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REPORT OF THE SUMMITS SECRETARIAT ON ACTIVITIES TO STRENGTHEN THE PARTICIPATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL ACTORS IN THE SUMMITS OF THE AMERICAS PROCESS AND AS PART OF THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE NINTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS

(Presented by Mrs. Maria Celina Conte,
Director, Summits Secretariat of the OAS)

Mr. Kevin O'Reilly, Chair of the SIRG and National Summits Coordinator of the United States,

Distinguished national summit coordinators and deputy summit coordinators

Distinguished representatives of the Joint Summit Working Group Institutions

Colleagues from the General Secretariat

I would like to thank the Chair for the inclusion of this agenda item regarding activities carried out to strengthen the participation of civil society and social actors in the Summits Process and as part of the preparations for the Ninth Summit of the Americas.^{1/}

In its 28 years of existence, the Summits Process has stood out for opening spaces to promote more meaningful citizen participation in policy formulation at the regional level. This process is, in essence, an exercise in democracy in which the concerns and aspirations of the citizens of the Hemisphere are made manifest. Therefore, the participation of civil society organizations and social actors in the different stages of the Summits Process is fundamental.

In order to enhance and innovate their participation and influence in the process, the Summits Secretariat has developed various participation mechanisms over the years. In the last two years (2021 and early 2022), it is organized a series of briefing sessions on the Summits Process and its participation mechanisms, workshops to strengthen their capacities in the formulation of effective recommendations,^{2/} and strategic partnerships with OAS agencies and other key partners in the process, in a bid to underscore the views of social actors.

At the same time, the Summits Secretariat, in collaboration with the Government of the United States as host country of the Summit, has facilitated a series of opportunities for civil society and social actors to have their voices heard in the preparatory phase of the Summit, including in the process of defining the Summit's theme.

Based on the three concept papers presented by the United States in October 2020 for discussion by all the actors in the process,^{3/} between January and May 2021, the Secretariat organized virtual PrepTalks where civil society and social actors exchanged ideas and agreed on recommendations as to the main national and regional priorities. The resulting recommendations were presented to the National Summit Coordinators at National Dialogues. These discussions highlighted where the priorities and interests of governments overlapped with those of civil society

representatives 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.^{4/} PrepTalks were held in 32 countries in the Hemisphere and attended by more than 290 civil society representatives and social actors.^{5/} National Dialogues were held in 19 countries,^{6/} with some 300 representatives of civil society organizations and social actors taking part.

Subsequently, in order to obtain input from all actors in the Process, multi-actor dialogues on regional priorities were held within the framework of the First Regular Meeting of the SIRG in July 2021. The contributions of civil society, together with those of other actors, including the private sector and international and regional institutions, which were presented for consideration by the Chair and the participating States, unquestionably helps to build a regional thematic agenda that was more inclusive and more in line with the reality of the Hemisphere.

To further strengthen their participation ahead of the Ninth Summit, civil society organizations and social actors of the Americas were invited to integrate *subregional thematic working groups* around the five core issues of the Ninth Summit, which were divided into three subregions (i) The 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 and established 15 subregional thematic working groups in March 2022. Following their formation, each group engaged in virtual dialogue to formulate recommendations for the five draft political commitments, which were presented to the States for their consideration during the negotiation phase by the spokesperson selected by each group.^{7/} This took place at the Hemispheric Dialogue^{8/} in the framework of the Fourth Regular Meeting of the SIRG,^{9/} held in Los Angeles in early May 2022, which proved a key opportunity for members of the working groups to directly enrich the negotiation process.

Various civil society organizations and social actors worked actively during the preparations for the Ninth Summit, including workers, academia, think tanks, indigenous and Afro-descendent peoples, the private sector, youth, and women's organizations, among others. This growing interest has motivated us to continue holding these hemispheric dialogues and forums, and to strengthen partnerships with these actors. The Secretariat collaborated with think tanks, such as the Atlantic Council, and private-sector entities, including the Council of the Americas and the American Business Dialogue; nongovernmental organizations, such as the International Republican Institute, and other organizations, such as c40 Cities, a global network of mayors, to attract more social actors to the process and enrich discussions on the hemispheric agenda.

Subsequently, as part of the official forums of the Ninth Summit in June 2022, the Summits Secretariat, in coordination with the Government of the United States, organized (a) the civil society forum and (b) the dialogue involving civil society, social actors, and high-level government representatives. As on previous occasions, the Forum offered an opportunity, through meetings of its thematic working groups, for civil society to finalize its recommendations, which they would present, through spokespersons, to their government representatives at the High-Level Dialogue. Some 300 civil society representatives participated in the Forum, with the same number doing so in the Dialogue, in addition to 15 high-level government representatives.^{10/}

As an innovation, the Civil Society Forum included a set of thematic discussions,^{11/} in which civil society interacted with experts to deepen their knowledge on the Summit's core themes and related topics from different perspectives. The Forum also included an initiatives fair,^{12/} in which projects related to the core themes were presented and work in that regard highlighted. Both spaces allowed civil society to share best practices with each other and with government delegations, JSWG entities, private sector representatives, and academia.

In addition, to contribute to the inclusiveness and diversity of the Summits Process, other initiatives were created aimed at specific actors in the process, including women's organizations, youth, and others.

With support from the Government of Canada, the Summits Secretariat began implementing the project Strengthening the Participation of Women's Organizations in the Summits Process in September 2021. The activities were part of the Secretariat's efforts to promote the participation of civil society and social actors in the preparatory process and during the Ninth Summit. Initiatives undertaken with women's organizations include: (1) information sessions on the Summits Process, (2) training on various topics, (3) discussions with specialists to address the gender dimensions of the Summit theme and sub-themes, (4) thematic consultations where the priorities of the women of the Americas were discussed and later reflected in recommendations,^{13/} and (5) spaces for interaction with National Summit Coordinators and spokespersons of women's organizations to address the recommendations made from a gender perspective. The collaboration of the Inter-American Commission of Women and OAS National Offices is worth highlighting in this regard, as they contributed to successful results and the empowerment of women's organizations in the Summits Process.

Also noteworthy was the First Model Summit of the Americas, held in the days prior to the Ninth Summit, a joint effort between the Summits Secretariat and the Coordination of the MOAS Program, in which university students from several countries of the region played an active part.

Regarding the Sixth Young Americas Forum,^{14/} organized by the YABT and the host country, young people presented their Declaration of Commitment and Plan of Action to the leaders of the region. Those documents were the result of contributions from 27,000 young people in the Hemisphere offered in response to consultations on the five draft political commitments of the Ninth Summit. The Summits Secretariat participated in the official presentation of the Declaration and Plan of Action, together with the Secretary General of the OAS, Mr. Luis Almagro, several heads of State, and the Executive Director of the YABT.

The various participation mechanisms were developed taking into account the interests and priorities of civil society and in collaboration with key partners. The mechanisms seek to promote a multi-actor, inclusive and diverse dialogue, and to highlight their work and proactivity in each phase of the Summits Process.

The work with civil society has enriched the process of building the regional agenda, and we hope that it will continue beyond it. Therefore, it is essential to continue to count on their participation in the follow-up and implementation phase to ensure that Summits mandates have a strong impact for the benefit of the citizens of the region.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to conclude by thanking the Government of the United States for the trust it has placed in the Secretariat to support it in its work with civil society, as well as in all other areas of the process of preparing and holding the Ninth Summit. We look forward to continuing to work with the Chair, participating States, JSWG entities, and civil society and social actors in the current phase of follow-up and implementation of the Ninth Summit.

Thank you very much. I am at your disposal for any questions.

1. The term *social actor* includes representatives of the academic sector, workers, youth, indigenous peoples, Afro-descendent communities, intercultural and interethnic communities, the private sector, and individuals with a role in advancing well-being in their respective communities.
2. These workshops have provided participants with information on the principles of the SMART methodology for formulating feasible and concrete recommendations. More than 100 representatives of CSOs and social actors from the Americas have participated, including women's organizations in the region.
3. Concept paper of the JSWG: The Main Challenges and Opportunities Facing the Americas and the Role of the Joint Summit Working Group (JSWG) Entities [EN](#) | [ES](#) | [FR](#) | [PT](#)
Concept Paper of US-based civil society: Strengthening Democratic Values and Institutions in the Americas: Challenges and Opportunities Post-COVID for the Ninth Summit of the Americas [ES](#) | [EN](#) | [FR](#) | [PT](#)
Concept Paper of the US-based private sector: Discussion Paper on Partnering with the Private Sector to Drive Inclusive Growth and Job Creation in the Western Hemisphere in the IX Summit of the Americas [ES](#) | [ES](#) | [FR](#) | [PT](#)
4. For more information, visit http://www.summit-americas.org/rumboalanovenacumbre_eng.htm.
5. Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominica, 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, Uruguay and Venezuela.
6. Bahamas, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela.
7. To access the recommendations of the working groups, click [here](#).
8. To learn more about the interventions at the Hemispheric Dialogue, click [here](#).
9. To learn more about the interventions at the Hemispheric Dialogue, click [here](#).
10. To access the statements, click [here](#).
11. For more information, click here: http://scm.oas.org/doc_public/ENGLISH/HIST_22/CMBRS02338E04.docx.
12. Link to photo gallery: <https://flic.kr/s/aHBqjA1Vxi>.
13. To access the recommendations of women's organizations, click [here](#).
14. For more information, visit <http://summit-americas.org/projects/womensorganizations.html>.