosted virtually by the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica on November 13, 16, 20 and 27, involved a series of activities devoted to the circular economy, a systemic approach to sustainable development designed to benefit society, the environment, and the economy. The events gathered parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, youth activists, civil society representatives, and subject-matter experts to discuss the importance of circular economy and its pertinence in the economic recovery processes needed to overcome the serious socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic across the region.

This year, annual reports by the president of ParlAmericas and the three presidents of the working networks

were presented via [video](#) and shared with member parliaments. The plenary reports were followed by two working sessions discussing the overall concept of circularity, good practices to achieve a circular economy, and the social, economic, and environmental factors that should be considered to attain a just transition.



 **Elizabeth Cabezas** (Ecuador),
Member of the National Assembly
President of ParlAmericas

 **Maya Fernández Allende** (Chile),
Member of the Chamber of Deputies
President of the Parliamentary Network for
Gender Equality

 **Blanca Ovelar** (Paraguay), Senator
President of the Open Parliament
Network

 **Ana Belén Marín** (Ecuador),
Member of the National Assembly
President of the Parliamentary Network for
Climate Change

The working session held in English and French on November 16 included welcoming remarks from Member of the National Assembly **Elizabeth Cabezas** (Ecuador), President of ParlAmericas; Member of the Legislative Assembly **María Inés Solís** (Costa Rica), ParlAmericas Board Member; and the Honourable **Bridgid Annisette-George** (Trinidad and Tobago), Speaker of the House of Representatives and ParlAmericas Board Member.

The session answered questions on the importance of a circular economy in the current socio-economic climate caused by COVID-19, strategies to achieve a just and inclusive transition, the value of a blue economy to diversify and create jobs, good practices to achieve circularity, financing options, and the application of circular models to the tourism industry. A dialogue session followed where legislators, parliamentary staff, and youth activists exchanged ideas and projects on the circular economy and posed questions to panellists.

At the working session in Spanish and Portuguese held on November 20, Member of the Legislative Assembly **Paola Vega** (Costa Rica), Vice-President for Central America of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network on Climate Change welcomed the participants along with Ms. **Cabezas** as President of ParlAmericas.

Panellists then discussed how circular economy can be used as a tool to move away from business as usual approaches especially in a post-COVID-19 reality; the support that the UN can provide to legislators to drive a circular economy agenda, as exemplified by a bill put forward by Ms. Cabezas on circular economy; the steps to undergoing a transition to circularity; and how such a transition should be guided by the principles of justice and equality. Parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, and youth representatives from civil society organizations then participated in an exchange on initiatives and projects related to the circular economy.

The closing plenary session held on Friday, November 27, was inaugurated by Vice-President of the Legislative Assembly **Jorge Luis Fonseca** (Costa Rica), and host of the 17th ParlAmericas Plenary Assembly, and by Member of the National Assembly **Elizabeth Cabezas** (Ecuador), President of ParlAmericas. There was a subsequent round of presentations moderated by Member of the Legislative Assembly **María Inés Solís** (Costa Rica), ParlAmericas Board Member, in which each parliament designated a legislator to share national progress in the transition towards a circular economy and a sustainable and equitable economic recovery. A selection of these follows.

Since March of this year, the Ministry of Environment, together with the Ministry of Economy and the EuroChile foundation, has been designing a road map for a circular economy on the basis of open government, high levels of public participation, and co-creation workshops. This roadmap will provide guidance on promoting policies and initiatives, actions and goals to facilitate the transition towards more efficient and sustainable value chains, especially in terms of how we use resources.



Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Javier Macaya** (Chile), Vice-President for South America of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network





Member of the National Assembly **Elizabeth Cabezas** (Ecuador), President of ParlAmericas

The circular economy benefits society, businesses, and the environment; it offers viable and sustainable alternatives for creating economic, social, and natural capital, and for reducing its impact on people and the environment.

Within the Legislative Assembly, many bills can be promoted to make that leap toward a circular economy, including proposals to improve waste management, save energy, and use resources sustainably. We need to promote policies that involve all sectors of local government, communities, and public-private partnerships that can incorporate these new development models. This will allow us to achieve sustainable growth, improve competitiveness, save on costs, and even create jobs.



Member of the Legislative Assembly **María Inés Solís** (Costa Rica), ParlAmericas Board Member

As we come to the circular economy and sustainable development in the COVID period ... emphasis is going to be given to food security, efficient use of our natural resources, on the issue of those items that cause harm to our natural environment. In this regard Guyana some 13 years ago completed agreements in terms of the sustainable use of our forests and launched the Low-Carbon Development Strategy. The last government also launched the Green State Development Strategy. All these programs are very in-sync with the circular economy.



The Honourable **Manzoor Nadir** (Guyana), Speaker of the National Assembly

The circular economy would mean that all layers of a society can participate in the effort of developing and improving the living conditions of the peoples of the Americas, with consideration for an equitable and integrative economy. As a senator and a member of the American community, I would like to share my concerns for the tendency of economies which do not have solidarity with the weakest ... I am inclined to ask all of you and myself, to work so that the world becomes a little more equitable.



Senator **Patrice Dumont** (Haiti)





Member of the National Assembly **Arling Alonso** (Nicaragua)

The National Assembly of Nicaragua aims to strengthen our legislation by applying a principle of integration, considering that the circular economy, or creative economy, as we call it, does not simply require a specific law ... The circular economy is closely tied to the activities of multiple sectors ... It is therefore essential that, as members of the National Assembly, we guarantee that all related bills submitted to our committees be reformed or updated in accordance with this new focus.

In Paraguay, we held a Latin America Forum on the Circular Economy, which included the participation of government authorities. Energy used in Paraguay is 100% renewable, which is a significant milestone. The country has also passed laws that are conducive to a sustainable economy, such as the law on the use of plastic bags in supermarkets, which has already been passed, and the law on zero deforestation and the establishment of protected natural areas.



Senator **Amado Florentín** (Paraguay),
ParlAmericas Board Member

When we are forced to think of new ways to make things work, it is likely that we will have new trends in the way we produce, distribute, purchase and consume things. Those trends, influenced by our new limitations, seem to favor a circular economy. The Support Recycling Suriname Foundation is raising awareness among the community about waste separation. Since 2015, the Foundation has been active in placing collection bins for all types of plastic bottles, plastic bags and aluminum cans in Suriname. The ultimate goal is to place 450 collection bins throughout the country.



The Honourable **Marinus Bee** (Suriname),
Speaker of the National Assembly and
ParlAmericas Board Member



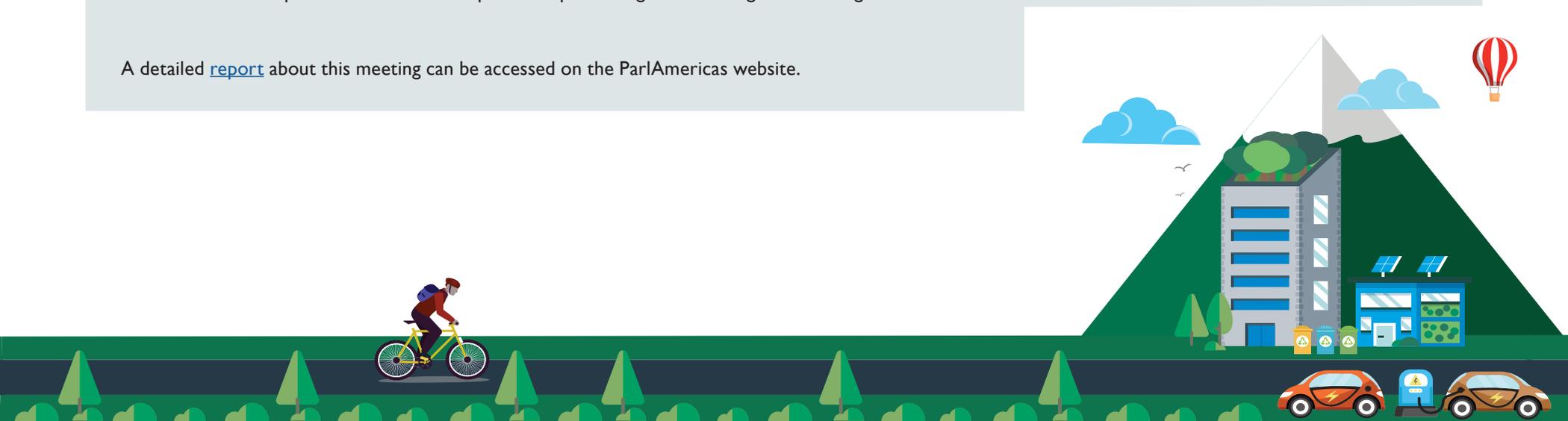
DECLARATION

The 17th ParlAmericas Plenary Assembly concluded with the reading of the [declaration](#) in Spanish, French, English, and Portuguese, by Member of the Legislative Assembly **Ana Lucía Delgado** (Costa Rica), Member of Parliament **Marc Serré** (Canada), The Honourable **Alicia Williams-Grant** (Antigua and Barbuda), President of the Senate; and **Fabio Almeida Lopes** (Brazil), Chief of Staff International Relations Secretariat, Chamber of Deputies, respectively. The declaration recognizes the threats posed by current economic models and demonstrates the importance for parliaments to take actions to move towards circularity in order to support more sustainable development.

Among the commitments adopted by the convened parliamentary delegations are:

- Work with national and local authorities to put circular economy on the public agenda and promote its importance in mitigating the effects of climate change and its relevance in the context of postCOVID-19 economic recovery plans.
- Advocate for competent authorities to generate, compile, and disseminate disaggregated environmental information in a systematic, regular, accessible, and comprehensible manner.
- Establish initiatives and policies that foster a fair and inclusive transition that ensures that workers in unsustainable industries are not left behind, such as training programs, as well as technical and financial assistance.
- Adopt legislation needed to finance the transition to circular economic models by providing tax and fiscal incentives, as well as financial stimulus, to industries that adopt circular economy practices.
- Ensure, through our oversight function, that foreign investments are governed by the same environmental protection and circular economy principles promoted at the national level and that multinationals registered and/or operating in our jurisdiction comply with the highest international standards on environmental protection.
- Promote the incorporation of a gender perspective and intersectional approach to the discussion and analysis of circular economic models, acknowledging the role of women in production and consumption and promoting women as agents of change.

A detailed [report](#) about this meeting can be accessed on the ParlAmericas website.



ParlAmericas Board of Directors Election Results 2020-2022: Incoming President and Vice-President

I would like to thank everyone for the enormous honour that they confer on me by electing me President of ParlAmericas ... A special greeting of gratitude and affection to the dear outgoing president, Elizabeth Cabezas, a friend, an outstanding leader of the sister republic of Ecuador who leaves us a clearly-defined path, and above all, the challenge of continuing to strengthen the action of our organization in favour of policy improvement ... The pandemic puts us at the center of this debate, evidencing with even greater vigor the need for quality political action of our states, and especially what is incumbent upon us in parliaments.



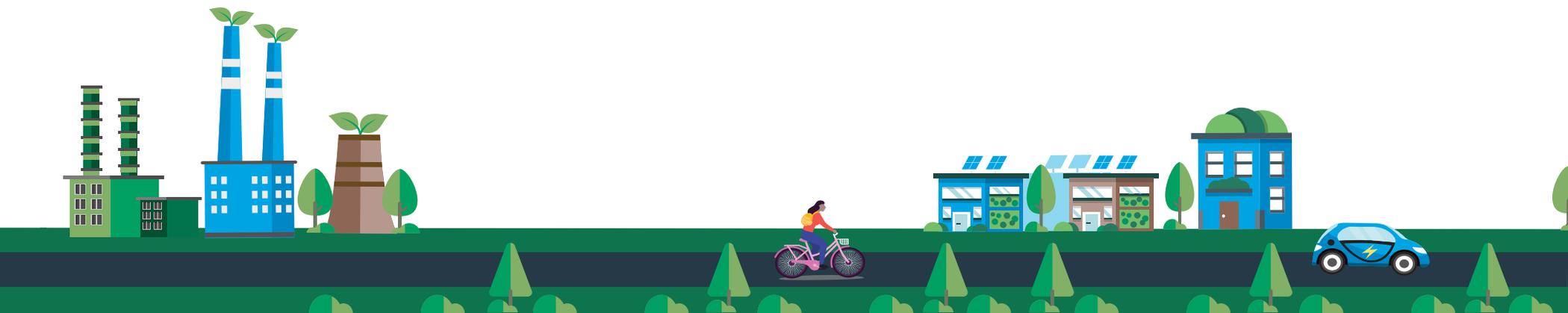
Senator **Blanca Ovelar** (Paraguay), Incoming President of ParlAmericas



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

It is a first for the English Speaking Caribbean to serve at this level of the organization ... I look forward to helping guide the organization in the achievement of its objectives, particularly within the context of its three pillars. Work and progress in all these areas are critically needed in our member countries of the English Speaking Caribbean and particularly so in the area of climate change.

ParlAmericas is grateful for the leadership and vision of Member of the National Assembly **Elizabeth Cabezas** (Ecuador) during her term as President of ParlAmericas.







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



Dear colleagues,

This year has been characterized by the COVID-19 pandemic and the socio-economic crisis produced by its effects. While the pandemic's consequences have certainly been general in scope, their disproportionate and specific impacts on women and girls threaten some of the progress and achievements of the last years in the realm of gender equality.

In this context, through the Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality (PNGE), we organized a number of virtual meetings in which we explored topics of interest to our membership designed to address these problems using a gender lens, for example gender-based violence, economic recovery, and disaster resilience.

Prior to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, we participated in person in regional negotiating spaces on gender equality. In that sense, I would like to highlight the XIV Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, organized by ECLAC in January in Santiago, Chile. In addition, ParlAmericas co-organized a meeting in Barbados in February on opportunities for subregional advocacy coordination on Beijing+25, the priority theme of the 64th session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Through the Gender Equality program, ParlAmericas has also undertaken national-level projects with the Congress of Colombia and the Senate of Paraguay to support the development of technical studies on gender equality within those legislatures.

In September and October we held the 12th Gathering of the PNGE, organized with the Congress of Colombia and the Parliament of Grenada. The gathering, titled *Designing Inclusive Futures in Partnership with Youth*, allowed us to bring together leaders representing a wide spectrum of youth organizations in order to hear about their concerns and proposed solutions to address them.

ParlAmericas continued work in line with our commitment to promote women's political leadership through projects with the National Forum of Women in Political Parties (FONAMUPP) and with Caribbean Women in Leadership (CIWiL), providing technical accompaniment and participating in their events and training.

Thanks to the work of our colleagues, and of the participation and dedication of our membership, ParlAmericas will continue to position itself as a space of hemispheric relevance for dialogue and exchange of good legislative practices on gender equality and women and girls' human rights.

Sincerely,

Maya Fernández Allende

Member of the Chamber of Deputies, Chile
President of the Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality

[FOLLOW ME ON TWITTER @MAYAFERNANDEZA](#)

BUILDING A COORDINATED POSITION FOR CARIBBEAN NEGOTIATIONS ON BEIJING +25

#ParIAmericasGEN #Beijing25Caribbean

THEME: Building a Coordinated Position for Caribbean Negotiations on Beijing+25

LOCATION: Bridgetown, Barbados

DATES: February 10-11, 2020

PARTICIPANTS: More than 60 parliamentarians, ministers, representatives from national gender machinery, multilaterals, and civil society from 12 countries over the two days of activities



This activity is aligned with SDGs 5 and 17.

ParIAmericas, in collaboration with the UN Women Multi-Country Office – Caribbean; the Institute for Gender and Development Studies (IGDS): Nita Barrow Unit, University of the West Indies (UWI) – Cave Hill; Caribbean Women in Leadership (CIWiL); the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD); and CARICOM, and with the support of the Parliament of Barbados, organized the meeting [Building a Coordinated Position for Caribbean Negotiations on Beijing+25](#).

The meeting was officially opened with welcoming remarks from **Ms. Alison McLean**, Representative, UN Women Multi-Country Office – Caribbean; **Dr. Letnie Rock**, Acting Head, IGDS: Nita Barrow



Unit, UWI – Cave Hill; **Ms. Sophia Fernandes**, Commonwealth Programme Director, WFD; **Ms. Ann-Marie Williams**, Deputy Programme Manager – Gender and Development, CARICOM; **Lady Anande Trotman-Joseph**, President, CIWiL; His Honour **Arthur Holder** (Barbados), Speaker of the House of Assembly and member of the ParIAmericas Board of Directors. **Ms. Roberta Clarke** and **Dr. Asha Kambon** co-

facilitated the meeting, offering their subject matter expertise and skills in building coalitions for women's rights and gender equality. Throughout the working sessions they encouraged the participants to devise strategies that amplified Caribbean leadership and experiences while responding to the region's current preoccupations.

The meeting's two days of activities convened parliamentarians, ministers, representatives from

KEY ACTION POINTS

- Increase political and technical contributions to CSW Political Statements and to other negotiated documents for gender equality, taking into account the need to centre shared Caribbean priorities.
- Ensure that all Caribbean countries submit timely progress reports to regional and international review mechanisms on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; additionally ensure that these reports are socialised with local CSOs.
- Facilitate the capacities of regional stakeholders to use the principles of transformational leadership to build common ground and advocate for gender equality.
- Identify strategic opportunities to put gender equality on the agendas of multilateral decision-making bodies.

multilaterals, national gender machinery, and civil society from English CARICOM countries for focused dialogue and coordination around the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action ahead of negotiations at the 64th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW64) scheduled for March 2020. Their dialogues contributed to the development of a unified sub regional voice and coordinated advocacy strategy.

The participants had the opportunity to acknowledge and applaud the pioneering work of **Dame Billie Miller** and other women in the room who had represented the Caribbean at the 4th World Conference on Women. In her keynote remarks, **Minister Cynthia Forde** shared a quote from Dame Miller's address to the Conference in her role at the time of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tourism and International Transport.

The meeting concluded with a networking reception for the participants hosted by the **International Women's Forum (IWF)-Barbados** and **UN Women Multi-Country Office – Caribbean**, in collaboration with **CIWiL** and **ParlAmericas**. This was an opportunity to learn about IWF-Barbados' initiatives to support women's leadership in the business sector and to hear from some of the young women who have benefitted from this programming.

A detailed [report](#) about this meeting can be accessed on the ParlAmericas website.



Alison McLean, Representative,
UN Women Multi-Country
Office – Caribbean

[The Beijing Declaration's] bold vision for transforming the lives of women and girls holds renewed relevance ... Across the globe, women's movements, energized by young feminists at the helm, are challenging slow and piecemeal progress and are impatient for systemic change in the face of these multiple crises. Their voices must be heard and acted upon.

I am acutely aware that there remains much work to be done to ensure that all women and girls truly have the same opportunities as boys and men. This is on all of us, men and women alike.



His Honour **Arthur E. Holder**
(Barbados), Speaker of the House
of Assembly and member of the
ParlAmericas Board of Directors

In Memoriam

On June 1, 2020 ParlAmericas joined the UN Women Multi-Country Office - Caribbean and countless others across the region in mourning the passing of Alison McLean, an extraordinary gender equality advocate, leader, and educator. A [tribute page](#) on the UN Women MCO webpage celebrates her life of committed action for social justice which continues to inspire those who knew her.



LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS FOR THE PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

#ParIAmericasGEN #COVID19

THEME: Preventing Domestic Violence during Social Distancing

LOCATION: Virtual meeting

DATE: May 8, 2020

PARTICIPANTS: More than 70 parliamentarians and parliamentary staff members from 14 countries



This activity is aligned with SDGs 5.



The ParlAmericas virtual meeting, [Legislative Actions for the Prevention of Violence against Women during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#), aimed to share experiences on the actions parliaments have taken to prevent and mitigate the effects of the pandemic on violence against women. Representatives of Latin American parliaments shared their recent experiences following a presentation by a specialist from UN Women, who shared studies with emerging data indicating that violence against women, especially domestic violence, has intensified in the region during the pandemic.

This virtual activity was inaugurated by Member of the National Assembly **Elizabeth Cabezas** (Ecuador), President of ParlAmericas, and by

Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Maya Fernández Allende** (Chile), President of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality, who gave welcoming remarks. **Anabella Zavagno**, Deputy Director General of ParlAmericas, moderated the meeting.

During the presentations, panellists shared information about the trends and impacts of COVID-19 on violence against women and highlighted the consequences of the pandemic on different groups of women. They also shared the measures and legal instruments that their governments have taken to counteract gender violence and the strategies that have been created to ensure women have access to complaint channels.



A question and answer period followed the panellists' presentations, in which participants shared initiatives implemented in their countries to prevent violence against women. For example, an Argentine bill was mentioned that proposes to declare, for a two-year term, any instance of gender-based violence as a public emergency. The bill also includes a monthly financial allowance for women who are in emergency situations due to gender violence.

To conclude the meeting, the floor was given to Member of the Legislative Assembly **Cristina Cornejo** (El Salvador) who proposed the advancement of practices that have worked in other countries, extending maternity leave, for instance, or increasing the penalties for perpetrators while in quarantine. Ms. Cornejo clarified, however, that no matter how high the penalties are, if crimes are not prosecuted, the practices will be ineffective. In her closing, she also stressed that it is necessary to generate proposals for economic and health measures with a gender focus.

A detailed [report](#) about this meeting can be accessed on the ParlAmericas website.



Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Marcela Sabat** (Chile), Vice-President (alternate) for South America of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality

Paradoxically, for women who are regularly abused, the confinement measures to protect us from the pandemic put them at much higher risk as they are confined with their aggressors. The violence is exacerbated because those who had spaces of freedom are obliged to live with the aggressor.

The pandemic is not only affecting health, but also the economy, especially in countries that are not great economic powers, such as the countries of the region. Unemployment is beginning to be felt in countries like Ecuador, and unemployment brings with it domestic violence. Confinement itself may make us feel depression and despair when there is violence in the home, which affects women and children.



Member of the National Assembly **Karina Arteaga** (Ecuador), Vice-President for South America of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality



Senator **Verónica Camino** (Mexico), Vice-President for North America of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality

Violence against health personnel has increased in the context of the current pandemic. Female nurses represent 85% of the personnel that practice this profession in Mexico. In addition to the aggression for being health personnel, there is the fact of being a woman, violence at home, and domestic burdens, which broadens the spectrum for suffering the consequences of violence.

The political violence experienced during the pandemic is a complex issue. It is important not to forget and not to set aside what women parliamentarians suffer from raising their voices and not agreeing with the way many things are being handled.



Member of the Legislative Assembly **Cristina Cornejo** (El Salvador), Vice-President for Central America of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality

12TH GATHERING OF THE PARLIAMENTARY NETWORK FOR GENDER EQUALITY

#ParlAmericasGEN # GenerationEquality

THEME: Gender equality, youth inclusion, intergenerational partnerships, political participation

LOCATION: Online, hosted by the Congress of Colombia and the Parliament of Grenada

DATES: September 23 and 25, October 2, 2020

PARTICIPANTS: More than 165 parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, youth delegates, and representatives of civil society and multilateral organizations from 25 countries



This activity is aligned with SDG 5.

The 12th Gathering of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality, hosted virtually by the Congress of Colombia and the

Parliament of Grenada, brought together parliamentarians and youth leaders from across the Americas and the Caribbean to discuss strategies to advance gender equality goals through collaborations between parliaments and youth. Under the theme of *Designing Inclusive Futures in Partnership with Youth*, the gathering's online activities facilitated proactive dialogue around key gender equality goals, established the importance of intergenerational dialogue, and highlighted parliamentary and political mechanisms to promote youth involvement.

The gathering began with the release of two intergenerational dialogues structured as interviews, one in *English* and one in *Spanish*, featuring a former parliamentarian and a young woman leader. These interviews, which were shared in video and podcast format for participants' viewing convenience, establish a foundation for the theme of the gathering on advancing gender equality through the engagement of youth in political processes.



The English keynote interview features Ms. **Ashlee Burnett**, youth leader and gender equality activist and chair of the Caribbean Women in Leadership (CIWiL) Trinidad and Tobago chapter, who speaks with the Honourable Dr. **Jean Augustine**, a Grenadian-Canadian former parliamentarian and minister and prominent social justice advocate. The Spanish keynote interview features Ms. **Solangel Robinson**, a Panamanian young leader and member of the National Forum for Women of Political Parties (FONAMUPP), and Ms. **Cecilia López**, a Colombian former senator and economist with a notable political career.



A youth-friendly parliament would involve having young people around. Mentorship, giving them opportunities. Making it clear that ‘this is your house,’ not a mystical place, but one where we work for the people. It would involve having parliamentarians giving spaces to young volunteers in their constituencies to incorporate their inputs.



The Honourable Dr. **Jean Augustine**, former parliamentarian (Canada)

Ms. **Cecilia López**, former parliamentarian (Colombia)



The message is very clear: the world is yours (youth). Commit to eradicating the inequality in our region. Unite, as a new youth, and build a new Latin America.

Experiences with parliaments are so important. When ParlAmericas and CIWiL organized YWiTT, I sat there (in Trinidad and Tobago’s Parliament, during the historic all-women parliamentary sitting) and thought to myself: “I can actually be here one day.” It was very empowering. I think those experiences need to happen often.



Ms. **Ashlee Burnett**, gender equality activist and chair of the CIWiL Trinidad and Tobago chapter

Ms. **Solangel Robinson**, young leader and member of FONAMUPP



Part of the challenges associated with our societies is the multiplicity of ideas, perspectives, life experiences, and ideologies, which are also present among members of different generations. Thus, it is necessary to build greater intergenerational cooperation to achieve common gender equality goals.



The gathering included two working group sessions, one in English on September 23 and one in Spanish on September 25, entitled “Advancing gender equality solutions with youth partners.” These sessions allowed participants to engage in focused discussions on a gender equality topic of interest to them in collaboration with parliamentary colleagues and youth advocates.

The English session was inaugurated with interventions by the Honourable **Chester Humphrey** (Grenada), President of the Senate and co-host of the meeting, and Vice-President for the Caribbean of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality; and by the Honourable **Bridgid Annisette-George** (Trinidad and Tobago), Speaker of the House of Representatives and member of the ParlAmericas Board. The Spanish session featured inaugural remarks by the Honourable **Germán Blanco** (Colombia), President of the Chamber of Representatives and co-host of the meeting; and by Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Maya Fernández Allende** (Chile), President of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality.

After initial remarks and presentations by UN Women representatives in plenary, participants were divided into their respective virtual working groups. Each group was facilitated by young activists working in different fields towards gender equality objectives. A parliamentary rapporteur from each group captured the key points of their dialogue and later delivered a short presentation of these during the gathering’s plenary session the following week.

On October 2, the gathering convened a hemispheric-wide plenary session, which brought together the learning from previous gathering activities to explore youth-inclusive and gender-responsive parliamentary and political mechanisms. The session was inaugurated with remarks by the Honourable Germán Blanco; the Honourable Chester Humphrey; Member of the Chamber of Deputies Maya Fernández Allende; as well as Member of the National Assembly **Elizabeth Cabezas** (Ecuador), President of ParlAmericas.

Following the inauguration, parliamentarian rapporteurs delivered presentations summarizing the key conclusions from their respective working groups on gender-based violence, women’s health, STEM and the future of work, climate change and disasters, co-responsibility in care work, and women’s leadership. The session continued with the panel discussion, “Making parliamentary politics more youth-inclusive,” that included interventions by young leaders and parliamentarians with experience in gender- and youth-inclusive parliamentary initiatives. The panel concluded with a period of open dialogue.

The diversity of youth must be considered when proposing public policies for them. We must insist on the need for disaggregated information that accounts for this wide and varied universe of people.



Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Maya Fernández Allende** (Chile), President of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality



DECLARATION

The 12th Gathering of the ParlAmericas PNGE concluded with the reading of the [declaration](#) by Senator **Cathisha Williams** (Grenada) and Member of the Chamber of Representatives **Adriana Matiz** (Colombia). Discussion around the declaration was followed by closing remarks delivered by Member of the National Assembly **Karina Arteaga** (Ecuador), Vice-President for South America of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality.

Among the commitments adopted by the convened parliamentary delegations are:

- Advocate within our parties on the need to establish favourable conditions for young women and youth participation through measures promoting their recruitment and substantial participation in leadership positions, such as youth quotas and mentoring programs, and the incorporation of their needs and perspectives in statutes and programmatic documents.
- Incorporate good practices to make our parliaments more open to young people and their organizations through, for example, training programs to increase the political participation of young women leaders and youth parliaments or committees in charge of mainstreaming these perspectives in bills.
- Promote the drafting and approval of youth laws and allocate the necessary budget for their implementation, insisting on the need to collect disaggregated data and statistical information on youth.
- Promote intergenerational dialogue through democratic and participatory spaces in which the voices of different groups are heard and taken into account in legislative work.

A detailed [report](#) about this meeting can be accessed on the ParlAmericas website.

It is critical not to lose sight of these goals to ensure that this progress continues to manifest well into the future; the prominence of diverse voices in all decision-making is essential to ensuring that the legislation and policies we enact are responsive to the varied needs of our populations.



The Honourable **Chester Humphrey** (Grenada), President of the Senate, and Vice-President for the Caribbean of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality and co-host of the gathering



The Honourable **Germán Blanco** (Colombia), President of the Chamber of Representatives and co-host of the gathering

The youth of the Americas and the Caribbean have called on the State and society as a whole with their demands, and the parliaments of the hemisphere, heeding this call, have opened the doors of congress to welcome them and listen to their voices.



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 the [Caribbean Institute for 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 context of the COVID-19 pandemic, CIWiL, FONAMUPP, and other project partners successfully adapted and transitioned their activities to online or hybrid online/in-person formats.

In 2020, project activities included:

- Webinars to encourage and support electoral candidacies by women;
- Online training initiatives to promote young women's leadership;
- The establishment of local chapters of the partner organizations;
- 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 2020 activities

- 2 national legislative reform processes impacted
- 11 virtual training and awareness-raising sessions held
- 4 regional dialogues convened with other networks of women in political parties
- 630+ women beneficiaries of project activities

In the words of FONAMUPP's training beneficiaries

“I learned about useful tools for project design, but the most valuable thing I gained was the experience of being part of the fight for women’s advancement and overcoming existing inequalities.”

“Women’s leadership serves as a guarantee for a successful future. Let’s continue working together regardless of the political parties or groups we represent.”

“The workshops on political messaging provided us with knowledge on many positive strategies for our future as women political leaders.”



PUBLICATION OF THE CHILDREN'S STORY ELENA AND THE ANTS: A TEAM TO THE RESCUE

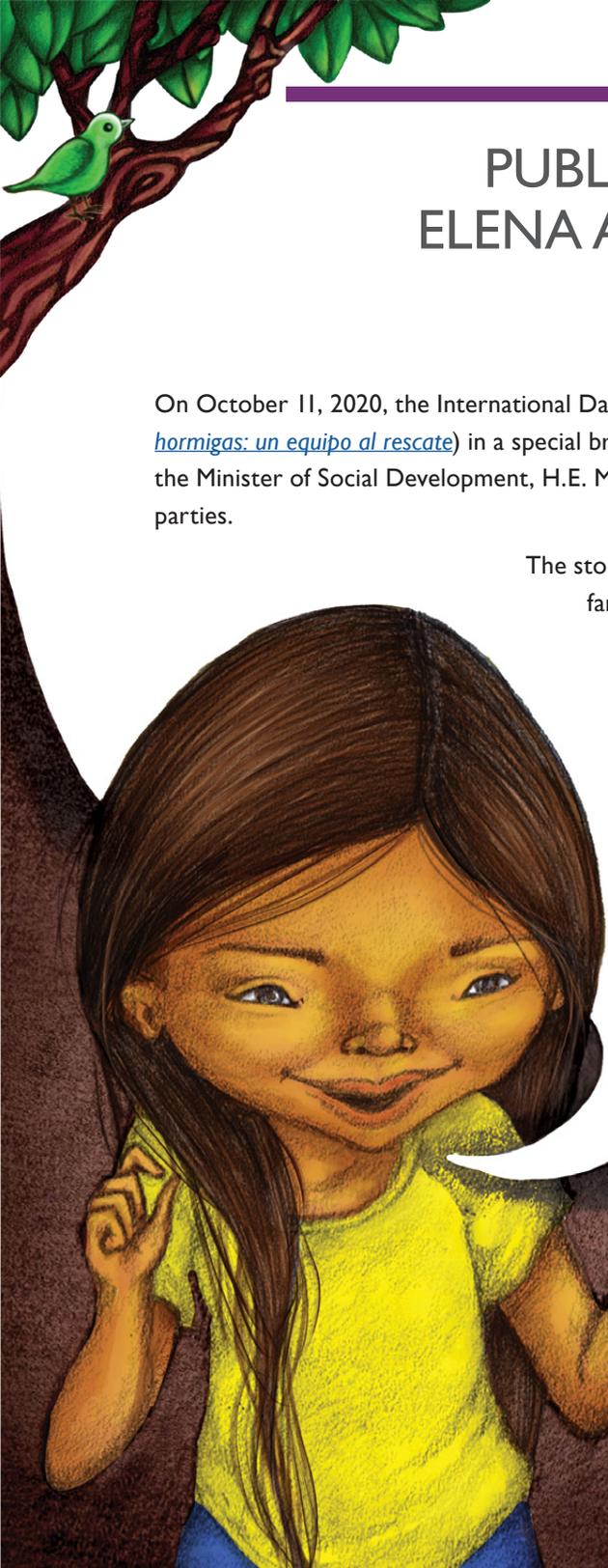


On October 11, 2020, the International Day of the Girl Child, FONAMUPP presented the children's story *Elena and the Ants: A Team to the Rescue* ([Elena y las hormigas: un equipo al rescate](#)) in a special broadcast on Panama's national state television system, with the participation of the First Lady, Yazmín Colón de Cortizo; the Minister of Social Development, H.E. María Inés Castillo López; and members of the National Assembly who serve in the women's arms of Panama's political parties.

The story focuses on the character of Elena, a girl from the Ngäbe-Buglé region who moves to the El Tigre community with her family. Dismayed by the pollution she sees in the river -- and inspired by a magical encounter with ants who teach her the value of teamwork -- she decides to lead a campaign to clean and protect the Tigre River. She enlists the support of her classmates, neighbours, and a member of the National Assembly representing her electoral district.

The book, which will be available nationwide in Panama, promotes girls' and women's leadership, civic engagement, teamwork, environmental protection, and respect for cultural diversity. FONAMUPP's president Juana Herrera Araúz stated that "the story will be an important tool for promoting more inclusive and collaborative leadership models from an early age, and for showing how mechanisms of civic and political engagement can help each of us become agents of change."

The book's author is the Panamanian writer Lil hArriera, and it is illustrated by the national artist Martanoemí Noriega; it was commissioned by FONAMUPP.



FONAMUPP ADVOCACY ACHIEVEMENTS

FONAMUPP's Participation in the Approval Process for Law 184 on Measures to Eradicate Political Violence against Women

On November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, the National Assembly of Panama held a session in which FONAMUPP participated; the session involved the formal approval of Law 184 on the adoption of measures to prevent, address, sanction, and eradicate political violence against women.

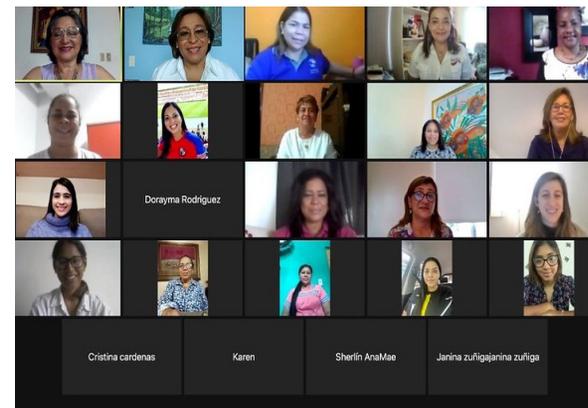
FONAMUPP contributed to the success of this law in different ways: through proposals for drafting the preliminary bill, speeches made during the first and second debates, and lobbying during the third debate. FONAMUPP is included in the law as an advisory body for monitoring and following up on its implementation.



FONAMUPP Convenes a Dialogue with the Presidents of the National Forums of Women in Politics of Central America and the Caribbean

On September 5, FONAMUPP organized a dialogue with the presidents of the National Forums of Women in Political Parties of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic, and with the support of ParlAmericas. The discussion -- which featured an interview with **Margarita Stolbizer**, an Argentine politician with an extensive career in politics -- was focused on issues related to the impact of parity laws, women's experiences in politics, and women's inclusion in political parties.

This was one of the five meetings held in 2020 by FONAMUPP with representatives of Forums from different countries, aimed at strengthening regional cooperation and facilitating the exchange of good practises for increasing women's participation in politics.





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.

Caribbean Women in Leadership 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, female 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.



“Together we must strategise to adopt new paradigms and policies which re-envision our collective approaches and realize the culture shifting which will squarely address old and new gender discrimination and realize gender equality and parity.” – **Lady Anande Trotman- Joseph**, CIWiL President

Summary of 2020 activities

- 5 new national chapters formed
- 9 virtual training and awareness-raising sessions held
- 95+ young women leaders reached through 2 youth-focused programs
- 735+ women beneficiaries of project activities



YOUNG WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAMME

Young Women in Leadership (YWiL) is a training programme that supports young women aged 18-25 in developing knowledge, skills, and networks to propel them in their leadership journeys and efforts to positively shape their communities. YWiL is a joint initiative of CIWiL and ParlAmericas.

These initiatives are organized in Caribbean countries in partnership with the national parliament, CIWiL chapter (as possible), and other local women's organizations and stakeholders. The programme culminates in a simulated parliamentary sitting, in which all participants serve as a parliamentarian or parliamentary official and apply learning gained throughout the programme. For both YWiL activities hosted in 2020, the debate centred around a budget bill that was an exercise in gender-responsive budgeting.

Knowledge: [Transformational leadership](#), gender equality, and parliamentary procedure are the core components of the YWiL curriculum. Information is shared both on pathways to leadership and how to make inclusive decisions that benefit all of society when in these roles.

Skills: Effective communications, creating strong partnerships and collaborations, and fostering ongoing personal development are areas of focus in skills-building sessions, providing practical tools and guidance for taking action as transformational leaders in all spaces.

Networks: Relationship building with peers and other women leaders based nationally creates support networks for participants to draw on through the programme and afterwards.





YWiL TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

- Dates: February 15 – March 9, 2020
- More than 55 young women leaders took part in the YWiLTT programme, hosted in partnership with the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago under the leadership of the Honourable Bridgid Annisette-George, Speaker of the House of Representatives
- Watch the debate [here](#)



YWiL ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

- Dates: October 29 – November 23, 2020
- More than 40 young women leaders took part in the YWiLAB programme, hosted in partnership with the Parliament of Antigua and Barbuda under the leadership of the Honourable Alincia Williams-Grant, President of the Senate
- Watch the House of Representatives sitting here ([part 1](#), [part 2](#)) and the Senate sitting [here](#)



VIDEO CAMPAIGN: 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



Minerva Tavárez Mirabal
(Dominican Republic)

In commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, ParlAmericas launched a special interview with the activist and politician Minou Tavárez Mirabal, the daughter of Minerva Mirabal.

The assassination of Minerva and her sisters, María Teresa and Patria, led to the declaration of November 25 as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. The legacy of resistance of the Mirabal sisters during the Trujillo dictatorship in the Dominican Republic continues to serve as a source of inspiration for women around the world working to end violence against women.

In the interview, which took place at the Mirabal Sisters' House-Museum, Ms. Mirabal underscores the importance of persevering in social and political efforts to eradicate violence against women.

Throughout the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence (November 25 - December 10) in 2020, ParlAmericas launched a series of 19 interviews with parliamentarians from across the Americas and the Caribbean in which they share their perspectives on the theme of the UNiTE 2020 campaign, "Orange the World: Fund, Respond, Prevent, Collect!"

These interviews - available on a ParlAmericas [YouTube playlist](#) - are a collaboration with FONAMUPP, CIWiL, the UN Women Multi-Country Office - Caribbean, and the UN Women Regional Office for the Americas and the Caribbean.





MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE PARLAMERICAS OPEN PARLIAMENT NETWORK



Dear colleagues,

The year 2020 has presented great challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused significant impacts on our health systems and economies. Parliaments have not been exempted from this situation and have endeavoured to take action to protect the public and safeguard its interests. Although parliamentary work in this context has been complex, the Open Parliament Network was able to adjust dynamically to the situation and collaborate with legislative bodies in the region on issues that have been vital under these circumstances and are in line with the pillars of legislative openness: transparency, accountability, public participation, and ethics.

Some of the highlights of our activities have included meetings on organizing virtual sittings in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which provided a space to share and analyze experiences focused on ensuring the continued functioning of legislative bodies across the region—a key component of democratic systems. Furthermore, given the importance of maintaining the balance of power within our democracies and guaranteeing that measures adopted in response to the pandemic be implemented with integrity, we also held an inter-parliamentary meeting on oversight.

As part of our mission to encourage legislative openness in parliaments across the Americas and the Caribbean, we held a series of national meetings in order to continue strengthening and encouraging open parliament plans and commitments. These efforts included joint meetings and support for legislative bodies in Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, and Peru, with a focus on the value of co-creation processes, the importance of active public and civil society participation, and the benefits of adopting this agenda, which has allowed for building trust and a close relationship between parliaments and civil society organizations.

In addition, based on the experiences of Brazil, Ecuador, and Chile, we prepared an infographic on the organization of virtual parliamentary sittings that provides general advice for the transition to remote plenary and committee sittings,

according to international standards. We also produced two publications with the Directorio Legislativo Foundation on the challenges of adapting and strengthening the role of parliament during the pandemic from a gendered and open parliament perspective. We were also pleased to celebrate the official release of the Legislative Transparency Toolkit, a joint initiative between ParlAmericas, the Transparency and Access to Public Information Network (RTA), and EUROsociAL+. Informed by a year of meetings and collaboration, this publication addressed key issues related to active transparency, requests for access to information, open data, communication and accessibility, and records management, while also elaborating on the recommendations set forth by the transparency and access to public information pillar in the ParlAmericas Roadmap Towards Legislative Openness.

In closing, I would like to especially thank the parliamentary representatives who participated in our activities for their valuable contributions and commitment to ParlAmericas and the Open Parliament Network. I would also like to thank several international organizations and networks, including the Latin American Network for Legislative Transparency, the National Democratic Institute, the International Republican Institute, the Directorio Legislativo Foundation, the RTA, EUROsociAL+, and the consortium of organizations that make up the Open Parliament e-Network (OPeN), for their trust and support on the various activities and resources we have produced jointly.

Sincerely,

Blanca Ovelar

Senator, Paraguay
President of the Open Parliament Network

Incoming President of ParlAmericas elected by acclamation at the 17th ParlAmericas Plenary Assembly

.....
 FOLLOW ME ON TWITTER @OVELAR BLANCA

ORGANIZING VIRTUAL PARLIAMENTARY SESSIONS

#ParIAmericasOPN #COVID19

THEME: Innovation, virtual sessions, and modernization of parliamentary processes

LOCATION: Virtual meetings

DATES: April 16 (Spanish) and May 1, 2020 (English)

PARTICIPANTS: More than 140 parliamentarians and parliamentary staff from 33 countries and overseas territories in the two sessions combined



These activities are aligned with SDG16.

Following the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ParlAmericas Open Parliament program promptly organized a series of meetings online to support legislatures in their transition to conducting nearly all of their proceedings virtually.

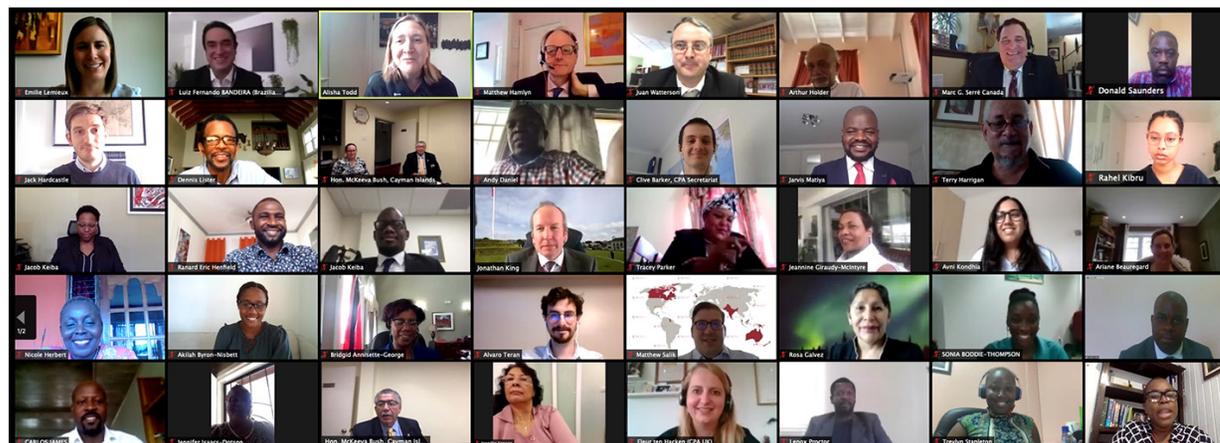
The first of these, held on April 16, convened presentations by representatives of the parliaments of Brazil, Chile, and Ecuador under the title of [Organizing Virtual Parliamentary Sessions during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). This was followed on May 1 with [Virtual Parliamentary Sitings during the COVID-19 Pandemic for Presiding Officers and Clerks of English-Speaking Parliaments in the Americas and the Caribbean](#), organized with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) which convened presentations from Brazil, Isle of Man, and United Kingdom. In these meetings participants exchanged on the practices and tools their institutions were using to



hold sittings and committee meetings and to conduct other necessary legislative business while following social distancing and other national and international recommendations to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

The Spanish session was inaugurated by Member of the National Assembly **Elizabeth Cabezas** (Ecuador), President of ParlAmericas, and featured welcoming remarks by President of the National Assembly **César Litardo** (Ecuador). Ms.

Anabella Zavagno, Deputy Director General of ParlAmericas, served as moderator. Afterwards, a panel of parliamentary staff provided information about digital technologies and processes to enable secure, remote registration of attendance and voting; constitutional reforms to ensure the legality of virtual plenary sittings; regulations and legal frameworks to approve teleworking; and training considerations to facilitate transitions to working from home.



Following their presentations, there was a question-and-answer period and dialogue with the invited specialists. To conclude the meeting, the floor was given to Member of the Legislative Assembly **María Inés Solís** (Costa Rica) who highlighted the work being carried out by parliamentary officials to allow the legislative powers to continue to meet virtually. Ms. Cabezas also provided closing remarks that stressed the importance of parliaments continuing to collaborate through ParlAmericas.

A detailed [report](#) about the Spanish meeting can be accessed on the ParlAmericas website.

The English session featured opening remarks from Ms. **Alisha Todd**, Director General of ParlAmericas, and Mr. **Jarvis Matiya**, Acting Secretary-General of the CPA, both of whom conveyed the disposition of their organizations to support member parliaments as they adapt their practices during the pandemic. The meeting was chaired by Senator **Ranard Henfield** (The Bahamas), Vice-President for the Caribbean of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network. Panellists then shared the experience of their respective parliaments in implementing virtual parliamentary sittings.

Afterwards, a representative from each parliament that attended the meeting intervened to provide details about the practices adopted or the considerations being debated in their parliaments for virtual sittings. These interventions inspired peer feedback and further exchanges with the panellists. The meeting concluded with remarks from the Honourable **Bridgid Annisette-George** (Trinidad and Tobago), Speaker of the House of Representatives, ParlAmericas Board Member, and CPA International Executive Committee Member.

A detailed [report](#) about the English meeting can be accessed on the ParlAmericas website.

Key considerations for holding virtual sittings:

- Establish functionalities that guarantee the security of digital applications or tools used during virtual sittings.
- Support parliamentarians and their respective teams during remote sittings in the event that they have any problems or queries.
- Train parliamentary officials and legislators in the use of technological tools.
- Continue to computerize and digitize parliamentary processes, including internal communications and electronic signatures, to facilitate the transition process to virtual sittings.
- Strengthen legislative openness to guarantee transparency, accountability, public participation, ethics, and integrity in the transition to virtual parliamentary processes.





Mr. **Miguel Landeros**, Secretary General of the Chamber of Deputies of Chile

Each country has its own way of being and has worked either more or less on this. We believe that these initiatives should be done in a simple way. It is important that the country go through its own processes and experiences to adapt or create the necessary development tools according to its context.

There is a constant concern for security, so new security features are added in each new version of the system. The solution (Remote Deliberation System) is being used successfully, and there have already been several votes, including a proposed amendment to the constitution that was voted on successfully. This is a new reality for all of us and we are learning every day. Therefore, the exchange of experiences as we are engaging in today in this meeting is essential.



Mr. **Gustavo Vasconcellos Calvacanti**, IT Analyst in the Innovation and ICT Directorate of the Chamber of Deputies of Brazil



To perform our constitutional duties to the nation, we as forward-thinking legislators and transformative national leaders must adapt our legislatures to keep the democratic system alive in the hearts and minds of our electorate, of our backbenchers and senators, our media, our NGOs, academia, and the private sector. The question ... can be posed here today, 'Is your parliament seen by your electorate –and does it see itself –as the essential service it is?'



Senator **Ranard Henfield** (The Bahamas), Vice-President for the Caribbean of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network



We have recently held two sittings particularly to deal with the emergency regulations and legislative provisions which facilitated the lower house meeting virtually; the upper house met in person following social distancing practices. We do still have some concerns regarding constitutional and legislative provisions regarding symbols of authority during virtual sittings ... and the psychological and emotional impact that working remotely may have on members and staff. We also face public calls on parliamentarians to lower or forego their salaries during this period while continuing to provide this essential service.

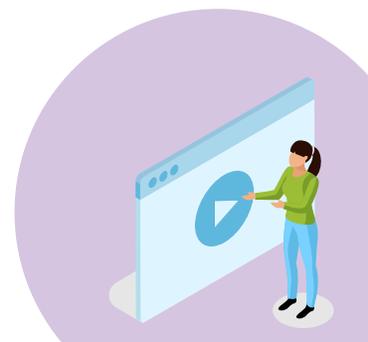
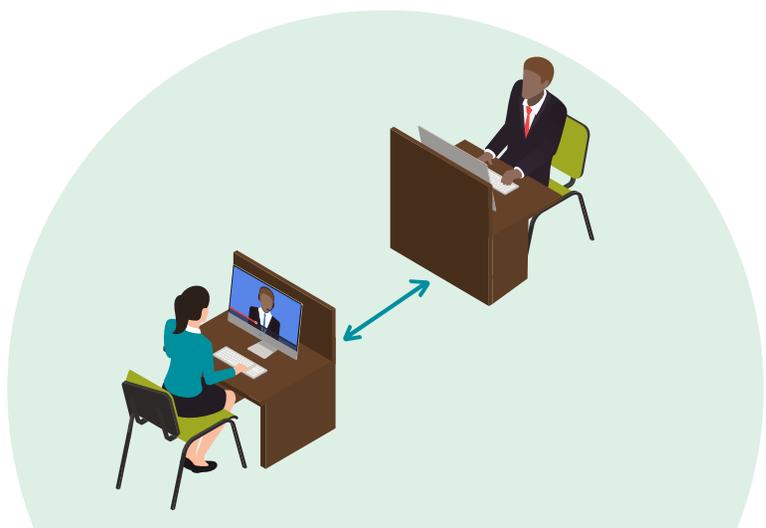


The Honourable **Alincia Williams Grant** (Antigua and Barbuda), President of the Senate



The Honourable **Andy Daniel** (Saint Lucia), Speaker of the House of Assembly and ParlAmericas Board Member

We have met five times since the start of the pandemic and we've declared a state of emergency that indicates that parliament is an essential service, which has now been extended to the end of May. We have practiced social distancing fully in the parliament and have limited the number of members present in the chamber to those meeting the quorum and rotated so that all members could have the opportunity to speak. In terms of virtual parliament, our constitution states that each session of parliament shall be held at such place [defined by the rules of procedure], which can be amended by the parliament.



LEGISLATING FOR POST COVID-19 ECONOMIC RECOVERY: COOPERATIVE DIALOGUE BETWEEN PRESIDING OFFICERS OF PARLIAMENTS OF THE AMERICAS

#ParlAmericasSDG #COVID19

THEME: Economic recovery, sustainable development, inclusion

LOCATION: Virtual meeting

DATE: June 5, 2020

PARTICIPANTS: More than 100 parliamentarians, parliamentary staff and embassy representatives from 16 countries



This activity is aligned with SDG 16.

The high-level dialogue organized by ParlAmericas, [Legislating for Post COVID-19 Economic Recovery: Cooperative Dialogue among Presiding Officers of Parliaments of the Americas](#), aimed to explore the legislative and public policy response needed to promote a sustainable and equitable economic recovery, in line with the 2030 Agenda goals.

This activity was inaugurated by Member of the National Assembly **Elizabeth Cabezas** (Ecuador), President of ParlAmericas, followed by a keynote address by Ms. **Alicia Bárcena**, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), on the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic in the region and proposals for mitigating its effects. Senator **Rosa Gálvez**



(Canada), Vice-President for North America of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network on Climate Change, moderated the high-level dialogue among presiding officers of parliaments who spoke about the economic actions and measures adopted in response to COVID-19.

Ms. Bárcena noted that the post-pandemic world would require a higher degree of collaboration and integration, making it necessary to conceive a new economic landscape so as to reduce reliance on imported manufactured goods and establish regional value chains. To this end, the region will need industrial policies and new strategic sectors to avoid a single focus on primary economies in the region, with the aim of adding value to production via technological innovation. She also highlighted the fact that an integrated market in a region composed of 650 million people would be a very strong one and

would reach the scale and resilience needed to avoid future economic shocks. Lastly, she underlined the importance of building trust among the public with a new system of universal social protection as a result of inclusive and sustainable governance in line with the goals set forth in the 2030 Agenda.



Ms. Bárcena's presentation was followed by a high-level dialogue convening the presiding officers of parliaments representing 15 countries in the Americas. Participants highlighted the measures for economic recovery taken by their respective institutions, such as support for workers and small and medium enterprises, and resources provided to the health sector and to vulnerable families and population groups, among other actions.

To conclude the meeting, Ms. Cabezas thanked the presiding officers of parliaments for their participation. She highlighted the importance of countries standing united in order to strengthen the actions adopted in response to the complex situation at hand.

A detailed [report](#) about this meeting can be accessed on the ParlAmericas website.

Key considerations for parliamentary work on economic recovery in the region:

- Promote greater and better access to information in a timely and reliable fashion, allowing citizens to participate in decisions affecting them.
- Continue promoting oversight actions in order to ensure transparency in the application of government measures, which in turn will contribute to informing civil society on these measures and building public trust in the response.
- Create institutional channels for dialogue and engagement with civil society, which are needed to guide the post-crisis process.
- Build political agreements that can redesign the current economic model and call upon a broad social pact in favour of a more inclusive welfare system.
- Enact reforms to social security systems and care economy policies in order to improve social protection and reinforce healthcare and education systems to achieve universal and high-quality coverage of public goods and services.
- Debate and enact fiscal reform in order to create more progressive tax systems with greater income tax collection.



Strengthening the work of parliamentarians is essential. We have seen here that there is a broad consensus among all of you in terms of how to respond to the pandemic, with a sense of urgency and opportunity, and in a very straightforward fashion. When people ask, 'What do we do first?' I say we should protect the vulnerable sectors of society, protect people's incomes, which is very important, and protect our productive capacity. Lastly, we have to think about building a better future for our peoples through more inclusive welfare systems, green sustainability, and strategies for ensuring a strong commitment from businesses by giving them the support they need to protect jobs. And, of course, plans on how to transition toward strategic sectors that would allow us to achieve greater environmental and social sustainability.



Ms. **Alicia Bárcena**, Executive Secretary, ECLAC



Senator **Mónica Fernández** (Mexico),
President of the Senate

We are doing our part in the Mexican congress; perhaps the most relevant action we have taken under the circumstances is the amendment of our Constitution in order to have an article that guarantees social programs for senior adults and people with disabilities, as well as scholarships for students at every level, and the provision of healthcare. In the Mexican senate specifically, we are currently analyzing the relevant issues and administrative reforms to initiate the Free Trade Agreement between Mexico, the United States, and Canada on July 1. We also agree on the need to open new channels for the purpose of transparency and dialogue with the citizenry and believe in universal basic access to a state-run welfare system, which is something we need to strive for.

We have set party differences aside to support various bills addressing this emergency, such as an emergency law to protect Guatemalans from the effects generated by the pandemic. This was an immediate response aimed at tackling hoarding and overseeing price monitoring and the dissemination of information. In addition, we passed the Economic Bailout Law to assist families and mitigate the effects of the economic crisis, and we've granted two loans for public criminal defense, the Public Prosecutor's Office, and other judicial institutions. As legislators, we have also been in charge of oversight of the various executive branch levels, both through regular congressional committees and new committees established by congressional leadership for the purpose of overseeing and supporting government agencies.



Member of Congress **Sofía Hernández**
(Guatemala), First Vice-President of the
Congress



Cuba has based itself on its Public Health Law to develop a strategy encompassing more than 500 measures within the framework of a free and universal healthcare system that has allowed us to combat and mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects, with representatives of the National Assembly involved in the implementation and monitoring of the strategy. The country has set forth economic measures benefitting workers and companies, such as salary guarantees for those whose employment has been affected, tax benefits for state-run and privately-owned economic entities, the use of duly compensated remote work, and the adjustment of our national economic plan for the year 2020. We are also assessing a potential adjustment to the State Budget Law for the current year.



Member of the National Assembly
José Luis Toledo (Cuba)



Member of the National Assembly
Juan Guaidó (Venezuela), President of the National Assembly

Democracy is always at stake, and the way to address this situation is with strong institutions and a democracy at the service of the citizenry. That is where parliaments have a key role in dialogue, in channeling that social demand and the need to articulate solutions with the different branches of government in order to assist our people. We have determined that the vulnerable sector that is on the frontlines against the virus is the healthcare sector: today, a nurse earns \$4 a month in Venezuela, so we have decided on a direct health bonus for these frontline workers.

Our proposals include sustainable and equitable economic recovery in line with the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, such as laws in favour of education, healthcare, the micro-economy, small and medium enterprises, the informal economy, and economic reactivation. We also include telework laws implemented during quarantine for the purpose of preserving jobs, public-private partnerships, a national system for medicines, programs for education and combating multidimensional poverty, and the creation of the Centralized National System for 911 Emergencies.



Member of the National Assembly
Marcos Castellero (Panama), President of the National Assembly



STRENGTHENING OVERSIGHT OF RESPONSES TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

#ParlAmericasOPN #COVID19

THEME: Oversight, transparency, sustainability, gender, economic recovery

LOCATION: Virtual meeting

DATE: August 21, 2020

PARTICIPANTS: More than 120 parliamentarians and parliamentary staff from 17 countries



This activity is aligned with SDG 16.

The ParlAmericas virtual meeting [Strengthening Oversight of Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) was hosted by the Chamber of Representatives of Uruguay, and it brought together parliamentarians and parliamentary staff to discuss challenges and good practices associated with exercising oversight of government responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The meeting was inaugurated with welcoming remarks from Representative **Martín Lema** (Uruguay), Speaker of the Chamber of Representatives and host of the meeting; Member of the National Assembly **Elizabeth Cabezas** (Ecuador), President of ParlAmericas; and Senator **Blanca Ovelar** (Paraguay), President of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network.



The inter-parliamentary discussion, moderated by Representative **Silvana Pérez Bonavita** (Uruguay), provided a space for the participation of parliamentarians and parliamentary staff who commented on oversight and transparency concerns, as well as broader legislative challenges to responding to an unprecedented pandemic in real time, particularly given the need for expedited actions that in many countries entailed declarations of states of emergency and numerous executive decrees. The dialogue also drew attention to the necessary balance between oversight and collaboration with government, particularly in crisis situations.

Transparency of information was mentioned as an essential prerequisite for proper oversight, particularly with regards to access to accurate and timely health data essential to informing decision-making across all branches of government, and regularly communicating this information with the

general public to maintain trust in public institutions. Concerns around the spread of misinformation—which the World Health Organization has characterized as an “infodemic”—emerged as a central sub-topic on access to information, with reflections on parliament’s role in countering misleading and false information.



The meeting concluded with closing remarks from Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Javier Macaya** (Chile) who commented on the value of learning about the experiences of different parliamentary committees in the region dedicated to exercising oversight, whether they were created as a result of the pandemic or already existed. He emphasized the ongoing and long-term nature of these oversight tasks; as countries eventually start to move past the most difficult crisis periods, parliamentarians will need to continue scrutinizing government recovery plans and ensure they consider the differential impacts of the pandemic, including on women and vulnerable populations.

A detailed [report](#) about this meeting can be accessed on the ParlAmericas website.

Even before COVID-19, Uruguay's parliament had resolved to strengthen the scope of its oversight functions due to a growing public demand for greater transparency and accountability.



Representative **Martín Lema** (Uruguay),
Speaker of the Chamber of Representatives and
host of the meeting



Key considerations for parliamentary oversight:

- Parliamentary committees in the region play an important role in practicing oversight of government actions during the COVID-19 pandemic, which will be a long-term task given the still long road to recovery for the region.
- Oversight during this crisis encompasses not only scrutiny of budgets, fiscal policy, and resource allocation in the health sector but also advocacy for the inclusion of gender equality and climate considerations within policy responses.
- Oversight entails a balancing act between supporting the government in its policy responses in a time of crisis and applying the necessary checks and balances to ensure that such policies are effective in addressing core issues.
- The dual challenge of increases in government spending—and often public debt—alongside falling revenues, necessitates fiscal scrutiny but also an exploration of fiscal reforms, including more progressive tax regimes, given the long-standing wealth and income inequality in the region.
- Transparency and access to information are critical to effective oversight by the legislative branch and the public.
- The spread of misinformation—misleading or fabricated information or news—presents a critical challenge for all branches of government in their response and recovery efforts.
- Building public trust in the response to and recovery from the health and socioeconomic crisis requires clear and timely communication with the public and opportunities for its participation in the decision-making process.
- Ongoing vigilance is needed to ensure that responses recognize the differential impact of the pandemic on women, single-parent households, and informal sector worker, as well as vulnerable or historically marginalized populations, including Indigenous, Afro-descendent, refugee and internally displaced, LGBTQ, homeless, and prison populations.



Senator **Blanca Ovelar** (Paraguay),
President of the ParlAmericas Open
Parliament Network

The urgent need to meet the multiple and complex challenges created by the pandemic requires that we strengthen our role in the oversight of actions by the executive branch, with the aim of ensuring transparency, accountability, honesty, ethics, and integrity in public service.

The goal of the Special Committee on Climate Change is to ensure that it is understood, first, that while the challenge of COVID-19 is great, the challenge of climate change in the coming years is immense. Second, we want to emphasize that economic recovery cannot be achieved at the expense of our ecosystems and that we are in this situation now precisely because we have not had a sustainable plan for economic development. Thus, it is essential that we overcome this false dichotomy between economic growth or environmental protection.



Member of Congress **Alberto de Belaunde** (Peru)



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

Three [Working Group] meetings have been held so far and we have had working meetings with . . . researchers from the Geographic Information Centre of the National Autonomous University of Mexico on the spread of COVID-19 over time and space, to gain a better understanding of how it has spread, in what contexts, and its effect on vulnerable populations. A meeting was also held with the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy, which shared projections on the impact of the pandemic on the economy and poverty levels in our country.

TRANSPARENCY IS NOT IN QUARANTINE: LAUNCH OF THE LEGISLATIVE TRANSPARENCY TOOLKIT

#ParlAmericasOPN #LegislativeTransparency

THEME: Legislative transparency

LOCATION: Virtual meeting

DATE: October 1, 2020

PARTICIPANTS: More than 100 parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, government staff, and civil society and international organization representatives from 18 countries



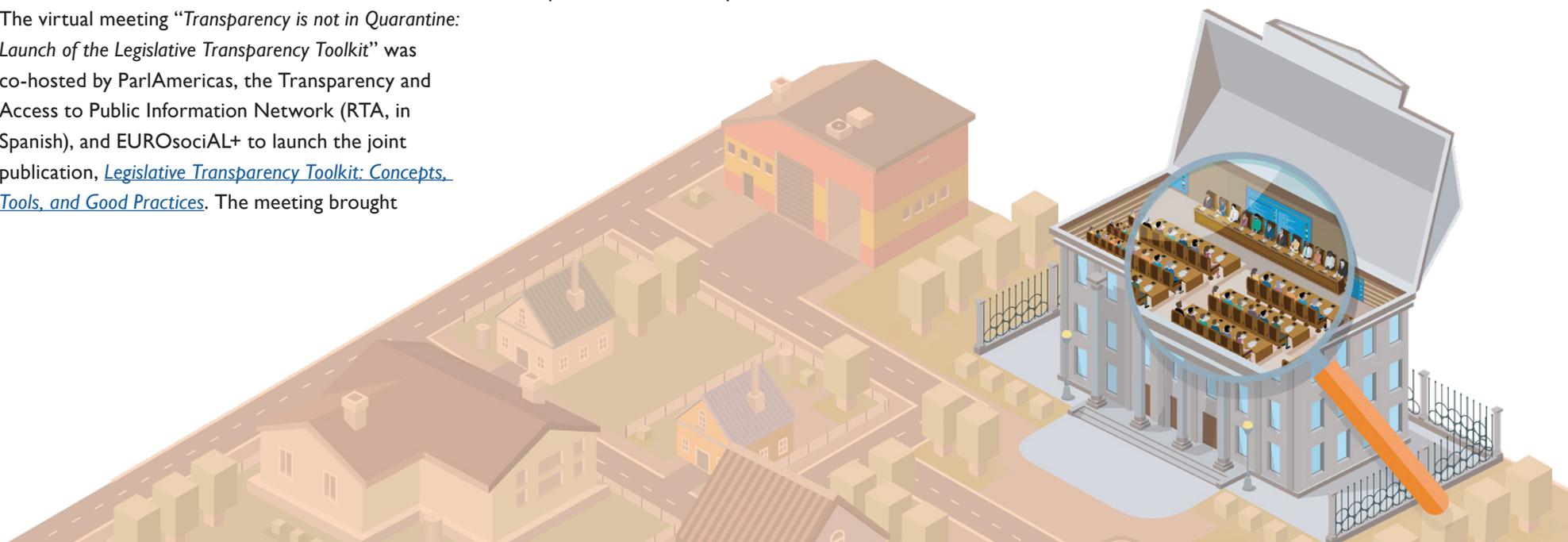
This activity is aligned with SDG 16.

The virtual meeting “*Transparency is not in Quarantine: Launch of the Legislative Transparency Toolkit*” was co-hosted by ParlAmericas, the Transparency and Access to Public Information Network (RTA, in Spanish), and EUROsociAL+ to launch the joint publication, [Legislative Transparency Toolkit: Concepts, Tools, and Good Practices](#). The meeting brought

together parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, government staff, civil society, and international organization representatives with the aim of presenting the publication to stakeholders in the Americas and Caribbean and sharing good practices to apply its concepts to promote parliamentary transparency and access to information.

The meeting was inaugurated by Senator **Blanca Ovelar** (Paraguay), President of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network; Dr. **Gabriel Delpiazzo**, Executive Council Chair of Uruguay’s Unit for Access to Public Information (UAIP); and Ms. **Anna Herrero**, representative of the European Commission’s Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development.

Following the inauguration, there was a presentation on the participatory process that informed the development of the Legislative Transparency Toolkit, as well as a summary of its contents that provided an overview of the resource and the importance of applying its concepts to parliamentary practices. This was followed by a session on the relevance of the resource from the perspective of three panelists, each an actor involved in supporting parliamentary transparency: a parliamentarian, a representative from a national transparency enforcement agency, and a civil society organization. Afterward, there was a session on selected good practices in legislative transparency comprised in the toolkit, including the [Open Data Portal](#) in Argentina, the [Congress2030](#)



platform for monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Paraguay, [video broadcasts](#) of plenary and committee sessions in Spain, and [online learning programs](#) on the work of parliament in the United Kingdom. These practices were explored in the context of broader open parliament agendas and meeting participants provided commentary and posed questions.

The virtual meeting concluded with final thoughts from project partners and the official launch of the Legislative Transparency Toolkit. The [press release](#) for this meeting can be accessed on the ParlAmericas website.

In being transparent and facilitating access to public information, we strive to strengthen public integrity, policy quality and, above all, take a vital step toward empowering the public and bringing policies much closer to the needs of the citizens that demand our attention.



Senator **Blanca Ovelar** (Paraguay),
President of the ParlAmericas Open
Parliament Network

[The Toolkit has the] capacity to influence and bring about change ... more transparent parliaments can achieve greater citizen engagement and representation, leading to a more democratic society.



Dr. **Gabriel Delpiazzo**, Executive Council
Chair of Uruguay's Unit for Access to
Public Information (UAIP)



The [Legislative Transparency Toolkit](#) is the outcome of a collaboration between ParlAmericas, RTA, and EUROsociAL+. It provides an overview of the principles and concepts associated with transparency and the right of access to public information. It also outlines five legislative transparency tools that incorporate a gender perspective and consideration of the SDGs:

1. Active transparency;
2. Requests for access to public information;
3. Open data;
4. Communication and accessibility; and
5. Records management.



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



Dear colleagues,

The COVID-19 pandemic and its devastating impact on populations and economies has demonstrated the urgent need to bolster action toward more ambitious climate goals,

ensuring that countries update their Nationally Determined Contributions this year in line with the Paris Agreement to advance toward sustainable, resilient, and equitable societies. Recognizing our responsibility to swiftly and decisively lead legislative initiatives that will advance the climate agenda, ParlAmericas and the Network have continued working to support parliaments during these times of crisis, promoting mechanisms to build back better after the pandemic.

To this end, several virtual meetings have been held in order to assess the region's legislative and public response in favour of a green economic recovery based on a fair transition. The sessions highlighted the importance of considering gender impact assessments in our response to the crisis, the value of long-term planning and environmental resilience, the higher rate of zoonotic diseases caused by unsustainable human activities, and the greater impact of climate change on society and the economy in comparison to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We also had the pleasure of speaking with parliamentarians on the subject of marine conservation in the South Pacific and the adoption of policies to support sustainable fishing and protection of endangered marine life, in line with current international standards. Additionally, in collaboration with the UN Women Multi-Country Office in the Caribbean, a series of meetings were held in the Caribbean to address gender mainstreaming in national plans for disaster risk reduction, with a special focus on hurricane season during the pandemic. Additionally, ParlAmericas has provided technical support for the implementation and parliamentary oversight of progress toward the 2030 Agenda and its incorporation into green recovery plans in Mexico, Panama, and Peru.

We also ended the year with the 17th Plenary Assembly, *Towards a Circular Economy*, a critical theme that aims to separate economic growth from environmental damage, improve resource efficiency, and promote sustainable, low-carbon lifestyles. As a contribution to this debate, we released the *Guide on Green Parliaments*, a practical tool that promotes the adoption of strategies to reduce greenhouse gases and improve the general sustainability of parliamentary activities, as well as the *Guide on Supporting a Post-COVID-19 Green Economic Recovery*, which seeks to support parliamentary work in this area.

The Network has strengthened its collaboration with the UN and participated in international platforms, highlighting the importance of parliamentary work in areas such as disaster risk reduction, strengthening education, access to public information, and citizen participation on climate change-related matters.

I would like to thank all of the parliamentarians for their participation and contributions during these activities, as well as our international partner organizations, particularly the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the UN Environment Programme, ECLAC, CPA, and UN Women, which have shared their valuable time and knowledge in making these activities and publications possible.

Sincerely,

Ana Belén Marín

**Member of the National Assembly, Ecuador
President of the Parliamentary Network for Climate Change**

.....
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SUSTAINABLE RESPONSES FOR A POST COVID-19 ECONOMIC RECOVERY

#ParlAmericasGEN #ParlAmericasCC
#ParlAmericasSDG

THEME: Economic recovery, gender equality, climate change

LOCATION: Virtual meeting

DATE: June 11, 2020

PARTICIPANTS: More than 45 parliamentarians and parliamentary staff from 13 countries



This activity is aligned with SDG 5.

This virtual meeting on [Sustainable Responses for a Post-COVID-19 Economic Recovery](#) gathered parliamentarians and parliamentary staff from the Americas and the Caribbean to engage with experts and discuss legislative and public policy responses that promote sustainable and inclusive economic recovery from COVID-19, while considering the gendered impacts of the pandemic and promoting the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

The activity was inaugurated by Member of the National Assembly **Elizabeth Cabezas** (Ecuador), President of ParlAmericas. The Honourable **Alincia Williams-Grant** (Antigua and Barbuda), President of the Senate, moderated the meeting, which featured presentations from a panel of experts. The dialogue was enriched through a series of

interventions by parliamentarians, allowing for a sharing of good practices and further deliberation on the presentations.

A discussion period followed the panellists' presentations, in which participants shared economic recovery measures implemented in their countries and posed questions to the panellists. During this portion of the meeting, participants and experts discussed how to measure the efficiency of public responses to the crisis, the difficulty in accessing concessionary financing rather than loans to reduce the level of debt, and the importance of investing in environmental resilience.

To conclude the meeting, the floor was given to Senator **Saphire Longmore**, ParlAmericas Board member, who reiterated the importance

of strengthening data collection in the region, addressing the issue of domestic violence, and introducing stronger parental leave policies, among other good practices discussed. Senator Longmore thanked participants and panelists for their enriching contributions and welcomed the proposal of Ambassador **Irwin LaRocque**, Secretary General of CARICOM, to hold a future dialogue with top advisors from CARICOM, in partnership with the International Secretariat of ParlAmericas.

A detailed [report](#) about this meeting can be accessed on the ParlAmericas website.



Key considerations:

- The most significant economic impact in the region is caused by loss of revenue due to tourism, which is the largest sector of most Caribbean economies.
- Caribbean countries are heavily indebted and need access to concessionary financing rather than loans, but opportunities are limited due to official development aid being awarded based on the criteria of GDP per capita.
- Long-term planning and investing on environmental resilience are key, especially considering the impact of hurricane season in the Caribbean region.
- Local data from Caribbean countries confirms the gendered impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in areas like unpaid care work, job losses, nutrition, sexual harassment, and household work.
- Women are more acutely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and should be actively engaged in public responses, which should incorporate gender-based analyses.
- Introducing stronger parental leave policies is key to alleviate the unequal burden of childcare on women, especially during this crisis.

All of this is taking place within the context of the start of the hurricane season. Climate change has not gone away because of COVID ... you need to take into account the fragility of our economies, the fragility of our environment, and allow us to have access to concessionary financing.



Ambassador **Irwin LaRocque**, Secretary General, CARICOM

As we continue to plan and implement economic recovery measures in our countries, let's remember the importance of incorporating the principles of sustainability and gender equality discussed today. Let us also remember the importance of continued dialogue in the region. Conversations like these allow for the exchange of strategies and best practices and offer a venue to address pressing questions and challenges that we face as a region.



Senator **Saphire Longmore** (Jamaica), ParlAmericas Board Member

We surveyed over 12,500 people in the Caribbean, and what we found is that about 47% of women lost their jobs during the pandemic, while over 40% of men did; 22% of women went hungry while 15% of men did; and 61% of households identified women as been primarily in charge of cleaning. Considering that the pandemic is disproportionately affecting women, and that governments are taking actions to address the pandemic -- from the development of vaccines to social protection programs -- we need women's voices to be heard and represented.



Ms. **Therese Turner-Jones**, General Manager, Country Department Caribbean Group, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)

BUILD BACK BETTER: A GREEN AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC RECOVERY

#ParlAmericasCC #COVID19

THEME: Securing a path towards a green economic recovery post-COVID-19 for a sustainable and equitable future

LOCATION: Virtual meeting

DATE: July 10, 2020

PARTICIPANTS: More than 60 parliamentarians and parliamentary staff from 14 countries



This activity is aligned with SDGs 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 16.

The ParlAmericas virtual meeting, hosted by the Chamber of Deputies of Chile, [Build Back Better: A Green and Sustainable Economic Recovery](#), brought together parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, and thematic experts with the objective of discussing strategies to integrate key climate change and environmental considerations into post-COVID-19 economic recovery plans and contribute to a paradigm shift towards sustainable development.

The meeting was inaugurated by President of the Chamber of Deputies **Diego Paulsen** (Chile), host

of the meeting; and by Member of the National Assembly **Elizabeth Cabezas** (Ecuador), President of ParlAmericas. Member of the National Assembly **Ana Belén Marín**, President for South America of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network on Climate Change, moderated the session.

During their presentations, the panellists spoke about the areas where governments could incorporate climate-friendly solutions in building back better, their experience with disaster risk management, and how the structure of societies influences these. They also shared climate policy recommendations and the benefits that these could provide for recovery as well as the value in policies that promote digitization and remote work.

The discussion period allowed for a lively exchange of experiences among parliamentarians and parliamentary staff, and provided a space for panellists to reflect on questions asked. Among the shared experiences, participants learned about the climate actions being taken in Canada, Mexico, and Nicaragua. The discussion also brought attention to other challenges, such as addressing the increase in disposable waste being created due to the pandemic. The dialogue also pointed out the importance of the Ezcacú Agreement to incentivize public participation and access to information in matters related to the environment in the region.

The meeting concluded with final reflections from Member of the Legislative Assembly **Paola Vega** (Costa Rica), Vice-President for Central America of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network on Climate Change, who called on participants to apply what they learned in order to collectively achieve a green recovery.

A detailed [report](#) about this meeting can be accessed on the ParlAmericas website.



Key considerations:

- The frequency of zoonotic diseases (diseases originating from animals) is increasing due to unsustainable human activities, including agricultural intensification, land use change, unsustainable use of natural resources, climate change, among others (for a complete list, read the UNEP report).
- Environmental health is inextricably linked with human health; policies should work for nature to ensure good air and water quality, food security, and prevention of disease outbreak.
- Climate change inaction will lead to global economic, social, and environmental impacts far worse than what COVID-19 has caused. It is paramount that countries take advantage of this opportunity to integrate climate and environmental considerations into economic recovery plans and align them with the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- To build back better countries need to ensure they develop risk management plans that not only account for natural hazards but also biological and anthropogenic ones.
- Due to the complexity of disaster risks and crises, legislation and policies addressing these risks should ensure they are coordinated and involve a diverse set of stakeholders.
- A green recovery means thinking about the short- and long-term future; investing and supporting climate-positive industries, projects, and policies/legislation that work to decouple economic growth from greenhouse gas emission increases; and synergistically strengthening the economy and providing social benefits to reduce the inequality gap.
- In order to effectively obtain a green recovery, parliaments can work with the other branches and levels of governments, the private sector, and utilize their function of representation to ensure the needs of their constituency are responded to, and that women, Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, individuals living in situations of poverty, youth, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups are included in decision-making processes.

It is essential that governments seriously commit to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, the 2030 Agenda, which constitutes a roadmap for the next decade that ensures economic development with social well-being and environmental equilibrium. This transformation, far from halting economic growth, represents an opportunity for real development with equity and the generation of new green jobs in Latin America.



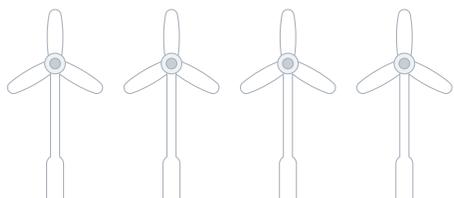
President of the Chamber of Deputies **Diego Paulsen** (Chile), host of the meeting

Currently, we are at a crossroads. Without a doubt, our responses and actions towards COVID-19 can define whether or not we will achieve the climate and sustainable development goals. As parliamentarians, we have a great responsibility to legislate and exercise our oversight role so that these efforts are not delayed and are included in the actions taken in the face of the current pandemic.



Member of the National Assembly **Ana Belén Marín** (Ecuador), President of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network on Climate Change





COVID-19 has already had a severe impact on countries, economically and socially, and has had a very important response from governments. When we compare it to climate change, we are talking about completely different scales because climate change is going to affect the whole world. It is going to affect all economies, all of nature; it is going to affect everything. So, we are talking about a greater crisis. The ability to respond to future post-COVID-19 crises will be compromised by future indebtedness and the collapse of an increasingly unsustainable environmental system. This is an opportunity to revive the economy by generating decent jobs and taking into account the most vulnerable populations.



Mr. **Leo Heileman**, Director, UNEP Latin America and the Caribbean Office



We have to do both. We need to keep COVID-19 at bay because there could be some secondary waves, but at the same time we have to plan ahead. We have to lay down the policies and the foundation, not only for a low-carbon economy but in general for a cleaner, fairer, inclusive, smarter, and resilient economic recovery that will create new jobs, ensuring a just transition, [trainings in green jobs] for workers, while also mitigating the climate crisis that we have. COVID-19 did not break the system; COVID revealed the flaws of the system. It is evident that an infinite growth is not real and unrealistic; the new economy must consider the natural and biological laws.



Senator **Rosa Galvez** (Canada), Vice-President for North America of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network on Climate Change



GENDER-RESPONSIVENESS AND DISASTER RESILIENCE DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS

#ParlAmericasGEN #ParlAmericasCC
#COVID19

THEME: Gender-transformative considerations in climate management, resilient and inclusive societies

LOCATION: Virtual meeting

DATE: July 22, 2020

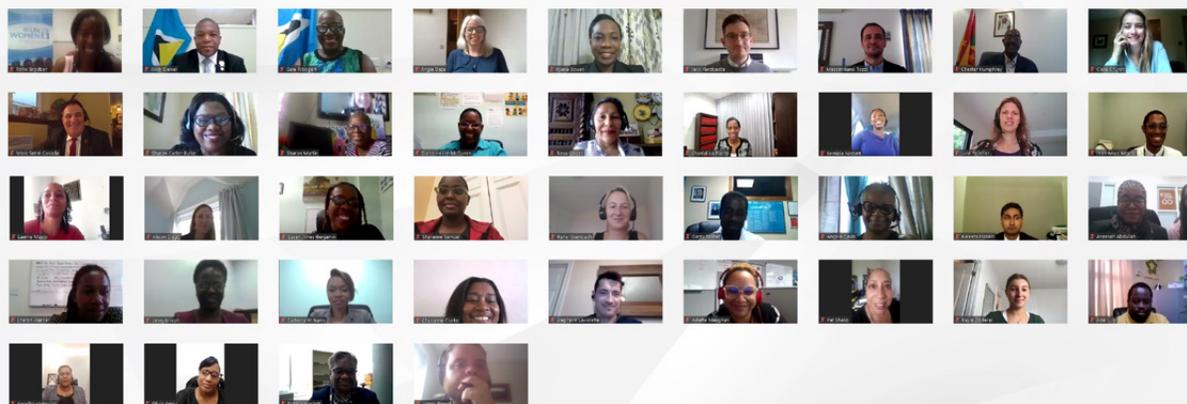
PARTICIPANTS: More than 85 parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, technical staff, and civil society from 15 countries over the two days of activities



This activity is aligned with SDGs 5, 9, 10 and 13.

The online meeting on [Gender-Responsiveness and Disaster Resilience during the COVID-19 Crisis](#), organized in collaboration with the UN Women Multi-Country Office - Caribbean and the Parliament of Saint Lucia, fostered a dialogue among parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, technical staff, and civil society on gender inequality in the impacts of and experiences during emergency situations caused by various hazards. It further examined how to incorporate a gender perspective in prevention, response, and recovery measures to ensure that the differentiated needs created are met with the aim of building disaster resilience.

The online meeting was inaugurated by Ms. **Tonni**



Brodber, Head of Office a.i., UN Women Multi-Country Office - Caribbean; the host of the meeting, the Honourable **Andy Daniel** (Saint Lucia), Speaker of the House of Assembly and Vice-President for the Caribbean of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network on Climate Change; and Member of the National Assembly **Elizabeth Cabezas** (Ecuador), President of ParlAmericas. The Honourable Dr. **Gale Rigobert** (Saint Lucia), Minister for Education, Innovation, Gender Relations, and Sustainable Development moderated the meeting.

The informative presentations were followed by a discussion period in which participants shared good practices that are being implemented by their own institutions. Participants learned about the experiences of other countries and shared some approaches that were taken to address the COVID-19 crisis. Participants noted the heavy economic impact of the pandemic and the increasing

levels of indebtedness of the Caribbean region which will seriously impact resiliency efforts during the hurricane season. Within this context, they flagged the need to update the regulations around official development assistance as these can prevent countries in real need (i.e. recovering from disasters) from accessing grants and concessionary resources.

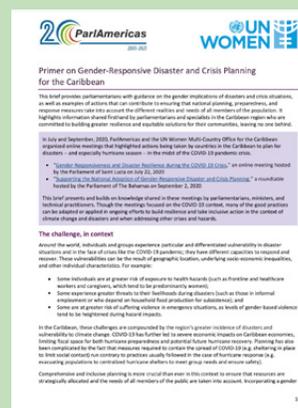
The meeting concluded with remarks by the Honourable **Chester Humphrey** (Grenada), President of the Senate and Vice-President for the Caribbean of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality; and by Ms. Tonni Brodber. Both speakers highlighted the need for a more holistic approach to resiliency in the Caribbean, with a view to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and reducing the inequalities in society that exacerbate the vulnerabilities of the Caribbean to disasters.

Key considerations:

- Socially determined factors and other identity characteristics influence an individual's vulnerability to disasters and other crisis situations.
- Disaggregated data should be collected and used to inform policy decisions in recognition of the differential needs, capacities, disaster risks, and impacts of disasters and climate change on people, especially on women and girls.
- Gender-responsive budgeting is an important tool for ensuring that disaster resilience is achieved in practice for all.
- There should be gender equitable participation in disaster planning, response, and decision making.
- Countries can put in place disaster management plans for the future that include biological/health-related hazards, not just natural/ hydro-meteorological hazards.
- Addressing multiple hazards at once (e.g. COVID-19 and the hurricane season) requires increased collaboration between traditional response units and the health sector. Personal protective equipment (PPE) and sanitations products, including water, will be needed in shelters, as well as adherence to physical distancing protocols.
 - ▶ Examples of gender-responsive disaster responses include: protocols that consider the needs of women and girls, trainings to specifically address gender considerations, ensuring the presence of women responders, protecting women from exploitative situations, offering services that meet women's health and reproductive needs, and relief that is distributed in an inclusive manner.
- COVID-19 can be seen as an opportunity to build resilience by ensuring that disaster management frameworks include gender considerations, that systemic biases and injustices are challenged, and that economies integrate social and environmental values.

This meeting is the first in a series planned for ParlAmericas and UN Women MCO-Caribbean to work with policy makers and parliamentarians in the Caribbean to support their adoption of gender-responsive and resilient disaster measures.

A detailed [report](#) about this meeting can be accessed on the ParlAmericas website.



On September 2, 2020, ParlAmericas and the UN Women Multi-Country Office - Caribbean organized a session to expand on the *Gender-Responsiveness and Disaster Resilience* meeting. This session, titled [Supporting the National Adaptation of Gender-Responsive Disaster and Crisis Planning](#), was hosted by the Parliament of The Bahamas and moderated by Senator Ranard Henfield, Vice-President for the Caribbean of the ParlAmericas

Open Parliament Network. It brought together parliamentarians, ministers, and other designated national representatives from the region in a virtual 'roundtable' to present and examine the concrete actions being taken in their countries to mitigate the threat of hurricanes in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis from a gender perspective.

The ParlAmericas-UN Women "[Primer on Gender-Responsive Disaster and Crisis Planning for the Caribbean](#)" is a briefing document that outlines the knowledge and good practices shared in that roundtable session. These guidelines for parliamentary action are relevant to decision making in direct response to crisis situations in Small Island Developing States and to building more resilient societies that leave no one behind.

The goals of our parliament, I suggest, must be to establish a non-adversarial gender-responsive environment to build non-competitive sustainable mechanisms for holistic participation and capacity building. Such mechanisms should include educational programs, technical assistance to countries with identified deficiencies, coordination and psychosocial support, healthcare training, and gender-sensitive protocols and procedures.



The Honourable **Halson Moultrie** (The Bahamas),
Speaker of the House of Assembly

The pandemic is affecting Canadian women and men differently and, as mentioned, by age, location, Indigenous origins, occupations, and disability status. For instance, women represent 82% of social and health care system workers in Canada; therefore they might have a higher risk of exposure than their male counterparts ... As well, since the start of the pandemic many individuals have experienced greater child care, home schooling, elder care, and household responsibilities. And women, who in most countries, including Canada, were spending more time than men in unpaid work before the pandemic, are disproportionately affected by these increases.



Member of Parliament **Marc Serré** (Canada),
ParlAmericas Board Member

The health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis can't be viewed in a vacuum. These impacts play out differently for different groups of people, as with other disasters, so building resilience must focus on addressing, reducing, and, if possible, eliminating altogether inequalities that can deepen and create compounded issues for us.



The Honourable Dr. **Gale Rigobert** (Saint Lucia), Minister for Education, Innovation, Gender Relations, and Sustainable Development

It is impossible to be disaster resilient without thinking about how hazards impact our lives differently. We are not all the same; in fact, not all women are the same. As Audre Lorde once said, 'It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.' Integrating gender into humanitarian response and enhancing women's self-reliance and empowerment lead to better humanitarian outcomes. Planning, preparing, and mitigating against disasters, taking into account the lived realities of men, women, boys, and girls is gender-transformative programming.



Ms. **Tonni Brodber**, Head of Office a.i., UN
Women Multi-Country Office - Caribbean



Thank you

for being part of ParlAmericas in 2020.

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

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