



CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION IN THE SUMMITS
OF THE AMERICAS PROCESS
Sub Regional Civil Society Forum
October 30 - 31, 2008
Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

OEA/Ser.E
SCCA/Foro-3/08
31 October 2008
Original: English

RECOMMENDATIONS

CARIBBEAN SUB REGIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM
IN PREPARATION FOR THE FIFTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS:
“SECURING OUR CITIZENS’ FUTURE BY PROMOTING HUMAN PROSPERITY,
ENERGY SECURITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY”

(October 30-31, 2008 - Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago)

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On October 30-31, 2008, 140 civil society representatives from the Caribbean convened at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago 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. 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.

During two days of deliberation, five open dialogues were held that addressed all of the themes presented in the 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, [GRIC/DC-V/doc.1/08](#). The list of the participants of the Caribbean Sub Regional Civil Society Forum is included as an annexed to this document.

RECOMMENDATIONS

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. We propose that some key interest groups be positioned in the Draft 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).
2. 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.

STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION

3. We suggest that the Declaration provide the framework for enhancing and strengthening 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; 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. We furthermore urge governments to work in good faith and seek to build mutual trust levels with us.

4. We additionally urge member states to undertake the necessary actions to ensure that civil society organizations are able to obtain juridical personality.

HUMAN PROSPERITY

5. 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.
6. Regarding reference to vulnerable groups, we request the inclusion of the elderly as a vulnerable group, particularly in paragraphs 5 and 6. We urge member states to commit to conduct research into the structural reasons for existing inequalities, and including monitoring and evaluation into identifying vulnerability.
7. In paragraph 5 as well, we request the member states to make reference to persisting in their efforts to enact and enforce minimum wage legislation within the region.
8. In the discourse on poverty in paragraphs 5, 6, & 7 the commitment fails to reaffirm the right to an adequate standard of living as a sine qua non of human prosperity. The discussion on poverty alleviation/eradication must always highlight poverty as a violation of human rights and place governments in a position of a mandatory obligation to fulfill the right to an adequate standard of living for everyone.
9. With regard to the macroeconomic policies encouraged in paragraph 7 of the draft Declaration, we recognize that this is a top down approach, where further multi-sectoral consultation is needed in order to ensure adequate consideration for protecting the environment, ensuring gender equality, and addressing social marginalization.
10. In paragraph 8, we request the member states to make reference the creation of more decent and productive employment opportunities in the formal sector including the use of technology transfer and foreign direct investment to support creation of decent and productive employment. This plan must specifically address workplace discrimination due to HIV/AIDS, sexual identity, and gender orientation and also should consider programs that will build capacity to promote the creation of employment opportunities.
11. We ask that paragraph 9 referring to the rights of migrants, end at “full observance of labour laws”.

12. With regard to the commitments proposed in paragraph 10, we urge the member states to commit to eradicating child labour before or in the same time period as that applied to eliminating forced labour. Additionally, “women” should be removed from this commitment, given that women and children are two separate groups.
13. With regard to trade, we request that governments assess the impact of decisions to enter trade and business agreements on the wider public. To this end, there should be greater dissemination of information on these topics to the general public.
14. Replace the phrase “social services” as used throughout this section with either “amenities” or “basic needs” given that water, housing, healthcare, food and sanitation are key to human survival and if one can achieve that then they move to the next level which is that of social services. We consider that the term ‘affordable’ should also be inserted to qualify the “access for all men and women”.
15. We request member states to address in the draft Declaration the promotion of entrepreneurship and community based development, including attention to access to credit and business development services and the involvement of youth in these activities.
16. The issue of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights needs to be specifically included and addressed in discussions around the reform of constitutional rights, human rights, legislation and discrimination. In a Caribbean context, this particular group, is often left out of the discourse and is therefore rarely addressed or benefit from any reform processes.
17. With specific regard to Haiti, we request that the member states encourage a cancelation of Haiti’s debt because it is a major impediment to all human prosperity initiatives.
18. With regard to the development of a gender-sensitive hemispheric strategy to reform secondary education set forth in paragraph 25, we urge member states to include the principle of “brain-readiness” and age-appropriate curricula in order to increase reading levels, decrease crime, and encourage high levels of self-esteem among youth. Placement exams, common in the Caribbean, should be reconsidered given their potentially negative impact on youth development. Additionally, states should attempt to eliminate legislation that allows for school corporal punishment and instead provide teachers with the appropriate training and resources to deal with classroom challenges in non-violent ways. We furthermore urge the member states to commit to achieving a secondary education enrollment rate of 100%, rather than 75%.
19. Regarding health issues, consider developing projects that involve partnerships between the government and civil society to provide education, especially through the use of ICTs to high risk populations. Such partnerships have the possibility to address systemic issues such as discriminatory legislation, health care workers’ attitudes towards LGBT persons so that such persons feel at liberty to access the health services provided by the Government.
20. We request the member states to commit to supporting the development of sustainable economic activities for persons living positively with HIV.
21. With regard to food security, we request that the member states endorse the promotion of local goods to support efforts to stimulate economic growth and reduce poverty. Member states must also recognize their responsibility in ensuring the safety of imported food.

22. We urge member states to recognize in the Declaration that education is a human right, not a privilege.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND ENERGY SECURITY

23. 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.
24. Regarding paragraph 33, we suggest the deletion of “also” in the final sentence in order to emphasize the primary importance of the development and use of alternative sources of energy. In addition the paragraph can be strengthened by making reference to “pledging support to governments in the region that are already leading the way in terms of alternative sources of energy.
25. At the end of paragraph 36, add text that will explain how the member states will achieve this commitment, including by the harmonizing of requirements for and reporting on energy and environmental developments and basing these on international codes of best practice for the energy and extractive industries in compliance with the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and for the new biofuel industries.
26. Regarding paragraph 41, we suggest that specific reference be made to “encourage and make use of traditional knowledge” in respect of disaster preparedness and that the commitment to “encourage improved education at an early age on disaster preparedness” is included.
27. In paragraph 42 we request the inclusion of the concepts of “government support for the development of an informed citizenry through data collection and reporting on environmental sustainability and energy security”, “greater public accessibility to such information” and “the use of modern technology to enhance environmental sustainability”. We also suggest that either in this paragraph or as a separate one, the member states reiterate the commitment to increase budgetary allocations for the promotion of environmental sustainability. We also suggest that a third paragraph be added which reinforces the relationship between energy security and environmental security.
28. We suggest that explicit mention be made of the reality of climate change at the beginning of paragraph 45, especially its impact on rising sea levels and our own vulnerability in this regard.
29. We suggest that paragraph 46 be framed in a manner as to include the concept of public management and ownership as it relates to beaches (so as to guarantee public access) and integrated management of waterways.
30. We suggest that governments make more specific commitments to tackling the critical issues of waste disposal and environmental degradation, by including a commitment towards improving solid waste disposal, including of a medical nature, to prevent environmental degradation especially in relation to preventing pollution of waterways, and by including a commitment to support more robust efforts in preventing environmental degradation.
31. We suggest the inclusion of a paragraph committing governments to the adoption of policies that are more stringent with regard to banned or dangerous chemicals and at the same time pledging support for the implementation of organic agricultural practices.

STRENGTHENING DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

32. 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).
33. In regard to the fight against all forms of corruption and unethical behavior, we ask member states to include in paragraph 52, specific reference to the need to fight white collar crime, given its role as an instigator of violent crime.
34. We ask member states in paragraph 58 to include reference to the development of a "Participatory Governance Index" which would include the ability to recall, voting by conscience, referenda, etc.
35. With regard to the development of the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we request that the member states include in paragraph 55 a commitment to accelerate and conclude the process before the end of 2009.

PUBLIC SECURITY

36. 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, psychological approaches to dealing with criminal behavior.
37. We urge member states to recognize within the Declaration that the entire region has porous borders and therefore this issue must be addressed; particularly with regard to the narcotics trade, gun trafficking, and human trafficking. We ask member states to commit to the modernization of security services; for example, through intelligence gathering and forensic analysis. We also ask member states to include a commitment to seriously address the elimination of the importation of illegal drugs.
38. We are concerned with the problem of armed violence and ask that reference to this scourge be included in paragraph 48 of the draft Declaration. We exhort governments to commit to the Geneva Declaration and other international conventions related to armed violence. We are also concerned with the relationship between gender and armed violence and ask member states to add a paragraph in the draft Declaration which speaks to the need for gender analysis on armed violence.
39. Regarding paragraph 50 of the draft Declaration, we ask for the inclusion of language that will encourage the use of music, art and culture to positively influence our youth and to eliminate or suppress the negative and violent messages to which they are currently subject. Additionally, we request that specific reference is made to the crucial role of faith-based and community organizations working on the ground to prevent violence and foster a culture of peace.

STRENGTHENING THE SUMMITS OF THE AMERICAS, FOLLOW-UP AND IMPLEMENTATION EFFECTIVENESS

40. 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.
41. We call upon the governments of the member states that participate in the Active Democracy Network project to adopt and implement the recommendations for follow up on Summits mandates including those set forth in the Active Democracy project country reports.
42. We encourage member states to support the establishment within the OAS of a mechanism to monitor and evaluate implementation of Summits of the Americas mandates.
43. With regard to implementation of existing and future Summits of the Americas mandates, we encourage member states to establish priorities and set specific targets to achieve the goals of the Summit. Member states should consider the development of a monitoring and implementation board which would include members of civil society in order to monitor the implementation of civil society recommendations.
44. We support retaining the content of paragraphs 61 and 62 of the draft Declaration of Commitment of Port of Spain and furthermore encourage member states to call for greater collaboration between Ministers of Finance and civil society.

ANNEX

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

**CARIBBEAN SUB REGIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM
IN PREPARATION FOR THE FIFTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS: “SECURING
OUR CITIZENS’ FUTURE BY PROMOTING HUMAN PROSPERITY, ENERGY
SECURITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY”**

October 30-31, 2008

Port of Spain, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago



October 31st, 2008 / 31 de octubre de 2008



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