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PRESENTATION BY HAZEL BROWN, ON BEHALF OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY CARIBBEAN  
FORUM, OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE DRAFT DECLARATION OF  
COMMITMENT OF PORT OF SPAIN - FIFTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS

**(Forum held in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago on October 30-31, 2008)**

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### **Introduction**

On October 30-31, 2008, 140 civil society representatives from 12 countries of the Caribbean convened at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. They came from a diverse sectors to formulate recommendations in preparation for the Fifth Summit of the Americas, "Securing Our Citizens' Future by Promoting Human Prosperity, Energy Security and Environmental Sustainability" to be held in Trinidad and Tobago in April 2009.

The Caribbean Sub Regional Civil Society Forum, which received support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), was organised to prepare Caribbean civil society organizations (CSOs) to participate in the Summit by mobilizing social capital towards confronting the contemporary issues facing the Hemisphere. Specifically, a central objective of the Forum was to position the diverse range of expertise and activism of Caribbean civil society to discuss and compile recommendations regarding the themes of the Fifth Summit to be presented to the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG), which will shape the Draft Declaration of Commitment of Port of Spain to be considered by the Heads of State and Governments at the Fifth Summit. A second goal was to raise knowledge and awareness of, and increase involvement in, the Fifth Summit among civil society in the region while providing practical advice to facilitate their participation in the Fifth Summit.

This Forum was hosted by the National Secretariat for the Fifth Summit of the Americas, with the support of the Summits of the Americas Secretariat and the Department of International Affairs of the Organization of American States (OAS), and in collaboration with the civil society organizations Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL) and the Network of NGOs of Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancement of Women. The collaboration between civil society organisations continues with stronger participation by Caribbean people.

### Forum Overview

During two days of deliberation, five open dialogues were held that addressed all of the themes presented in the Draft Declaration of Commitment of Port of Spain, including promoting human prosperity, environmental sustainability and energy security, and strengthening democratic governance, public security, and the Summits of the Americas Process.

The recommendations that arose out of these meetings refer to articles of the Draft Declaration of Commitment of Port of Spain have been circulated for your consideration.

### **Highlights of Recommendations**

We propose that key interest groups be positioned in the Declaration and that the 9 major groups as designated by the UN be explicitly recognized (women, youth and children, business and industry, local governments, science and technology, workers and trade unions, indigenous people, farmers and NGOs).

We exhort the member states to include in the preamble a specific commitment to put in place the necessary national legislation to make operational all of the multilateral agreements to which they have subscribed.

We recognize that human prosperity necessarily includes the concept of health and urge member states to make commitments to develop health services nationally so that all citizens can access and benefit from good health services. These efforts must include consideration of access to quality education, access to and availability of food and adequate nutrition.

We request that the member states include reference to the UN Charter and the Earth Charter in the preamble (paragraph 2) of the Declaration of Commitment of Port of Spain.

We urge member states to include in the Declaration a commitment on the part of the member states to fully implement the Inter-American Convention against Corruption (IACAC).

It has been stated that Latin American and the Caribbean is the most violent region in the world; however, the Draft Declaration contains only three paragraphs related to strengthening public security. We believe that greater attention should be paid to public security in the draft Declaration. Specifically, we ask for consideration of the following issues as they relate to public security: domestic violence and child abuse, drug addiction and its relationship with behavioral problems and mental illnesses, especially among children, and psychological approaches to dealing with criminal behavior.

We call upon governments to work in collaboration with civil society in favor of institutionalizing active and real participation by civil society organizations in the Summits of the Americas Process. We urge member states to support meaningful and effective spaces for civil society interface with governments at the Summit. We also recommend that governments include civil society representatives as part of their official delegations to the various meetings and forums that are held in the framework of the inter-American system to serve as advisors. Governments must likewise ensure that appropriate funding is made available to facilitate participation by civil society delegates in these meetings.

### **Particularities of the Caribbean**

The small islands of the Caribbean have certain particularities which must be captured in the discussions and commitments of the 5th Summit

- SIDS Vulnerabilities
- HIV/AIDS

- Food Security

We also want specially to put on the table the question of Cuba's exclusion and the need for a different and respectful vision for Haiti.

### **Strategic Recommendations from Caribbean Forum**

We wish now to present four strategic recommendations from the Caribbean sub region for the consideration of the SIRG;

#### 1. Action to Strengthen Effective Civil Society Participation

We suggest that the Declaration of Commitments enhance and strengthen the partnership between governments and civil society through reiteration of the principle of Article 6 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter related to the rights and responsibilities of citizens to participate in the decisions related to their own development, and reference to Articles 26 (last sentence) and 27 (first sentence) of the Democratic Charter.

We further suggest that having recognized civil society participation as a right, not as a privilege, the Declaration should include a commitment by governments to institutionalize interactive civil society participation in the design, development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of regional and national policies, programmes and projects;

To ensure repeated, dynamic, broad, and diverse consultations support civil society organizations and their activities through the establishment of a regional agency which would provide funding and thus facilitate their effective partnering with governments in realizing the goals set out in the Declaration and related documents before the next Summit.

Continue after the Summit a virtual interactive civil society network from the pertinent office of the OAS, to serve as a link among citizen initiatives in the Hemisphere, disseminate information on good practices, provide information on Summit agreements, and other relevant data.

Create a citizenship observatory to monitor of the fulfillment of commitments established in the Summit Plan of Action.

The current format of the formal dialogues, which includes prepared statements, must adapt to allow unscripted dialogue between civil society and governments. Formal dialogues must result in concrete results—feasible actions that can be easily evaluated. One possibility is to divide the meeting into smaller working groups in which government representatives and civil society participate according to their geographic and thematic interests.

#### 2. Fight Against Corruption

We urge member states to formalize civil society's participation in the meetings of the Experts Committee of the Follow-Up Mechanism of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption, and could be permanent observers of the committee's activities.

We call attention to the need for states to support and promote the participation of civil society organizations in the follow-up mechanism of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption, specially, in the preparation of its independent reports. We call attention to the lack of participation by civil society organizations in the Caribbean region.

### 3. Gender Equity

We recommend the adoption of a hemispheric policy of gender balance in legislative and political party structures and in the OAS Secretariat by 2015.

Institute mandatory hemispheric gender policies to build a culture of acceptance of women as a critical part of national development to eliminate gender-based poverty and to reduce disparities between men and women in the workplace through an integrated approach that incorporates a gender perspective in employment policies.

Ensure independence in the follow-up mechanism of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará).

Ensure that the efforts made by the OAS and its member states to ensure equality between women and men and the human rights of women in the hemisphere are coordinated with the efforts made by the United Nations and other regional and subregional inter-governmental forums and organizations in which OAS member states also participate. We want more active role by the CIM in the Fifth Summit process.

### 4. Labour Issues

It is necessary for the Fifth Summit to define a strategy for equitable growth in which the creation of fitting and decent jobs and greater social inclusion are core development objectives.

To improve their structural competitiveness and, at the same time, raise their productivity to drive down inequality and poverty, Caribbean countries must implement sectoral and subnational policies that stimulate investment in every size of enterprise, increase productivity, and create employment in labor-intensive sectors.

The fight against exclusion and poverty must include access for all to a decent job and efforts to tackle poverty and unemployment jointly. The foregoing requires: i) implementation of international labor standards; ii) more employment opportunities for men and women so that they can access decent jobs and incomes; iii) increased coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all; and, iv) consolidation of the tripartisan approach and social dialogue.

**Active Democracy Network**

This is a project coordinated by the PARTICIPA Corporation of Chile in association with the Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL) and the Venezuelan Institute of Social and Political Studies (INVESP) in which a network of civil society organizations from 24 countries participate. Its central objective is to inform citizens and CSOs about the processes of the Summits of the Americas, the commitments assumed by governments there and how these are linked with a country's development and the life of its citizens. Furthermore, it attempts to follow up the commitments which governments acquire and their level of implementation.

The second stage of Civil Society's Monitoring Strategy for the Quebec and Mar de Plata Plan of Action is currently being carried out. The initiative to monitor the commitments which were assumed by governments at the Quebec and Mar de Plata Summits corresponds to the deep conviction that the Summits processes offer a complementary opportunity to those already existing at national level for the voice of organized civil society to be heard, as well as for the defense of an effective commitment on the part of governments to advance with concrete actions in a set of themes which are relevant to strengthening democracy and the achievement of higher degrees of development.

In this context, an Evaluation Index of Governmental Compliance (EIGC) has been produced to evaluate to what extent, in the opinion of civil society, each government has made progress during a given period in the compliance of the agreements adopted by the Inter-American system. The EIGC is thus a channel of expression for civil society participating in the process, since we are able to express ourselves regarding how much we value or criticize what governments have or have not done.