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SUMMITS SECRETARIAT PROGRESS ON THE
PARTICIPATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL ACTORS
IN THE LEAD UP TO THE NINTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS

(María Celina Conte, Director, Summits of the Americas Secretariat)

Mr. Kevin O'Reilly, United States National Summit Coordinator
Distinguished National Summit Coordinators
Representatives of the Joint Summit Working Group institutions
Special guests:

I am pleased to deliver this report on the progress the Summits Secretariat has made in terms of engaging civil society and social actors in the lead up to the Ninth Summit of the Americas.

Since the launch of the Summits process in 1994, the Summits of the Americas Secretariat has been promoting participation by civil society and social actors in that process by creating a variety of mechanisms for participation. As a result, in both quantitative and qualitative terms this participation has grown from strength to strength.

In coordination with the Government of the United States as host country of the Ninth Summit, the Summits Secretariat has arranged several opportunities for these stakeholders to take part in the Ninth Summit of the Americas. Firstly, a series of *preptalks* and national dialogues were organized with civil society organizations, social actors, and National Summit Coordinators between January and May 2021. These talks gave both sectors an opportunity to share their views and common interests in order to determine the hemispheric agenda for the Ninth Summit. These discussions revealed that the governments' priorities and interests aligned with those of the representatives of civil society and social actors, including the importance of ensuring inclusive and sustainable economic development, strengthening health systems, advancing an anti-corruption agenda, and bolstering democratic institutions.

Civil society organizations and social actors were also invited to join thematic subregional working groups so they can get more involved in the preparatory process and in pre-Summit activities. These working groups comprised civil society organizations and/or social actors of the Americas, spread across the (5) core issues of the Ninth Summit and divided into three sub-regions (i) Caribbean, Canada and the United States, (ii) Mesoamerica, and (iii) South America. The Summits Secretariat

received more than 1,200 applications from civil society organizations and social actors seeking to join these groups. It also established 15 sub-regional thematic working groups.

The main objective of the working groups is to hold dialogue and come up with effective recommendations to enrich and complement the five (5) draft political commitments presented by the host country. At this point, the members of each working group are taking part in a virtual dialogue to share ideas and coordinate on drafting their recommendations, which the spokespersons selected by the members of each group will submit to the countries participating in the Summits process for consideration during the preparatory stage and during the activities immediately prior to the Ninth Summit. A [guide to participation](#) in the working groups is available on the Summits Secretariat website.

At the Hemispheric Dialogue scheduled to take place during the Fourth Regular Meeting of the SIRG in May, the spokespersons appointed by each thematic group will have a chance to give the countries participating in the Summits process a progress report on their work.

Additionally, a pre-registration process was launched for civil society and social actors in the Americas to apply to participate in the in-person activities that are scheduled for the days leading up to the Ninth Summit. Pre-registration opened on April 1 and remained open until April 22, and more than 900 applications were received. A document with guidelines for participation was distributed along with the call for applications. The document notes that a diverse and inclusive participation in these activities will be promoted so as to ensure balance in terms of gender, region, and theme, taking into account as well, among other factors, participation in activities at the preparation phase and in the working groups. [Pre-registration](#) information is available on the official website of the Summits Secretariat.

Two in-person activities are being organized for the week of the Summit, including (a) the civil society forum and (b) the dialogue involving civil society, social actors, and high-level government representatives.

The civil society forum will involve:

1. Meetings of the thematic working groups to advance the ongoing work of its members. Participation in these meetings will be limited to members of these previously established working groups.
2. Thematic discussions: in which civil society and social actors will share ideas and best practices, and learn more about the issues of the Ninth Summit and other related topics.
3. An initiative fair (still tentative) to provide a venue for representatives of civil society and social actors to present their projects relating to the priorities of the Ninth Summit. The aim is to showcase their work and promote the sharing of best practices among them.

Secondly, the Dialogue involving civil society, social actors, and high-level government representatives will enable the spokespersons for the thematic working groups and for young people to exchange ideas and propose common initiatives and actions on the Summit's core themes to the high-level government representatives of the countries participating in the Summit process. This Dialogue will be webcast live for those unable to attend.

I would also like to announce that, as part of its efforts to strengthen the participation of civil society, the Summits Secretariat is launching a project aimed at strengthening the participation of women's organizations in the Ninth Summit process. This is made possible thanks to generous support from Global Affairs Canada, and has included various activities aimed at involving a larger number of women's organizations in the preparatory phase of the Summit in order to improve their outreach capacity. As part of this endeavor, briefings have been given on the mechanisms for civil society participation and training workshops, and discussions have been held on how to produce effective recommendations and on the gender dimensions of the thematic areas of the Ninth Summit. Thematic consultations have been held, giving the participating women's organizations opportunity to submit recommendations on each of the Summit's sub-themes. The outcomes of those consultations have served to inform the preparation of a position paper on the gender dimensions of the Summit theme. The Summits Secretariat, in collaboration with the Inter-American Commission of Women, is preparing said paper for the consideration of the Chair and the states participating in the Summits process.

These initiatives that I have just cited have all been pursued with the interests of civil society and social actors in mind, and are designed to promote multi-stakeholder and inclusive dialogue and to showcase the work and efforts of these actors under each of the Summit's priorities.

Civil society and social actors do play a key role in ensuring that democracies are strong and inclusive, hence including their input when designing and implementing public policies enables us to come up with better and more efficient solutions.

I would therefore like to stress the need to continue strengthening the participation of this sector in preparations, as well as in the follow-up and implementation, for the next Summit.

We remain at your disposal. Thank you very much.