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WORK UNDERTAKEN BY THE AD HOC TECHNICAL GROUPS IN THE FOLLOW-UP AND IMPLEMENTATION PHASE OF THE NINTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS^{1/}

(Presented by the Chair of the SIRG)

Background

This report covers the main progress achieved through the ad hoc technical groups established at the second meeting of the Summit Implementation Review Group at the ministerial level in 2022, as part of the follow-up and implementation phase of the Ninth Summit of the Americas. The Ninth Summit took place in the city of Los Angeles, USA, in June 2022 under the theme “Building a Sustainable, Resilient and Equitable Future.” As a result, the Heads of State and Government of the Hemisphere adopted by consensus five documents containing 209 mandates.^{2/}

- The document *Action Plan on Health and Resilience in the Americas* sets guidelines for a plan of action on which to reach consensus looking toward the Tenth Summit, and to be implemented by 2030.
- The *Regional Agenda for Digital Transformation* addresses digital ecosystems and connectivity, digital and open government, cybersecurity, economic growth, and competitiveness. It encourages the development of national strategies on digital innovation with a focus on women and vulnerable groups and promotes the convergence of existing regional initiatives and the strengthening of digital infrastructure. It aims to modernize the provision of public services and open data. In the area of cybersecurity, it seeks to encourage international cooperation and information exchanges. It supports strengthened cooperation in e-commerce, entrepreneurship, the development of smart industries, and financial inclusion.
- The document *Accelerating the Just Transition to Clean, Sustainable and Renewable Energy* seeks to promote energy efficiency and integration, with special attention to women and vulnerable groups, implement action plans to mitigate the effects of methane gas, work on the implementation of emission mitigation targets and generate national

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1. This report is an updated version of document [GRIC/M.1/INF.27/23](#), which was presented at the first meeting of the SIRG at the ministerial level in 2023.
 2. The documents of the Ninth Summit of the Americas are available at the [web site of the Summits Secretariat](#).

plans to accelerate the energy transition. It aims to promote the dissemination of technologies, funding to promote low-emission energy systems, good management practices in the mining sector, and the setting of targets for the expansion of renewable energy.

- The document *Our Sustainable Green Future* is intended to address the climate crisis by conserving and restoring ecosystems, reducing emissions from land use, harnessing the role of the oceans in climate change mitigation, and promoting sustainable production and consumption patterns. It works to ensure equal opportunities among affected populations by fostering scientific cooperation and education, increasing financing and investment, and encouraging the development of low-emission economies. It commits to strengthening the protection of human rights defenders involved in environmental matters.
- The *Inter-American Action Plan on Democratic Governance* establishes mandates on democracy and human rights, sustainable development, anticorruption efforts, and citizen participation. It seeks to strengthen dialogue mechanisms by supporting the Inter-American Democratic Charter and analyzing and addressing challenges to democracy. It fosters measures and conditions to guarantee more universal participation in the electoral process, and it recognizes the importance of electoral observation missions, along with the principles that should govern them, including the protection of observers. It aims to protect freedom of the press, freedom of association, freedom of peaceful assembly, and freedom of expression, and to counteract the spreading of false information. It promotes the protection of human rights defenders and the rights of women, indigenous, tribal, Afro-descendent peoples, and other vulnerable or marginalized populations.

The Ad Hoc Technical Groups were established through the document “Ninth Summit of the Americas Implementation: Notional Calendar and Working Procedures,”^{3/} adopted at the Second SIRG Ministerial Meeting of 2022, held in October in Lima, on the occasion of the fifty-second regular session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS). This document provides for the creation of five ad hoc technical groups, made up of governmental experts, to support progress in the implementation of the mandates adopted at the Ninth Summit. In addition to the participation of experts appointed by the governments of the Ninth Summit, it includes the participation of experts from Joint Summit Working Group (JSWG) member institutions, as well as the inclusion of recommendations made by stakeholders, including civil society and social actors, private sector representatives, and youth representatives.

The Ad Hoc Technical Groups allow governments to share the work they have undertaken in the implementation of the mandates of the Ninth Summit. Their specific objectives vary according to the nature of the document in question:

- The Ad Hoc Technical Group for the Action Plan on Health and Resilience in the Americas was set up with the aim of reaching a preliminary agreement on the Draft Action Plan on Health and Resilience in the Americas.

3. The document “Ninth Summit of the Americas Implementation: Notional Calendar and Working Procedures” was published as document [GRIC/M.2/doc.21/22](#).

- The Ad Hoc Technical Group on Our Sustainable Green Future was established to promote the exchange of best practices and knowledge for the formulation or implementation of national plans, and the coordination of joint activities and follow-up of national implementation.
- The purposes of the Ad Hoc Technical Group on Accelerating the Clean, Sustainable, Renewable, and Just Energy Transition is to monitor progress in the energy transition, share best practices, and coordinate regional and national efforts.
- The Ad Hoc Technical Group for the Regional Agenda for Digital Transformation was created to promote the use of existing mechanisms and follow-up activities focused on the pillars of the Regional Agenda for Digital Transformation.
- Ad Hoc Technical Group on the Inter-American Action Plan on Democratic Governance was established to coordinate and report on implementation and joint activities and identify obstacles to be overcome focusing on the pillars of the Inter-American Action Plan on Democratic Governance.

According to the Working Procedures, the Ad Hoc Technical Groups are to report to the SIRG, which in turn will provide guidance and take charge of following up on and supporting the implementation of the Summit mandates. Accordingly, with the exception of the Ad Hoc Technical Group on Health and Resilience, it was proposed that following the final meetings of the ad hoc technical groups, the SIRG Chair would prepare reports for consideration by the ministers of foreign affairs. The first reporting exercise on the status of the technical groups took place at the first regular meeting of the SIRG in 2023, held on April 6 that year.^{4/}

The Summits Secretariat, as the technical secretariat of the Summits Process, has been providing technical assistance and advice to the Chair and the governments in organizing and reporting on the meetings of the Ad Hoc Technical Groups with the participation of the states and the JSWG entities, and it has also facilitated the participation of civil society and social actors and made their recommendations available to the delegations.

Meetings

To date, the ad hoc technical groups have held 16 meetings. The Technical Group for the Action Plan on Health and Resilience in the Americas met on six occasions; four meetings were for negotiations, and the remaining two were devoted to the presentation of the then-Chair's proposal for the Preliminary Draft Action Plan on Health and Resilience, and to engage in dialogue on the preliminary draft with representatives of civil society and social actors, including the youth and the private sector. The Ad Hoc Technical Group on Our Sustainable Green Future has held three meetings: the first focused on the protection of environmental defenders, and the second on sustainable shipping and the preservation of coastal ecosystems, and the third on climate-smart agriculture. The Technical Group on Accelerating the Clean, Sustainable, Renewable, and Just Energy Transition met on two occasions: a first meeting focused on presenting the JSWG

4. The Chair's report was published as document [GRIC/O.1/INF.32/23](#), and the meeting's final report, as document [GRIC/O.1/doc.98/23](#).

institutions' energy transition programs and discussing the creation of enabling environments for clean energy investments, and the second focused on the use of green hydrogen as an example of clean energy. The Ad Hoc Technical Group for the Regional Program for Digital Transformation convened once to address regional cybersecurity within the framework of the adopted mandates. Four other meetings took place under the aegis of the Inter-American Action Plan on Democratic Governance; the first focused on the challenges to democratic governance and the promotion of human rights within the inter-American system, and the second centered on efforts to combat disinformation, the third on protecting the rights of people of African descent, and the fourth on public procurement.

The meetings of the Ad Hoc Technical Groups held following the transfer of the Chair of the Summits Process from the government of the United States to the government of the Dominican Republic, which took place on November 3, 2023, were co-chaired by both states. Similarly, some of these were also co-chaired by other participating states, such as Brazil, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Panama, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

a. Ad Hoc Technical Group for the Action Plan on Health and Resilience in the Americas

The Ad Hoc Technical Group on Health and Resilience met periodically between February and June 2023 to reach a preliminary agreement on the Action Plan on Health and Resilience in the Americas. The meetings and negotiations of the Ad Hoc Technical Group were chaired by Dr. Nelson Arboleda, Director of the Office of the Americas at the United States Department of Health, and Human Services.

The Draft Action Plan focuses on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and on strengthening the capacity and resilience of the region's health systems to cope with future outbreaks of infectious diseases and other health situations. The document recognizes the sociocultural, economic, environmental, and structural challenges facing the Americas, as well as on the global health and resilience commitments that states have assumed. It comprises five parts, each with several sections: (1) promoting equitable access to health services and products; (2) invest in health systems; (3) strengthen emergency preparedness; (4) address non-communicable diseases; and (5) leverage technology appropriately.

The Preliminary Draft Action Plan was distributed on behalf of the then-Chair at the end of January 2023 and presented at the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Group. Following the first meeting, the then-Chair invited the delegations to submit comments on the document. Based on the comments received, the Summits Secretariat consolidated the revised version of the Preliminary Draft Action Plan, which was then considered at the Technical Group's second meeting. This meeting was followed by three additional negotiation meetings. This was followed by a dialogue with representatives of civil society and social actors (coordinated in subregional thematic groups by the Summits Secretariat), youth (coordinated by the Young Americas Business Trust), and the private sector (coordinated by the Americas Business Dialogue). Finally, an additional negotiation meeting was held to settle the pending preliminary agreements and to incorporate the contributions presented at the previous meeting.

Negotiations for the Preliminary Draft Action Plan on Health and Resilience in the Americas were concluded at the sixth meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Group on June 1, after which the preliminary draft was submitted to the SIRG for consideration. After being discussed by the

delegations at the Second Regular Meeting of the SIRG of 2023, held on June 12 under the leadership of Mr. Kevin O'Reilly, the Chair of the SIRG and National Summit Coordinator of the United States, the Draft Action Plan was submitted for the consideration and approval of the Foreign Ministers at the First SIRG Meeting at the Ministerial Level. The Ministerial Meeting of the SIRG adopted the Action Plan on June 23, 2023, on the occasion of the fifty-second regular session of the OAS General Assembly in Washington, D.C.

The dialogue among the delegations also benefited from the input of Summit process stakeholders. In particular, the JSWG played an important role: the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) provided valuable comments, which were taken up by the delegations to improve the language of the negotiated text. The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF) also shared contributions.

Similarly, at the dialogue session between the delegations and representatives of civil society and social actors, youth, and the private sector (through the subregional thematic groups, the YABT, and the ABD, respectively), the representatives made concrete contributions towards the negotiation document. The ABD highlighted, among other issues, the need for venues for dialogue with the private sector and the promotion of regulatory convergence and of measures to stimulate investment, knowledge exchanges, and the strengthening of the sector's governance. The YABT focused on promoting mental health, sexual and reproductive health, health training, youth initiatives, and references to girls and young people. The spokespersons of the subregional thematic groups focused their attention on ensuring equitable access to health services while respecting privacy, promoting dialogue on health issues among the states, sexual and reproductive rights, care for vulnerable groups, and various other topics.^{5/}

b. Ad Hoc Technical Group on Our Sustainable Green Future

The Technical Group on Our Sustainable Green Future met on three occasions to facilitate the exchange of best practices and knowledge for the formulation and implementation of national plans in this area, and to coordinate joint activities.

The first meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Group addressed the protection of environmental defenders, as described in paragraph 1.f. of the applicable document. It was held on January 24, 2023, and was chaired by Ms. Monica Medina, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, U.S. Department of State, and Ms. Jane Nishida, Assistant Administrator, Office of International and Tribal Affairs, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The Alliance for Land, Indigenous, and Environmental Defenders (ALLIED) civil society coalition was invited to present on the subject. It described both killings and non-lethal attacks against defenders and the failure to investigate or prosecute such incidents. It recommended meaningful and iterative consultations with defenders, civil society, and the private sector; working with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) to develop whole-of-government national action plans harmonized with the Escazu agreement; tracking attacks; strengthening protection mechanisms; prioritizing the investigation and prosecution of attacks against defenders; and creating positive narratives about defenders.

5. The list of documents with the contributions presented at the fifth meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Group on Health was published as document [GRIC/CA-IX/GT-SAL/doc.10/23](#).

Key member organizations of the JSWG also gave presentations. The Special Rapporteur on Economic, Social, Cultural, and Environmental Rights of the OAS Inter-American Commission on Human Rights warned about the difficult situation faced by human rights defenders and noted that the inter-American system was a pioneer in the protection of the human right to a healthy environment. She highlighted IACHR resolution 3/21 on the climate emergency and its incorporation of the rights-based approach to the climate emergency.^{6/} In turn, ECLAC's Sustainable Development Policy Unit gave a presentation in its capacity as the secretariat of the Escazú Agreement on Access to Information and Justice in Environmental Matters. It emphasized that this agreement was the first to incorporate provisions for the protection of rights in environmental matters and spoke of the three-pronged approach of the Agreement's article on environmental defenders, which focuses on ensuring safe environments, strengthening prevention and protection measures, and generating response measures.

During the dialogue that followed the governmental experts' presentations, they described their efforts to strengthen the protection of environmental defenders nationally and the cooperation tasks they had undertaken. They highlighted the existence of a voluntary fund for implementation of the Escazú Agreement and underscored the need for public consultations for the prioritization of state actions or prior to the implementation of projects with an impact on communities and the environment. They spoke of good practices in public consultation legislation and policies, and of the willingness to share experiences and lessons learned. They also agreed on the need to avoid duplication of efforts at the international level. In response, some delegations focused on the challenges of coordinating actions at the national level due to the different powers of local governments. Other delegations addressed efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prevent deforestation, as well as the need for more funding.^{7/}

In addition, the Second Meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Group on Our Sustainable and Green Future addressed paragraphs 3.c. and 3.d. on environmentally friendly shipping and the protection of coastal ecosystems. It was held on March 1, 2023, in Panama City, Panama, on the occasion of the Our Ocean Conference. It was co-chaired by the delegations of the United States and Panama, led by Ms. Sue Biniiaz, Deputy Special Envoy for Climate Change at the U.S. Department of State, and Ms. Maxine Burkett, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Oceans, Fisheries and Polar Affairs at the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, U.S. Department of State, together with Ms. Diana Laguna Caicedo, Panama's Vice Minister of the Environment, and Ms. Rosilena Lindo Riggs, Panama's Undersecretary of Energy.

Technical experts from the Panama Canal Authority and the Mærsk McKinney Møller Center for Zero Carbon Shipping were invited to the session on green shipping. The Panama Canal Authority's Interinstitutional Coordination Management highlighted the Canal's contribution to the reduction of transportation emissions, its efforts to achieve carbon-neutral operations, and its conservation of surrounding ecosystems. The Mærsk McKinney Møller Center warned that emissions from the maritime sector could continue to grow if current trends continued. It therefore recommended promoting energy efficiency, the production of alternative fuels, the creation of global regulations to level the playing field and providing support for pioneers throughout the value chain to

6. Resolution 3/21 is available at the following link:

https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/decisions/pdf/2021/resolucion_3-21_ENG.pdf.

7. The list of meeting documents was published as document [GRIC/CA-IX/GT-VER/doc.1/23](#).

achieve carbon neutrality in maritime transport, all of which are pillars for achieving neutrality in the sector by 2050.

Following the presentations, the delegations exchanged comments with the experts, and they spoke of the initiatives that had been undertaken—including within the framework of the International Maritime Organization (IMO)—to reduce ship and ocean pollution. They discussed the development of national strategies for green hydrogen and for the climate-change resilience of logistics sector infrastructure, and the establishment of public budgets that incorporate climate change variables. They also addressed the Clydebank Declaration on the decarbonization of maritime transport, the creation of national and international green corridors, and their compatibility with the multilateral trade regime. They also stressed the need to promote greater collaboration between governments and industry and to include local and indigenous communities in the transition to zero-emission transport. The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities was also discussed, along with the need for financing to adapt infrastructure and technologies in order to reduce the sector's emissions.

Technical experts from Conservation International were invited to the session on the protection of coastal marine ecosystems. In that session they spoke about the role of blue carbon ecosystems in carbon sequestration and the imperative need to inventory and protect them. The organization said that between a quarter and half of those ecosystems had been lost, while highlighting the region's leadership in protection strategies. It noted that nature-based solutions can contribute to the care of water sources for generating hydrogen power while also allowing carbon dioxide capture and biomass production.

The delegations discussed these issues and presented their governmental initiatives for assisting mitigation and adaptation. They first spoke about efforts to increase the percentage of marine protected areas. They showcased national blue carbon policies and strategies, focusing on institutional coordination, ecosystem management and rehabilitation, economic appraisal and funding, capacity-building, and raising awareness about their importance. Other delegations stressed the importance of strengthening national research campaigns and generating public information. Another central theme was the various efforts to inventory blue carbon and the willingness to strengthen external capacities in that area. Other delegations focused on nature-based solutions and their impact on the energy sector.

Among the agencies of the JSWG, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) highlighted its commitment to promote nature-related financing and the integration of natural capital and biodiversity into its operations, as well as the actions of the Natural Capital Laboratory. Similarly, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) highlighted its work to support states in protecting maritime areas and their biodiversity, and the assistance provided in relation to nationally determined contributions and the Convention on Biological Diversity.^{8/}

Lastly, the Third Meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Group on Our Sustainable Green Future addressed paragraph 2.b of the corresponding document adopted at the Ninth Summit, which focuses on climate-smart agriculture. It was held virtually on September 12, 2023, and chaired by Ambassador Francisco O. Mora, U.S. National Summit Coordinator, and then-Chair of the Summit

8. The list of meeting documents was published as document [GRIC/CA-IX/GT-VER/doc.6/23](https://www.usaid.gov/press-releases/2023/09/12/2023-09-12-01).

Process; and Hope Bigda-Payton, International Affairs Advisor, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

USDA introduced the Agricultural Innovation Mission for Climate (AIM for Climate) initiative, which it leads and funds, its aim being to accelerate innovation in agriculture to support climate action and global food security. This initiative fosters public-private and intergovernmental cooperation in research, innovation, and investment in different areas of climate-smart agriculture. As of the date of the meeting, AIM for Climate had attracted more than 1,200 members from over 260 organizations worldwide. The U.S. delegation renewed the invitation for more countries in the region to consider joining the initiative.

As part of the JSWG, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) stressed that the Americas are currently facing the challenges brought on by climate change, which include phenomena such as hurricanes, droughts, and floods, with significant implications for global food security. It was mentioned that to address these problems in a comprehensive manner, various strategies could be adopted, and the importance was stressed that public policies be based on scientific evidence and focused on farmers. In that context, it was argued that agriculture can play a key role as part of the solution to climate change. The IICA representative also referred to the XXII Regular Meeting of the Inter-American Board of Agriculture scheduled to be held in Costa Rica in October 2023, where IICA would propose the formation of a hemispheric partnership for global food security and sustainable development as a follow-up on the mandates adopted at the Ninth Summit of the Americas.

With the participation of representatives of the private sector, civil society, and entities of the JSWG, a panel was held to address various issues related to the promotion of climate-smart agriculture in the Americas. The panelists highlighted the initiatives and projects of their respective organizations to address this challenge, such as the restoration of degraded grasslands in the Cerrado region of Brazil and the promotion of regenerative agriculture. The importance of measuring impact and progress in these efforts was also emphasized, as was the need to invest in specific areas such as microbial fertilizers and climate information. Issues of collaboration between civil society, the private sector and governments were discussed, as well as the importance of rural education and incentives for farmers. In sum, the need to address climate-smart agriculture from multiple perspectives and collaborate in the implementation of sustainable solutions was highlighted.

Delegations from several countries shared their approaches and efforts in relation to climate-smart agriculture and climate change mitigation. Economic incentive policies for the adoption of clean energy sources and their approach based on scientific evidence were highlighted. The AIM for Climate initiative was also promoted, and other countries were encouraged to join. The importance of considering the environment and communities in sustainable agriculture was also discussed. In addition, examples of public-private collaboration in the field of climate-smart agriculture were requested. The need to educate the agricultural sector about climate change was also emphasized. These points demonstrate the diversity of approaches and priorities in the region for successfully introducing climate-smart agriculture.⁹

c. Ad Hoc Technical Group on Accelerating the Clean, Sustainable, Renewable, and Just Energy Transition

9. The list of meeting documents was published as document [GRIC/CA-IX/GT-VER/doc.10/23](https://www.usda.gov/press-releases/2023/09/20230914-gric-ca-ix-gt-ver-doc-10-23).

The Technical Group on Accelerating the Clean, Sustainable, Renewable, and Just Energy Transition met twice to exchange best practices and knowledge related to the development and implementation of national plans in this field, and to coordinate joint actions.

The first meeting of the Technical Group on Accelerating the Clean, Sustainable, Renewable, and Just Energy Transition focused on funding for clean energies. Held on March 9, 2023, it was chaired by Mr. Mark Wells, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, U.S. Department of State.

The JSWG was actively involved. Presentations were given by the OAS, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and all the multilateral banks that belong to the JSWG. The OAS's Technical Coordination Unit of the Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas (ECPA) gave a presentation on the close linkages between energy and security. It also stressed that the achievement of technical goals requires political agreements, crystallized in the case of the ECPA at its ministerial meetings. It then announced that the Sixth Ministerial Meeting was to focus on clean energy sources, universal energy access, energy efficiency, regional energy integration, and resilience. In turn, the OECD warned about the development of policies that run contrary to decarbonization plans, such as fossil fuel subsidies, and it noted that barely a quarter of the region's countries have carbon neutrality commitments for 2050. It reported on its Clean Energy Finance and Investment Mobilisation Programme (CEFIM), the aim of which is to provide technical assistance and capacity-building and to reduce the technical barriers impeding clean energy investments.

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF), the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI), the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), and the World Bank also provided updates on their clean energy financing programs. The bank experts also presented an overview of the region's energy mix, noting that the region's leadership in the use of renewable energies was due to the preponderance of hydroelectric power. They spoke about projected energy participation trends, as well as the persistent challenges facing the transition, which are largely on account of the transportation sector. They added that there were also challenges in terms of energy efficiency. They stressed the importance of greater coordination between the design of promotional policies and the establishment of regulatory frameworks and business plans. Another point of agreement was the need to provide legal certainty and to implement solid and lasting regulatory and fiscal frameworks. Efforts to promote private sector participation in the transition plans were also highlighted.

In turn, the private sector, represented by AES Corporation, gave a presentation on the criteria used by the sector in evaluating clean energy investment opportunities—such as respect for the rule of law, progressive regulatory policies, processes for the issuance of permits, and access to liquidity—and on creating the conditions for attracting investment.

The delegations stated that the promotion of clean energy not only contributes to limiting the rise in temperatures, but also offers opportunities for development and greater energy security. They spoke about national energy strategies for promoting cleaner energy sources, the gradual replacement of more polluting forms of energy, disincentives for carbon-intensive energy projects, and universal

access to electricity. They also emphasized the key role of international cooperation and capacity-building in those undertakings.^{10/}

The second meeting of the Technical Group on Accelerating the Clean, Sustainable, Renewable, and Just Energy Transition was held virtually on August 8, 2023. The meeting addressed paragraphs 7 and 14 on green hydrogen of the corresponding document from the Ninth Summit. Presentations were made by governmental and JSWG experts, as well as a representative of the private sector. This was followed by an exchange of experiences and a discussion on best practices among the delegations and the JSWG entities.

JSWG entities led the first part of the meeting. First, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) highlighted four key pillars for decarbonization: energy efficiency, process electrification, carbon capture and storage, and green hydrogen. The IDB is actively involved in 15 Latin American countries where it is contributing to 11 green hydrogen strategies and pilot tests. It noted that the leaders in this initiative were Chile, Brazil, Colombia, Argentina, Uruguay, and Panama, and mentioned 11 potential hydrogen production hubs in the region. It also said that US\$400 million had been provided in funding for these initiatives and noted the importance of taking care of water resources and considering indigenous perspectives in projects. The IDB is seeking the approval of certifications to European and American standards with the aim of finalizing a draft by October 2023 and obtaining support from the OAS and the U.S. Government for a declaration by high-level authorities at the Conference of the Parties (COP).

For its part, the Sustainable Energy Section of the OAS Department of Sustainable Development focused on the discussions in the ECPA clean hydrogen working group. It emphasized the distinction between green hydrogen and clean hydrogen, noting that the latter is more common in OAS dialogues and considers carbon neutrality through nuclear power and carbon capture and storage techniques. He stressed the importance of policies and the need for certification processes to ensure the sustainability of green and clean hydrogen production. It noted six key factors in the region's dialogues on the hydrogen economy, including accelerating the energy transition, hydrogen's contribution to decarbonization of sectors, the ability to integrate hydrogen into multiple sectors, cost reductions in electrolysis, expansion of renewable energies, and the creation of green jobs in the hydrogen economy. It also mentioned Colombia, Brazil, and Chile as leaders in the development of the hydrogen economy in the region and that 16 countries have national hydrogen plans and policies backed by governmental financial support.

Delegations took the floor to address various important issues related to green hydrogen. The specific challenges faced by island States were addressed, in addition to the international context of rising energy generation costs. Likewise, financing mechanisms for green hydrogen projects in the region were mentioned and proposed, wherein there is a key role for multilateral banks. There were also discussions about the need to generate favorable conditions for public and private capital in this market, such as tax credits, financing for clean fuel production, carbon pricing, and the creation of the Strategic Innovation Fund for new hydrogen projects and investments in hydrogen refueling stations and electric mobility.^{11/}

d. Ad Hoc Technical Group on the Regional Agenda for Digital Transformation

10. The list of meeting documents was published as document [GRIC/CA-IX/GT-ENE/doc.1/23.](#)

11. The list of meeting documents was published as document [GRIC/CA-IX/GT-ENE/doc.6/23.](#)

The First Meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Group on the Regional Agenda for Digital Transformation was held virtually on December 13, 2023, and co-chaired by the Dominican Republic, United States and Uruguay. The meeting, convened under the theme of cybersecurity, addressed Pillar C of the Regional Agenda for Digital Transformation adopted at the Ninth Summit of the Americas. It was attended by government representatives of the participating States, entities of the Joint Summit Working Group (JSWG), and civil society and social actors of the Americas.

The Vice Minister of the Digital Agenda of the Dominican Republic, Mr. José David Montilla, highlighted his country's achievements in cybersecurity, emphasizing international collaboration and post-pandemic acceleration. He emphasized the need for dedicated digital defense teams and mandatory government-backed strategies. Mr. Montilla alluded to the country's leadership in cybersecurity and its selection by the European Union to host a capacity-building center. Ms. Lauryn Williams, Senior Advisor in the Office of the National Cyber Director of the White House, highlighted the importance of the White House National Cybersecurity Strategy, which focuses on a long-term vision and the creation of a more defensible and resilient digital ecosystem. She emphasized the redistribution of responsibilities and the holistic implementation of the strategy. Lastly, Mr. Mauricio Papaleo, Director of Information Security at the Agency of Electronic Government and Information and Knowledge Society (AGESIC) of Uruguay, emphasized the importance of the country's cybersecurity strategy and highlighted the experience in digital agendas and collaboration with international organizations to address the national cybersecurity strategy.

Two JSWG entities presented their strategies with regard to regional cybersecurity support. On behalf of the IDB, Mr. Santiago Paz, Senior Cybersecurity Specialist, discussed the institution's more than 10 years of experience in cybersecurity issues. Focusing on financing key projects, such as transportation, education, and health, he said that the IDB took a holistic view of cybersecurity at the national level. The IDB, with nearly US\$200 million invested exclusively in cybersecurity projects, emphasized capacity building through training programs, partnerships with universities, and sector-specific knowledge materials, recognizing the importance of human capital in advancing cybersecurity in the region. Mr. Diego Subero and Ms. Mariana Cardona, specialists from the Secretariat of the OAS Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (CICTE), detailed the development of policies, noting that around 20 countries currently had national strategies supported by the OAS, while another five were in the process of creating or renewing theirs. They alluded to workforce development and gender inclusion in cybersecurity.

The panel on strengthening regional cybersecurity, moderated by Mr. Mauricio Papeleo of AGESIC, included notable input from Ms. Jimena Mora, Director for the Americas at Microsoft's Digital Crimes Unit, Microsoft. Ms. Mora mentioned the growing need for public-private collaboration to address cyberattacks and particularly emphasized the increase in ransomware attacks and the importance of sanctioning criminal groups, especially in critical sectors such as healthcare and electoral processes. Mr. Gustavo Betarte, President of the CyberLac Network, outlined an academic vision for addressing cybersecurity challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean, highlighting the need to develop technical training programs and postgraduate courses in collaboration with various institutions. Lastly, Mr. Ronmel López, spokesperson for the civil society thematic group on Digital Transformation emphasized the importance of consolidating digital transformation as a human right, as well as the need for international collaboration to protect technological services and guarantee the legitimacy of electoral processes in the face of possible cyberattacks.

Delegations outlined various approaches to cybersecurity, noted the importance of creating specialized national agencies, and referred to the shortage of professionals in the field. Mention was made of the development of strategies at the national level in collaboration with multiple stakeholders to enhance cybersecurity preparedness, including public-private partnerships on specific initiatives. Speakers also alluded to the importance of ensuring security in the use of agricultural technology through initiatives to raise awareness and train personnel in cybersecurity and data management.^{12/}

e. Ad Hoc Technical Group for the Inter-American Action Plan on Democratic Governance

The first meeting was co-chaired by the United States, Canada, and Costa Rica, represented by Mr. Kevin O'Reilly, the U.S. National Summit Coordinator and SIRG Chair, Ambassador Hugh Adsett, Deputy National Coordinator of Canada, and Ambassador Alejandra Solano Cabalceta, National Coordinator of Costa Rica. It was held on March 28, 2023, on the occasion of the Second Summit for Democracy, under the theme "Confronting challenges and advancing human rights: upholding our commitment to democracy in the inter-American system."

As Chair of the JSWG, the OAS was represented by the Secretary for Hemispheric Affairs, Ambassador James Lambert, and the Secretary for Strengthening Democracy, Francisco Guerrero. Ambassador Lambert highlighted previous exchanges on democratic resilience within the framework of the Summit Process and spoke about aspects of the Inter-American Action Plan on Democratic Governance, such as strengthening regional mechanisms to address democratic challenges, regional cooperation in support of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, and the right to vote. In turn, Secretary Guerrero underscored the Ninth Summit's commitment toward strengthening political dialogue in order to address democratic challenges and promote cooperation in support of the Charter. In that regard, he said that multilateralism should be leveraged in defending democracy in the region.

Representatives of specialized civil society also gave presentations on the state of democratic governance in the region and shared their recommendations. The Due Process Foundation warned about interference in the judiciary, the stigmatization and criminalization of opponents, the exacerbation of polarization by executive branches, the closure of venues for civic engagement, the growing role of the armed forces, and the questioning of international justice systems. Highlighting the mechanisms available within the framework of the OAS, the Foundation called for use to be made of those existing capacities to preserve democracy and to adapt electoral observation mechanisms to judicial selection processes. The use of existing mechanisms was also supported by the Carter Center, which also underscored the need for political will for those institutions to perform their functions.

The main areas of agreement identified by both the delegations and specialized civil society focused, first, on the challenges posed to democracy by disinformation. Second, they underscored the need for democracies to provide answers to the problems of inequality and citizen insecurity.

Some delegations noted that democracy was not limited to the holding of elections, but also to the recognition of individuals' rights, the separation of powers, and good governance, in order to ensure equal opportunities and upward social mobility. They also drew attention to the need for better

12. The list of meeting documents was published as document [GRIC/CA-IX/GT-DIG/doc.2/24](https://www.oas.org/en/GRIC/CA-IX/GT-DIG/doc.2/24).

tools to provide early warnings of threats to democracy. They addressed issues related to the strengthening of electoral systems and identified electoral observation missions as tools for the consolidation of democracy. They also spoke of the role of digital technologies in protecting human rights, ensuring affordability, and promoting pluralism, freedom of expression, the fight against climate change, and inclusive economic growth.

They also noted that under mandates 12 and 12.m of the Inter-American Action Plan on Democratic Governance, the Heads of State and Government are committed to continue to comply with the mandates of the Eighth Summit by actively participating in the Lima Commitment Follow-up and Implementation Mechanism.^{13/} Not only does this commitment ensure continuity with respect to the guidelines established in Lima in 2018, it also facilitates the provision of adequate follow-up to the fight against a scourge facing the region's democracies.^{14/}

The Second Meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Group focused on ensuring the integrity of information and counteracting disinformation in electoral processes. Co-chaired by the United States, Canada, and Chile, it was held on the occasion of the fifty-third regular session of the OAS General Assembly in Washington, D.C. The Government of the United States participated in its capacity as Chair of the Summits Process, and was represented by Mr. Kevin O'Reilly, its National Summit Coordinator, and by Ms. Kerri Hannan, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs for Public Diplomacy, Policy, Planning, and Coordination at the Department of State. The JSWG entities also participated, including—on the OAS side—presentations by Ambassador James Lambert, Secretary for Hemispheric Affairs, Mr. Francisco Guerrero, Secretary for Strengthening Democracy, and Mr. Pedro Vaca, Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression. Ms. María Celina Conte, Director of the Summits Secretariat, moderated the second part of the meeting.

The first part was moderated by Mr. Christopher Hernandez-Roy, Senior Fellow and Deputy Director of the Americas Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), and involved a debate among regional experts, civil society organizations, academics, and social actors specialized in disinformation and electoral systems, including Chequeado, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), and the Communications Faculty of the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile. Panelists discussed problems caused by disinformation and the impact new digital tools, such as AI, can have on the spread of disinformation and the electoral process. The second part was moderated by Ms. Conte, Director of the Summits Secretariat, and focused on the contributions of participating states and stakeholders in the Summits of the Americas process on best practices to ensure the integrity of information and counter disinformation at election times. Delegations discussed the importance of ensuring voters have verifiable and truthful information and countering disinformation going into elections. Delegations also discussed the importance of protecting freedom of expression and the need to work closely with the private sector, including social media companies. Closing remarks were provided by Mr. Kevin O'Reilly, National Summit Coordinator of the United States and Chair of the SIRG, and by Ambassador Hugh Adsett, Deputy National Coordinator of Canada, and Permanent Representative to the OAS.^{15/}

13. The Online platform of the Mechanism for Follow-up and Implementation of the Lima Commitment can be accessed at the following link: <https://compromisodelima.oas.org/Consulta/Verificar>

14. The list of meeting documents was published as document [GRIC/CA-IX/GT-DEM/doc.1/23](#)

15. The list of meeting documents was published as document [GRIC/CA-IX/GT-DEM/doc.4/23](#).

The Third Meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Group on the Inter-American Action Plan on Democratic Governance was held virtually on November 14, 2023, under the theme “Human Rights and Democracy: Protecting the Rights of People of African Descent in the Americas,” addressed paragraph (b) of mandate 9 of the Inter-American Action Plan on Democratic Governance adopted at the Ninth Summit of the Americas: the meeting was co-chaired by the Dominican Republic, the United States and Brazil, and was attended by government representatives of the participating States, entities of the Joint Summit Working Group (JSWG), and civil society and social actors of the Americas.

The delegations’ presentations on experience and best practices addressed issues related to gender equity, protection of the rights of Afro-descendants, and the fight against racial discrimination. Programs and laws promoting equality and inclusion were highlighted, as were efforts to combat gender-based violence and structural discrimination. In addition, the commitment of countries to ratify international instruments to protect the rights of these communities was mentioned, together with the importance of education and awareness-raising in this area. Despite the progress made, it was recognized that challenges remained on the road to a more inclusive and equitable society.

The exchange of experiences and discussion of good practices with civil society representatives, covered various proposals and recommendations for improving the inclusion and well-being of people of African descent in the region. The historical challenges faced by these communities were highlighted, as was the importance of addressing racial discrimination and fostering political and societal engagement. Measures proposed included the creation of a Permanent Forum on People of African Descent at the Summits of the Americas, the implementation of an ethnically aware follow-up mechanism, and the adoption of a resolution expressing an historic apology to the African people and the African diaspora in the Americas. Also underscored was the need to work in collaboration with civil society and Afro-descendant human rights defenders to combat discrimination and promote the safe participation of these communities in politics.^{16/}

The fourth meeting of the Ad Hoc Technical Group for the Inter-American Plan of Action on Democratic Governance was held on February 8, 2024, in virtual format and was convened under the theme "Public Procurement as a Strategic Area for Democratic Governance." It addressed mandate 20 of the Inter-American Plan of Action on Democratic Governance, adopted at the IX Summit of the Americas. The Technical Secretariat of the Inter-American Network on Public Procurement (INGP) presented it as a hemispheric mechanism to strengthen the institutional capacity of national public procurement agencies through various actions, which will allow them to increase the transparency, integrity, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, and innovation of public procurement systems in their countries. The INGP aligns with mandates from previous Summits and seeks to promote democratic, ethical, and integrity values in public procurement. Through the Department for Effective Public Management (DGPE), the OAS has carried out various actions to strengthen institutional capacities and promote sustainability, transparency, and innovation in public procurement.

National and Provincial Procurement Directors from the Dominican Republic, Paraguay, Jamaica, and Argentina shared achievements and challenges in the transformation of public procurement systems, highlighting innovative initiatives and commitments to transparency. The

16. The list of meeting documents was published as document [GRIC/CA-IX/GT-DEM/doc.11/23](https://www.oas.org/en/interam/summit/2023/09/23/GRIC/CA-IX/GT-DEM/doc.11/23).

transformation towards transparency and efficiency was discussed, with an emphasis on sustainable and gender-sensitive procurement. Similar efforts and commitment to regional cooperation were also highlighted, as well as good practices to further professionalize public procurement, and international support and advances in electronic systems and transparency tools were praised, underlining the importance of professionalization and continuous training.^{17/}

Conclusion

The model adopted for following up on and implementing the mandates of the Ninth Summit within the framework of the SIRG, through the establishment of ad hoc technical groups for each of the documents adopted at the Ninth Summit, has so far allowed for fluid and enriching dialogue and exchanges between the national experts designated by their governments and experts from institutions of the JSWG, with inputs from representatives of civil society and social actors, the private sector, and youth. The process has also been identifying good national-level practices that are suitable for replication. The working procedure was similar across all the technical groups, despite their differing objectives.^{18/}

In almost all cases, States participated through experts from ministries and specialized agencies with responsibility for the issues addressed. This not only implies a high-level technical exchange, but also contributes to the generation of knowledge networks in the region. Similarly, the discussions among the experts have been enriched by presentations from JSWG entities and contributions from specialized civil society, including social actors such as young people and the private sector.

The central themes of the meetings held to date, as defined by the Chair of the Ninth Summit, reflect the Ninth Summit documents and several of the Hemisphere's priorities.

Another defining feature of the follow-up and implementation phase through the Ad Hoc Technical Groups has been and continues to be the extensive participation of the various stakeholders in the Summits process. In addition to the participating states, the organizations that make up the JSWG have been actively participating through their experts, providing technical inputs to enrich the debate, and making their capacities available to the states to continue supporting national efforts to implement the Summit mandates. Representatives of specialized civil society, including women's organizations, the private sector, and youth, were also able to share their recommendations with the delegations.

In this regard, the process of follow-up and implementation of the mandates of the Ninth Summit, carried out through the Ad Hoc Technical Groups, has proven to be an effective exercise in multi-stakeholder collaboration. The broad participation of national experts, civil society representatives, and JSWG entities has enriched the flow of ideas and encouraged the identification of good practices that can be replicated at the national level, thus strengthening the generation of knowledge networks, and promoting progress towards the common objectives of development and prosperity in the region. This continued commitment of all stakeholders marks a significant step

17. The list of meeting documents was published as document [GRIC/CA-IX/GT-DEM/doc.12/24](#).

18. The only technical group that operated differently was the one on Health and Resilience, where the objective of producing an action plan required a more negotiation-oriented approach.

towards the materialization of the mandates of the Ninth Summit and towards building a more inclusive, sustainable future for all citizens of the Hemisphere.