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SUMMIT TALK: CONNECTING THE AMERICAS – PARTNERS FOR PROSPERITY

(Report of the Virtual Forum held from February 08 to March 07, 2012)

1. INTRODUCTION

This summary presents the main observations and recommendations from the virtual consultation **Summit Talk: Connecting the Americas – Partners for Prosperity**, carried out by the Summits of the Americas Secretariat from February 08 to March 07, 2012.

The virtual consultation had 351 visits to the forum pages in the Summits Virtual Community (SVC), with effective participation of 32 users from 17 countries, all nationals from OAS Member States. There was an especially active participation of representatives from civil society organizations (CSOs).

The forum allowed for an enriching dialogue in which the main regional physical integration challenges of the hemisphere were highlighted, with a particular focus on how cooperation on infrastructure can contribute for the development of the Americas.

2. MAIN COMMENTS AND CONCERNS FROM PARTICIPANTS

The main points highlighted by forum participants were the pivotal role of governments in the promotion of infrastructural cooperation, as well as the need to increase public-private partnerships in order to advance regional physical integration projects in the Americas. Improved telecommunications, roads and railways were described as the most important factors to promote economic and social development in the region. Some comments also addressed the importance of mainstreaming environmental sustainability in the implementation of such projects.

As a general consensus, participants also agreed that regional physical integration faces challenges beyond infrastructural factors, reaching cultural, economic and political differences among countries. Participants pointed out that more cooperative legal frameworks on intraregional migration, trade, and employment, which should incorporate inclusive policies regarding disabled and under-qualified workforce, would expand businesses and cultural exchange across countries.

3. MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSALS

In order to address the aforementioned challenges, the following recommendations were proposed:

- To invest more in communication and transportation systems, such as broadband internet, roads, railways, and electricity transmission, through public-private partnerships and multinational infrastructural projects between neighboring countries, consequently generating an important cultural, touristic and commercial exchange in the Americas.
- To join efforts to invest in infrastructure projects designed to meet the socio-economic necessities of each region of the Americas. For example, as cited in the debate, the Nicaraguan inter-ocean canal.
- To promote regional physical integration under the precepts of environmental responsibility, assuring the development of sustainable projects and exemplary environmental standards in the Americas.
- To promote regional physical integration under the precepts of social responsibility, advancing inclusive and fair work policies as well as migration policies, along with human resources assistance in order to facilitate employment in different parts of the Americas.
- To develop education policies that provide opportunities to younger generations to interact with the new social dynamics through the improvement of technological cooperation.