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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

National Dialogues between National Summit Coordinators and Civil Society and Social Actors in Preparation for the Ninth Summit of the Americas
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Introduction

The Summits of the Americas Secretariat, in coordination with the Government of the United States as the host country and Chair of the Summits Process, organized a series of PrepTalks and National Dialogues with civil society and social actors as part of the Ninth Summit of the Americas preparatory process. Those events, consisting of virtual dialogues between civil society, social actors, and national government representatives, were held between January and May 2021.

First, the PrepTalks provided an opportunity for the participating civil society organizations and social actors to construct a common, unified vision about the main priorities in the individual countries and the region as a whole, taking into consideration the concept papers previously distributed to the National Summit Coordinators by the host country. In particular, the sessions allowed participants to exchange ideas and thoughts and to agree on recommendations that were later presented to the National Coordinators and other government representatives at the National Dialogues.

The PrepTalks were held in 31 of the Hemisphere’s countries and were attended by more than 280 representatives of civil society and social actors from the Americas. National Dialogue sessions have been held in 17 countries, attended by some 270 participants, and five additional dialogues are being organized. The moderation of the National Dialogues was supported by representatives of the Citizen Forum of the Americas (FCA), in recognition of its engaged work in the region, as well as by the coordinators of the National Anticorruption Hubs.

1 The concept papers were prepared by non-governmental actors based in the United States and the Joint Summit Working Group (JSWG). More information: http://www.summit-americas.org/sirg_meet.html.
2 Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay.
3 The Bahamas, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, and Trinidad and Tobago.
4 Barbados, Canada, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Venezuela.
5 The Citizen Forum of the Americas (CAF) is an exercise involving dialogue and constant articulation among civil society organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean, organized by REDLAD and the PASCA project, which works to enhance the participation and advocacy of its members at different forums including the OAS General Assembly and the Summits of the Americas.
6 National Anticorruption Hubs are a mechanism created by the Summits Secretariat that seeks to highlight the work of civil society organizations and social actors in the Americas in preventing and combating
The participants identified issues of common interest, problems, and challenges of concern to the citizens of the Americas. A summary of these issues is presented in this report, structured into seven dimensions: political and institutional, human rights and freedoms, social, economic, health, environmental, and digital.

**Political and Institutional Issues**

In the political and institutional area, the civil society organizations and social actors of the Americas stated that implementing an anticorruption agenda was a high priority for the Hemisphere, in keeping with the mandates of the Lima Commitment. In this connection, they underscored the need for governments to respect and guarantee the independence of the autonomous bodies in charge of overseeing transparency and accountability and to ensure the separation of powers. They also stated that citizen participation played a key role in the oversight and monitoring of state actions, especially in the context of the pandemic, when opportunities for corruption have increased.

In addition, they highlighted the imperative of designing inclusive public policies in terms of gender and human rights, with an intersectional approach. Public policies must be designed in a nondiscriminatory manner, taking into account existing gaps and inequalities, in order to incorporate the most vulnerable populations into the social fabric.

On the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Inter-American Democratic Charter and with a view to strengthening the democratic system and the rule of law, the representative of civil society and social actors stressed the need to implement policies that promote a culture of peace, citizen participation, and institutional strengthening. These, they said, would strengthen the mechanisms of democratic governance, which have been undermined by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Americas.

**Human Rights and Freedoms**

In this area, reference was made to the need to ensure the protection of human rights and the freedoms that societies have secured. The values of humanity, respect for diversity, solidarity, and citizen participation were emphasized as key elements in achieving sustainable development.

First, the participants noted their concern about the violation of labor rights, which has been exacerbated by the pandemic. For that reason, protection mechanisms for informal workers and the creation of decent jobs will be required, especially during the economic reactivation process.

Second, they emphasized the rights of vulnerable social groups, such as LGBTI persons, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, older persons, migrant populations, Afro-descendants, and others. In that area, the region’s governments must undertake actions aimed at eradicating all forms of violence, exclusion, discrimination, and lack of opportunities to which those groups are exposed, as well as at guaranteeing their participation in the design of public policies.

Finally, they stressed that post-pandemic recovery agendas must guarantee and prioritize food security and access to safe drinking water for the entire population.

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Social Issues

In the social dimension, the participants highlighted the importance of formulating public policies that guarantee children and adolescents access to quality education, in order to reduce existing gaps and positively impact the most vulnerable populations.

In a similar vein, they also noted the need to create comprehensive youth development programs focused on reducing unemployment rates among young people and discouraging them—especially those in vulnerable communities—from joining gangs or organized crime.

Finally, they stated that there had been an increase in violence against women in both the home and the workplace as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. For this reason, public policies must be developed that guarantee effective and comprehensive protection against all forms of violence in a holistic and intersectional manner: for example, by providing victims with psychosocial and legal support, generating statistics, and organizing awareness-raising campaigns about this scourge.

Economic Issues

The post-pandemic economic recovery was the central theme in the discussion of the economic dimension. The participants stated that reactivation strategies must be sustainable, inclusive, and equitable, and must incorporate an intersectional perspective.

In line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), they highlighted the urgency of creating jobs, especially considering the high levels of unemployment in the region as a result of the socioeconomic crisis triggered by the pandemic. Thus, they noted support for entrepreneurship, innovation, and MSMEs as fundamental pillars in creating more jobs.

Finally, the participants highlighted the need to establish and strengthen partnerships between governments, the private sector, civil society, and multilateral agencies as a mechanism for post-COVID-19 recovery. They said that cooperation must be focused on fostering economic development and reviving the economy, as well as on building a digital economy.

Health Issues

The participants said that strengthening the Americas’ health systems was essential, particularly in the current pandemic context. They therefore called to efforts to ensure that people’s health is not compromised in future crises, with particular attention on the most vulnerable populations.

The main thrust of the exchange was aimed at the design of public policies to guarantee timely, free, and quality access to health services for the entire population, with a particular focus on mitigating the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and through an approach based on gender, inclusion, interculturality, and intersectionality.

According to the ILO’s annual Labour Overview report for 2020, the unemployment rate in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2020 was 10.6%, meaning that the number of people seeking employment but unable to find any was 30.1 million. The Organization also warned that the 2021 result could rise to 11.2%. To learn more about this report: https://www.ilo.org/global/docs/WCMS_777630/lang--en/index.htm.
In addition, the participants called for guaranteeing fair and stable working conditions for health personnel through the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) at medical centers and the improvement of those facilities. Another proposed action was the strategic reorientation of public budgets to ensure their effective use. For example, they recommended the development of open data systems through which the public can consult those budgets and see how they are managed.

Finally, they emphasized the importance of guaranteeing effective, free, and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines, and of ensuring transparency in their purchase and distribution, in order to achieve immunity for the entire population of the Americas.

Environmental Issues

In the environmental sphere, the civil society representatives and social actors stated that environmental sustainability policies must prioritize the strengthening of environmental governance mechanisms that guarantee citizen participation, access to information, access to environmental justice, and the preservation and protection of the environment. Improving and expanding participatory processes that include local communities and vulnerable populations in the development and implementation of local programs to mitigate the effects of climate change will bring those groups’ experience and knowledge to the forefront.

They also said that economic reactivation policies must adopt a sustainable approach in pursuit of a green economy and must motivate the private sector to develop products and services in that direction. Similarly, the participants called on the Hemisphere’s governments to further pursue the climate agenda—for example, by committing to the ratification of the Escazú Agreement and to the attainment of the SDGs.

Finally, the transition of the energy mix toward renewable sources to reduce ecological footprints and decarbonize economies was deemed a priority.

Digitization in the Americas

The incorporation of new technologies in the various areas referred to above was a recurring element in the discussions. In the political and institutional area, civil society called for the implementation of open-government models that guarantee access to public information in a clear and truthful manner, allowing for effective social oversight.

In the social and educational spheres, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of adapting education systems to ensure digital literacy, combining traditional and virtual education methods. In order to transition toward such a model, tools and connectivity must be provided, with a view to reducing the existing digital divide. In connection with this, the participants discussed the vital importance of guaranteeing the population access to the internet.

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Finally, the digitization process must include the development and adoption of cybersecurity policies to guarantee the protection of the population’s personal data and regulatory frameworks that ensure a safe internet, paying particular attention to the protection of children and adolescents.

**Conclusion**

There was broad agreement regarding the priorities among the governments and the representatives of civil society and social actors. Among the priorities for the upcoming Summit that found common ground were ensuring an inclusive and sustainable economic reactivation, strengthening health systems, bolstering democratic institutions, and advancing the anticorruption agenda.

The government representatives received the contributions of the civil society representatives and social actors, and they recognized that many of the matters discussed were also issues of concern to their states. It was also an opportunity for national governments to share the results of their efforts on various topics addressed in the dialogues and to highlight the importance of continuing to provide forums for dialogue and coordination with civil society and social actors in the run-up to the Ninth Summit.

The national dialogues generated frank and direct exchanges between both groups of actors, which is expected to contribute to the construction of a hemispheric agenda that reflects the reality experienced by the citizens of the Americas.