

ParlAmericas, the National Forum of Youth in Political Parties, the International Republican Institute and the Espacio Cívico Foundation Co-Organized a Gathering to Promote the Political Participation of Youth in Panama

PANAMA CITY (PANAMA), August 17, 2023 — On this day, the event [*The role of youth in strengthening democracy: Building a just and inclusive future*](#), co-organized by ParlAmericas, the National Forum of Youth in Political Parties (FNJPP), the International Republican Institute (IRI), and the Espacio Cívico Foundation, was held in Panama City. The event brought together leaders from different political spaces with the aim of sharing ideas, good practices, and strategies from an intersectional perspective to promote the political participation of Panamanian youth.

Opening remarks were delivered by **Lohanniz Gaitán Montenegro**, president of the FNJPP; **Barry Bristman**, first secretary and chargé d'affaires of the Canadian Embassy in Panama; and **Anabella Zavagno**, Deputy Director General at ParlAmericas. Afterwards, the Gender Director of the National Assembly of Panama, Ms. **Kathy Ramos**, Regional Coordinator for Central America of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Staff Network on Gender Equality, carried out an interview with the youngest Member of the National Assembly to ever be elected in Panama, the Honourable Member of the National Assembly **Juan Diego Vasquez Gutiérrez**, an independent. In this session, the legislator shared his experience as a member of parliament, his beginnings in politics, the issues in which he is interested, and the importance of youth participation in legislative affairs.

The next activity on the agenda was a workshop for co-creating proposals aimed at strengthening democracy from a fair and inclusive perspective. The challenges and opportunities related to youth political participation were discussed using the *world café* methodology, a process for establishing round table dialogues on specific questions in order to generate ideas, consensus, and innovative strategies. The workshop highlighted the different mechanisms for youth involvement in politics, the agendas prioritized by young people, and the role of political parties as vehicles for representing their interests. The workshop was facilitated by **Leah Cedeño de Boersner**, vice-president of the Espacio Cívico Foundation.

The round tables within the workshop were moderated by the FNJPP representatives who then presented the collaboratively prepared proposals during the debriefing session to conclude the co-creation workshop. The following participants acted as moderators: **Lohanniz Gaitán Montenegro**, Panameñista Party; **Derick Chavarría**, Democratic Change Party; **Javier Ábrego**, Molirena Party; **Hussein Pitty**, Democratic Revolutionary Party; **Gustavo Ruíz Díaz**, Independent Social Alternative Party; **José Gil**, People's Party; **Jaime Díaz**, Realizing Goals; **Adolfo Batista**, Alliance Party; and **Natanael García**, Another Way Movement Party.

Lastly, **Beatriz de Anta**, director of the IRI Resident Program, delivered the closing remarks, highlighting the importance of the role of young people in strengthening democracy.

Quotes

Lohanniz Gaitán Montenegro, president of the National Forum of Political Party Youth

“Since its establishment in 1990, it is the first time that a woman has been president of the Forum of Youth Political Parties of Panama. For Panama’s 2024 elections, 700 thousand young people will vote, including more than 300 thousand who will vote for the first time. Political parties should not be exclusive: women have the right not only to elect, but also to be elected.”

Barry Bristman, first secretary and chargé d’affaires of the Canadian Embassy in Panama

“Being agents of change as politically active citizens requires work to promote one’s interests and those of their communities, and thus guarantee a fair and inclusive political, social, and economic future.”

Anabella Zavagno, Deputy Director General at ParlAmericas

“Intersectionality means recognizing that systemic inequalities are shaped by the overlap of different social factors, such as gender, ethnicity, and social class. That is why it is essential that it be considered when taking action.”

The Honourable Member of the National Assembly Juan Diego Vasquez Gutiérrez (Panama)

“Let us occupy spaces and promote solidarity among the youth: let us reach out, be a bridge, and engage more people.”

Leah Cedeño de Boersner, vice-president of the Espacio Cívico Foundation

“These spaces for multi-party co-creation with young people are inspiring and necessary in order to reach a consensus on inclusive and truly representative proposals. They are significant steps for strengthening democracy.”

Beatriz de Anta, director of the International Republican Institute Resident Program

“Young people have the ability to restore trust in political parties, a fundamental pillar of democracy. We are facing very significant challenges in the region and democracy needs them more than ever.”

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ParlAmericas is the institution that promotes parliamentary diplomacy in the inter-American system. Composed of the 35 national legislatures in North, Central and South America, and the Caribbean, ParlAmericas promotes cooperative political dialogue, facilitates the exchange of good legislative practices, and produces tailored resources to support parliamentarians in their work. The headquarters of the International Secretariat is located in Ottawa, Canada.