Agenda

5th Gathering of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network: Countering Disinformation to Promote Responsible Public Discourse

📹 **WORKING SESSION IN ENGLISH AND FRENCH**

March 15th, 2021 | 10:30 (UTC – 04:00)

8:30 (GMT-6)	9:30 (GMT-5)		10:30 (GMT-4)	11:30 (GMT-3)
Belize	Jamaica	Antigua and Barbuda The Bahamas* Barbados Dominica Grenada Guyana Haiti*	Ottawa, Canada* Saint Kitts and Nevis Saint Lucia Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Trinidad and Tobago Washington DC, United States of America*	Suriname

*Please note that Daylight Saving Time for Eastern Time Zones begins on Sunday, March 14, 2021 (clocks are turned ahead one hour). The time listed in this agenda reflects this change, it is in accordance with Eastern Daylight-Saving Time (EDT).

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This working session will provide a space for parliamentarians, parliamentary staff and civil society representatives of the Americas and the Caribbean to discuss the tactics and strategies currently utilised to spread disinformation. Participants will then explore proposed actions and key considerations to guide their efforts to combat this phenomenon. This session will include working groups on thematic areas related to disinformation, which will each be supported by a specialist in the matter.

10:30 – 10:45   **Inauguration**
- The Honourable Anthony Rota (Canada), Speaker of the House of Commons
- Senator, the Honourable Pierrette Ringuette (Canada), Speaker Pro Tempore of the Senate
- Senator, the Honourable Ranard Henfield (The Bahamas), Vice-President of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network for the Caribbean

| 10:45 – 11:05 | **Introduction: Disinformation tactics and strategies** |
| | - Professor Taylor Owen, Beaverbrook Chair in Media Ethics and Communications, Max Bell School of Public Policy, McGill University |

The amalgamation of phenomena related to digital disinformation and computational propaganda, combined with an eruption of new technologies and platforms, have had harmful societal effects that have manifested in multiple ways, including through the proliferation of hate speech, interference in electoral processes, delegitimization of public practices and campaigns, and a decline in democratic dialogue, which in turn affect trust in the political system. The threats of disinformation on democratic systems and social life are global and current, raising questions about actions that governments can adopt to face this issue, as well as the role of parliaments in this scenario. This session will introduce and contextualize the problem of disinformation and its most important manifestations and will offer an overview of the growing set of international good practices to mitigate its impacts.

| 11:05 – 12:35 | **Recommendations for Parliamentary Action: Thematic working groups** |

The multifaceted, globalized, and systemic nature of disinformation requires addressing its multiple manifestations from different angles. This session will offer participants the possibility of delving into various topics associated with this phenomenon through thematic working groups dedicated to exploring some of the most important and pressing effects of disinformation. Led by specialists on the topic, the working groups will provide an opportunity to learn about legislative initiatives or practices that are being developed or implemented in several countries to counteract the impacts of disinformation.

Working Group 1: Addressing the gendered dimensions of disinformation
- Moderator: Senator Natalie Campbell-Rodriques (Jamaica)
- Sandra Pepera, Senior Associate and Director for Gender, Women and Democracy, National Democratic Institute

Although social media platforms have provided important tools for bringing visibility to women's political leadership, it is also true that online spaces are being used to delegitimize women's work in the public sphere, thus undermining their leadership. Digital disinformation deployed against women tends to use violent language, leading to cyberbullying and creating significant challenges for their political participation, ultimately generating barriers to their candidacies and contributions in the public sphere. This working group will explore the effects of this phenomenon and discuss good practices for addressing it.

Working Group 2: Ensuring data protection and securing electoral integrity
- Moderator: His Honour Reginald Farley (Barbados), President of the Senate
- Estelle Massé, Senior Policy Analyst and Global Data Protection Lead, Access Now
- Daniel Arnaudo, Advisor for Information Strategies, National Democratic Institute
- Victoria Welborn, Technology and Innovation Program Manager, National Democratic Institute

A large and growing part of social interactions take place online; these are accompanied by the widespread sharing of personal information with a variety of public and private sector actors, which in turn feed into algorithms that determine important decisions about what information users are exposed to. All this information is also used to interfere in electoral processes, which has become one of the most serious threats to the national security of many

countries in the region and the world, undermining public confidence in the democratic system and the legitimacy of institutions, exacerbating political polarization, and ultimately destabilizing societies and nations. This working group will delve into the phenomenon, as well as initiatives to address its implications, as well as examine good practices in data protection regulatory frameworks.

Working Group 3: Collaborating with the news media sector and promoting ethical algorithms
- Moderator: The Honourable Alincia Williams Grant (Antigua and Barbuda), President of the Senate and ParlAmericas Board Member
- Nazima Raghubir, First Vice-President, Association of Caribbean Media Workers
- Micaela Mantegna, Professor at the Center for Technology and Society, University of San Andrés

Recognizing that disinformation comes from multiple sources, countering its spread requires a multifaceted strategy that involves a variety of actors, including the media. It also requires ethical considerations in the design and use of algorithms. The pandemic has been emblematic of the pressing need to ensure that the public has access to comprehensive, clear, and accurate information and to mechanisms and strategies that can verify its authenticity. This working group will consider effective collaboration mechanisms between legislatures and the media and tech giants, in order to protect and strengthen the right of access to public information, freedom of the press, and ethical standards in the design and use of algorithms to prevent and address disinformation.

12:35 – 13:00   **Report back by working groups**
- Presentation of the highlights from each discussion by lead specialists (5 min each)

13:00 – 13:20   **Q&A session**

13:20 – 13:25   **Evaluations**

13:25 – 13:30   **Closing remarks and next steps**
- Member of Parliament Marc Serré (Canada), ParlAmericas Board Member

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Please note that the session may be audio-recorded to become a podcast episode. Find ParlAmericas on iTunes and Google Play to listen to sessions and presentations from our past gatherings held across the hemisphere.

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