

13. Education

→ MANDATE

In the Plan of Action of the Third Summit of the Americas, the governments recognized that education is the key to strengthening democratic institutions, promoting the development of human potential, equality and understanding among our peoples, as well as sustaining economic growth and reducing poverty. They also reaffirmed the commitment of previous Summits to promote the principles of equity, quality, relevance and efficiency at all levels of the education system, and the commitment to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education.

The leaders of the Americas, meeting in Quebec City, pledged to support early childhood and adult education—particularly to promote literacy—while providing for alternative methods that meet the needs of disadvantaged segments of the population.



The Heads of State and Government pledged to promote access to quality basic education for all, support lifetime learning, strengthen education systems in the Hemisphere, enhance the performance of teachers, ensure universal access of all boys and girls to quality primary education, and ensure access to quality secondary education to 75% of the youth by 2010.

The leaders of the Americas, meeting in Quebec City, pledged to support early childhood and adult education—particularly to promote literacy—while providing for alternative methods that meet the needs of disadvantaged segments of the population, or of those excluded from formal education systems: girls, minorities, indigenous, and children with special education needs.

The Third Summit also agreed to identify and set up appropriate hemispheric mechanisms to ensure the implementation of the education initiatives in the Plan of

Action of Quebec City. It pledged to offer diversified curricula based on the development of skills, knowledge, and civic and democratic values.

These goals in the area of education accurately reflect the concerns raised at the World Conference on Education for All—which was held in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990—and were ratified and adopted in world and regional spheres over the course of the decade. There is also the objective of providing basic education to all children, youth, and adults, a principle that was recognized at the World Forum on Education held in Dakar in April 2000, and was ratified in the Millennium Development Objectives of the same year.

With regard to achieving universal access to quality primary education for all boys and girls in the Hemisphere—a goal that was set for 2010—the Program to Promote Educational Reform in Latin American

and the Caribbean (PREAL) and UNESCO report that 11 countries have attained the goal, or are close, to having 95% of their boys and girls attending primary school. Seven countries are still under 90%. As for secondary education, if the current trend continues very few countries will attain the goal of having 75% of their youth attend secondary school by 2010.

Regarding the objective of eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, World Bank statistics show that in 2000, girls in Latin America received on average only one-half year less schooling than boys. In fact, in some countries—including the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Paraguay, and Trinidad and Tobago—the rate of completion in primary education is 5 to 8 percent higher for girls than for boys.

On the issue of quality education, recent studies confirm that it is inadequate in Latin America. For example, according to the Program for International Student Assessment

(PISA)—conducted by the OECD/UNESCO in Mexico, Chile, Peru, Argentina, and Brazil—between 16 and 24% of children 15 years of age can technically read, but they have problems with understanding and using what they have read to advance and extend their understanding in other areas.

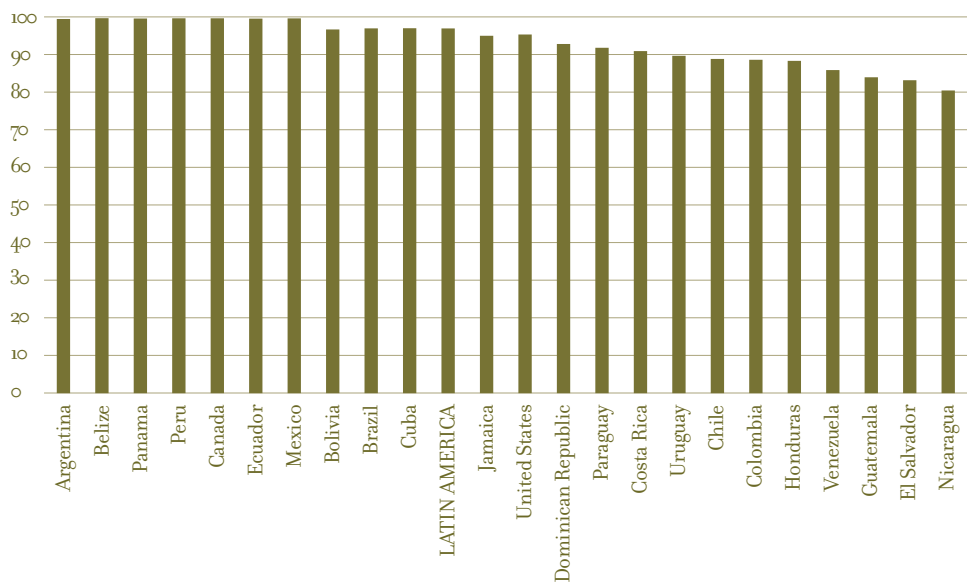
To follow up on the mandates established in education, and establish new cooperation mechanisms, the Ministers of Education of the Americas met in the framework of the OAS. The Meeting of Ministers of Education in the sphere of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI) was held September 24 and 25, 2001, in the city of Punta del Este, Uruguay. There the education ministers agreed to form the Inter-American Committee on Education to ensure implementation of the education initiatives, and prepare for the ministerial meetings. The Summit mandates were grouped in five substantive areas: equity with quality; decentralization, management, social participation, and teacher training; secondary education and certification of skills acquired on the job;



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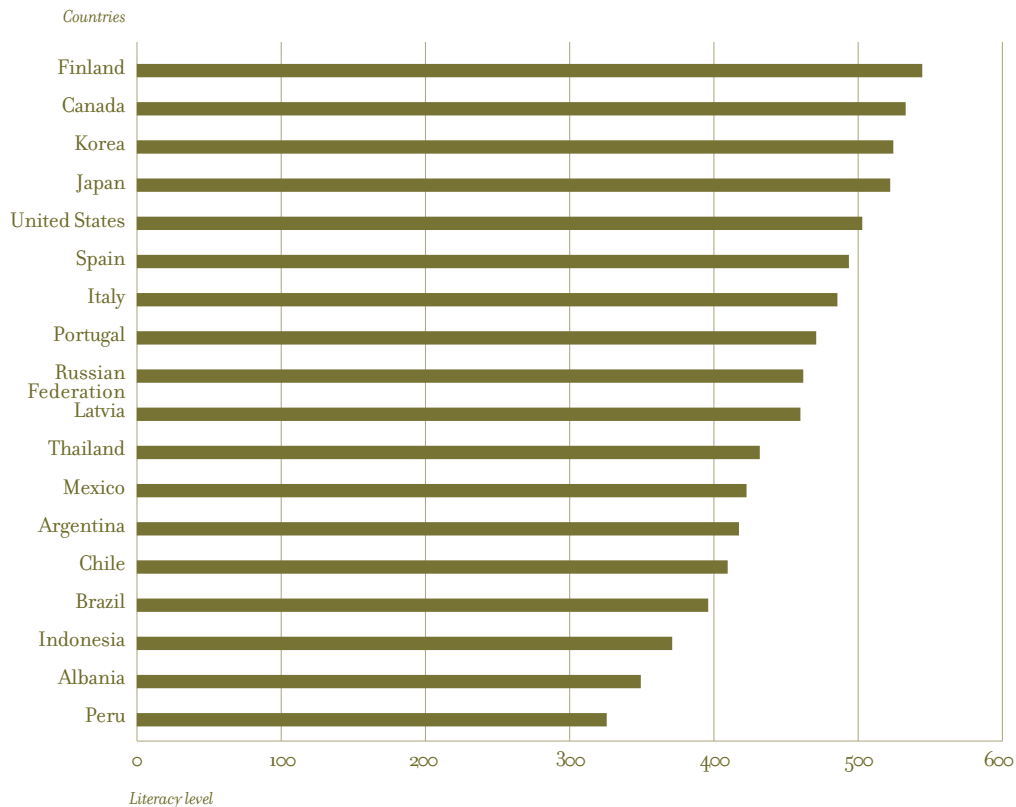
NET ENROLLMENT IN PRIMARY EDUCATION, 2000
Source: PREAL, *Lagging Behind*, 2001 and virtual databases of UNESCO, 2003.

% of the primary age population



LITERACY PERFORMANCE OF 15-YEAR-OLDS
IN SELECTED COUNTRIES (PISA), 2000

Source: OECD, *Literacy Skills for the World of Tomorrow*, 2003.



higher education; and the application of technology to education.

At the Third Meeting of Ministers of Education of CIDI—held in Mexico City from August 11-13, 2003—it was decided to join forces to respond to the challenges of equity with quality, teacher training, and secondary education. They encouraged the use of computer and educational technologies. The ministers established the Inter-American Committee on Education defined its specific duties, and tasked it with identifying how available resources are being used.

The education ministers also launched a strategy to compile the Permanent Portfolio of Exemplary or Consolidated Programs, including, as a start, 17 programs from 17 countries in the Hemisphere. This initiative groups educational programs will

be shared by governments, with a view to exchanging experiences that could help them design their own projects. As part of this effort, the Organization of American States and the World Bank held seven seminars during 2002 and 2003, with participation by 28 countries.

In view of the decision of Hemisphere leaders in Quebec City to mobilize resources to support sustained investment in education at all levels— and also establish a cooperative mechanism to promote the development of productive partnerships—the countries have been working closely with agencies of the inter-American system, international cooperation and development agencies, government offices, and civil society organizations. The agencies presented their strategies in keeping with the five subject areas established by the education ministers.

Furthermore, in response to the mandates of the Summits of the Americas, the Inter-American Development Bank, the OAS, and the Department of Education in Mexico jointly organized a meeting on financing education assistance, objective of which was to identify trends in the development of funding for education, and do a technical analysis of the availability of resources for the education sector in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Regarding the promotion of participation and dialogue with civil society organizations, the OAS opened an Internet forum. Contributions, suggestions, and experiences of civil society were presented at the education ministers' meetings in Punta del Este and Mexico City.

On the subject of education and democratic values, the OAS is organizing a Special Meeting on Promotion of a Democratic Cul-

PROGRESS

Regarding innovative use of information and communications technology to share knowledge and ideas, the Mexican government—through its Department of Education (Secretaría de Educación Pública—SEP)—offered all countries in the region free use of the Mexican educational satellite system, “EDUSAT.” Use of this signal, and the curricula developed by the SEP, will make it possible to undertake joint programs to improve the quality of basic education in the Hemisphere. At the Third Ministerial Meeting, the SEP launched the Education Channel of the Americas.

ture Through Education. This meeting is scheduled for the first quarter of 2004. The OAS conducted joint research on this question with the University of Maryland— with the support of the U.S. State Department—on



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strengthening of democracy in the Americas by instilling civic and democratic values.

In cooperation with the Department of Education of Mexico—and through the Educational Television Office and the Institute of the World Bank—there were three videoconferences to plan hemispheric projects for teacher training, secondary education, and equity with quality. These videoconferences permitted dialogue among education ministers of the countries that coordinate hemispheric projects in each subregion.

CHALLENGES

➤ **To strive to have all children receive an acceptable level of learning.**

To achieve this objective, necessary resources should be allocated to the educa-

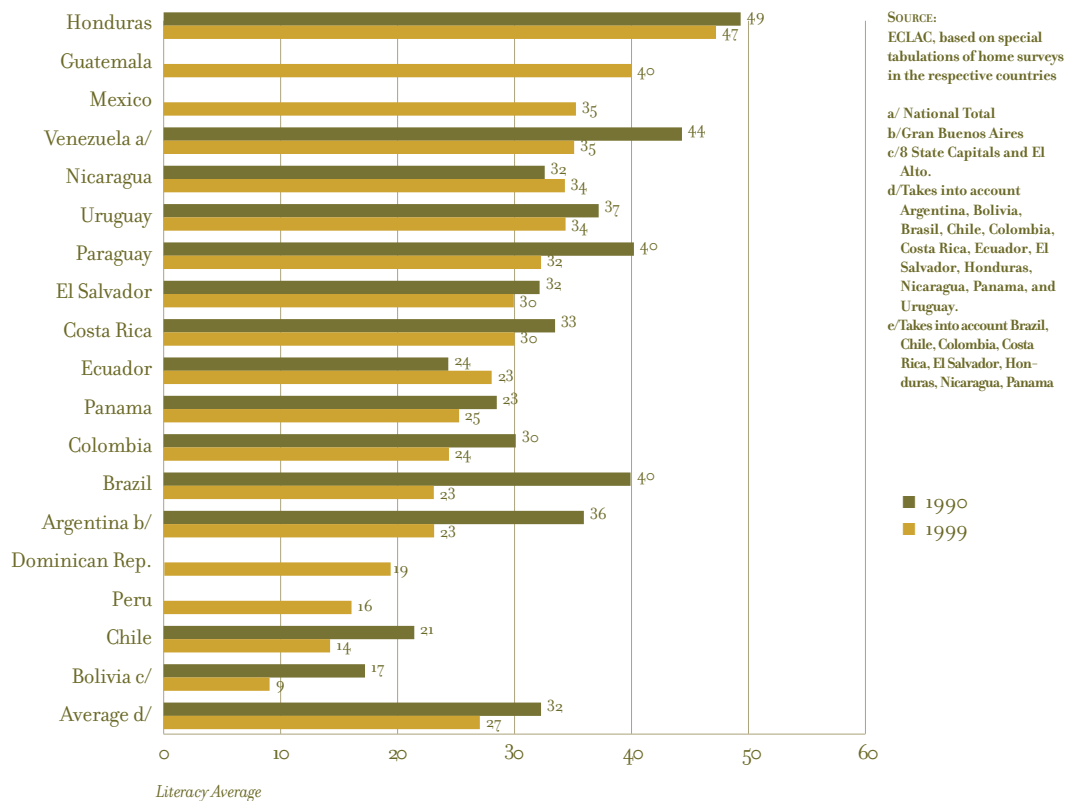
tion systems, and used efficiently and effectively to improve the quality of education for all. To also develop national standards and instruments to measure learning levels through periodic national tests, with publication of results and comparison of progress with past performance and with that of other countries in similar circumstances.

➤ **Improve student retention and equity in the schools.**

According to the Research Project on Educational Achievement and Enrollment Around the World of the World Bank, nearly all the region's children—even those with the lowest income—enter basic education at some point. Despite this "universal" access, many children and youth drop out of primary and secondary school before finishing.

LATIN AMERICA (18 COUNTRIES): DROPOUT RATES AMONG YOUTH 15 TO 19 YEARS, 1990-1999, URBAN ZONES

Global Dropout Rates



Therefore, hemispheric efforts to comply with the goal of universal primary education require attention to both equity and quality.

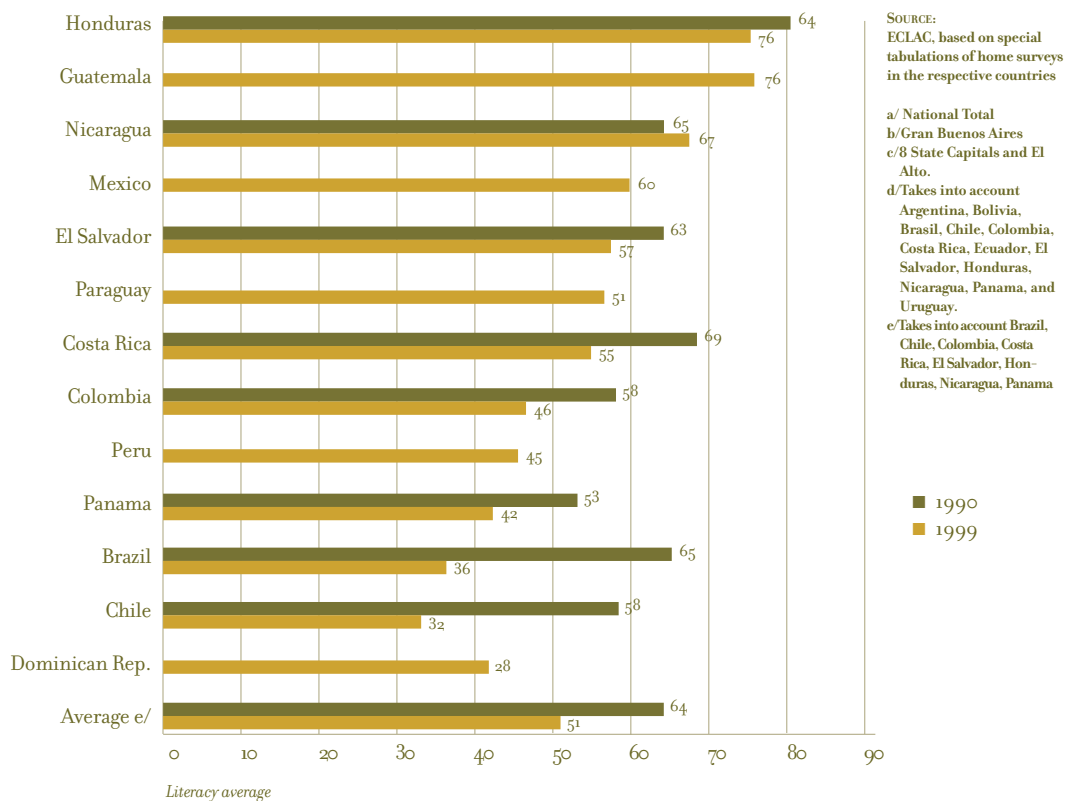
Estimates for the year 2000 by the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) indicate that about 37% of Latin America's teenagers (between 15 and 19 years of age) leave school before graduation. Regional data show that on average one needs at least 12 years of formal education to get a job to prevent poverty or escape from it. The data also show that the social return is higher for those who finish secondary and university education. ECLAC has also found that teens in low-income families are more likely to drop out. In 11 of 17 countries studied by ECLAC, more than half of all

children who quit school come from this type of family. At the same time, in most of the region the demand for skilled labor—workers with secondary and/or tertiary studies—is growing faster than the demand for unskilled labor. Therefore, at a time when the countries of the Americas need more educated citizens, the supply of students with at least a secondary diploma continues to lag behind.

According to the World Bank, the Caribbean's most serious education problems are access and high dropout rates. On average, less than half the children who begin elementary school finish secondary school. Youth unemployment is high in the Caribbean, because that is the age group most likely unemployed. Young people are also

LATIN AMERICA (18 COUNTRIES): DROPOUT RATES AMONG YOUTH 15 TO 19 YEARS, 1990-1999, RURAL ZONES

Global Dropout Rates



more impoverished than other groups, and live in larger families. (World Bank, 2000)

The countries need to increase retention and eliminate educational differences that result from inadequate allocation of financial and human resources in education systems, which induces discrimination on the basis of income, race, and/or gender.

> Restructure the teaching profession to make it more attractive and more responsible for results.

The challenges in teacher training are closely related to concept of the role of the teacher and the reality of their professional careers.

The way teachers are trained depends largely on the way education systems envision their role and work. At the same time, their

pay and working conditions influence the type of person who decides to become a teacher, and how she or he works in the profession. The deterioration of working conditions and low pay have created a teacher shortage, not only in the Americas, but throughout the world, which threatens the quality of teaching and learning.

Hemisphere-wide reforms also require the training of administrators at the school, municipal, provincial, regional, and national levels. They also demand an exhaustive study of the impact of changes on the school curriculum and the school community together, and the updating of teachers to respond effectively to these processes.

The region's challenge is to consider not only how to train teachers initially, but how to continue to update their skill as educators

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to respond to the system's new demands. It is also necessary to evaluate teachers' performance, with the main goal being to improve classroom work to ensure meaningful learning.

➤ **Hemispheric cooperation**

Finally, it is necessary to stimulate hemispheric cooperation in the areas of equity and quality, secondary education reform, and teacher training, pursuant to the above-mentioned recommendations of the

education ministers of the Americas. There must be even greater support from technical cooperation agencies to generate hemispheric projects that effectively address these concerns. In addition, it will be necessary to strengthen consultation with civil society and the work of the Inter-American Committee on Education (CIE), while expanding national, sub-regional, and hemispheric dialogues to permit continuous attention to the challenge of education financing to ensure quality and equity.

Science and Technology

→ MANDATE

At the Third Summit, leaders recognized the development of scientific and technological capacity as essential for building knowledge-based societies. Hemispheric cooperation was highlighted as a mechanism to promote popularization of science and technology, strengthen high-level human capital development for research and innovation, and further refine science and technology indicators.

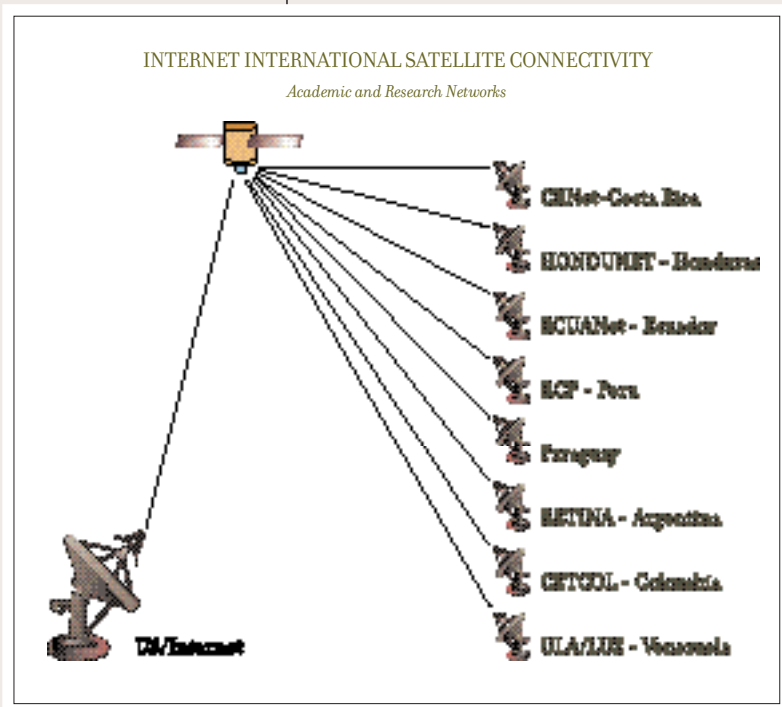
OVERALL PROGRESS

National programs of science and technology development are recognized as a key component of reaching national goals of business development to compete in international markets. On the occasion of approving a \$25.26 million loan to Chile in May 2003, the World Bank's Lead Science and Technology Specialist, Lauritz Holm-

Nielsen, stated: "By strengthening Chile's own scientific research network, and enabling Chilean scientists to interact with their peers in Europe and North America, these projects boost Chile's leap forward to develop an innovative capacity matching that of many developed countries. They also help the Government implement a policy framework and coordinated strategy to stimulate and sustain scientific innovation."

At the hemispheric level, the OAS Office of Science and Technology is the Technical Secretariat to a number of important scientific networks, including the Inter-American Commission on Science and Technology, and the Inter-American Network on Science and Technology Indicators. In this capacity, the OAS Office of Science and Technology provides permanent technical advice in science and technology, especially to national councils of science and technology, political bodies of the Organization, other internal bodies, and various units promoting—among other objectives—technical cooperation in issues related to the implementation and formulation of policies, strategies, programs, projects, and initiatives in science and technology. In this way the Office has also contributed to the popularization of the field.

RedHUCyT connected for the first time, most of the countries of the region to the Internet years ago. The new goal is that the OAS Office of Science and Technology, given its limited resources—and conscious of the OAS's current role—and the mandates in this area—focuses on promoting the development of a more advanced level of interconnections, therefore opening new possibilities of cooperation in advanced scientific and technological applications.



REACTIVATION OF THE INTER-AMERICAN METROLOGY SYSTEM



SIM has been reactivated with the support of the OAS. SIM is comprised of national metrology institutes from the 34 countries of the Americas. Created to promote international, particularly Inter-American, and regional cooperation in metrology, it is committed to the implementation of a Global Measurement System within the Americas, in which all users can have confidence. SIM is essential for the economic integration process that the region is currently facing.

Through the efforts in the area of Information Technology and Connectivity, the OAS Office of Science and Technology—through RedHUCyT, the Hemisphere Wide Inter-University Scientific and Technological Information Network—connected for first time most of the Hemisphere’s countries to the Internet years ago. The new goal of the OAS in this area is the development of more advanced level of interconnections, therefore opening new possibilities of cooperation in advanced scientific and technological applications.

CHALLENGES

The limited level of resources represents the main problem confronted by national governments, and the OAS Office of Science and Technology, for the implementation of the Summit mandates. The

importance of science and technology in the process of development, reduction of poverty, and improvement of living conditions of the countries of the Hemisphere, has been widely recognized by the Heads of State and Government of the Americas and the ministers of the Hemisphere through the Summit process. There is wide recognition of the need for evidence-based decision making, requiring quality data for specific benchmarks and measuring progress. A higher level of resources for the follow-up of the mandates would be very beneficial. Additional resources would facilitate the use of this information in public and private policy decisions. Conscious that the level of development in science and technology of the region is unequal, more resources would particularly help countries with smaller economies.