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CONNECTING THE AMERICAS: ADVANCING PARTNERSHIPS FOR ACTION

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

March 18, 2013 – Washington, D.C.

INTRODUCTION

On April 14 and 15, 2012, the heads of state and government and ministers of foreign affairs of the OAS member states met at the Sixth Summit of the Americas under the theme “Connecting the Americas: Partners for Prosperity.” On that occasion they adopted 47 mandates for regional cooperation intended to improve the integration of physical infrastructure, to reduce poverty and inequality, to reduce the risk of disasters and improve disaster-risk management, to increase access to and the use of information and communication technologies, and to strengthen citizen security in the region.

Almost a year after the Sixth Summit of the Americas, the OAS General Secretariat, through the Summits of the Americas Secretariat and with the support of the Department of International Affairs, the Department of Sustainable Development, the Department of Social Development and Employment, and the Department of Public Security, organized a forum with civil society and social actors, focused on the implementation phase of the Summits process. This event, “Connecting the Americas: Advancing Partnerships for Action,” was held on March 18, 2013.

This forum provided the participants with an opportunity to exchange ideas and offer comments for consideration by the OAS member states on the implementation of the Sixth Summit’s mandates in three key areas:

1. Energy, the Environment, and Infrastructure
2. Social and Economic Inclusion
3. Citizen Security

The resulting recommendations are set out in this report for the information of all stakeholders in the Summits process, and they will also be presented at a future meeting of the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG) for consideration by the OAS member states.

**TOPIC I:
ENERGY, THE ENVIRONMENT, AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

A. INTRODUCTION

This summary contains the main observations and recommendations that arose from the on-line consultation “Connecting the Americas: Advancing Partnerships for Action on Energy, the Environment, and Infrastructure,” which was held by the OAS Summits of the Americas Secretariat and the Department of Sustainable Development, with the support of the Department of International Affairs, from March 5 to 15, 2013. This on-line consultation was a part of the Secretariat’s “Connecting the Americas: Advancing Partnerships for Action” follow-up program, the aim of which is to make progress with the implementation of the commitments agreed on at the Sixth Summit of the Americas. On March 18, the proposal drawn up by the representatives of civil society at the follow-up forum on the Sixth Summit of the Americas was analyzed and validated.

The forum, held in the OAS Main Building on March 18 and attended by representatives from 15 countries, had the following objective: to prepare a series of thematic recommendations on Summit implementation and follow-up, which would be presented to the OAS member states at a future meeting of the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG).

For this, the results of the on-line consultation on the topics (held through the Summit Virtual Community) were first presented, together with summaries by OAS specialists on the relevant programs and political processes. A debate was then held on the follow-up initiatives (progress, status, challenges, recommendations, and work with local agencies and government officials), on the role of social actors in their implementation efforts (implementation monitoring, dissemination of information on follow-up and implementation efforts, cooperation with other stakeholders), and on how social actors can be more actively involved in the implementation process. The work was divided between three groups:

Group 1: Energy, the Environment, and Infrastructure (Columbus Room)

Group 2: Social and Economic Inclusion (Miranda Room)

Group 3: Citizen Security

The results below were those produced by Group 1: *Energy, the Environment, and Infrastructure*.

B. MAIN COMMENTS AND CONCERNS OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Among other topics, the forum participants noted that it was essential to promote environmental responsibility within society, together with an awareness of renewable energy. The Americas offer vast natural resources that can be used sustainably to generate energy. Cultural change through education and raising awareness of renewable energy leads to a change in people’s mentality regarding the environment. Within communities, strategies for the efficient use of energy and the adoption of renewable sources must be promoted. Without these actions to drive the cultural change sought, the goals of sustainability to which we all aspire will not be attainable. The change must come from the authorities toward the public (top-to-bottom), but also from the public to their

authorities as a demand served on them (bottom-up). Policies impose changes in behavior and encourage cultural changes. But the authorities are also guided, or at least should be guided, by the demands of the electorate. For that reason, the citizenry plays an essential role in the development of any policy. Civil society must demand that the government encourage and promote the sustainable use of renewable resources. Through those efforts, future generations will develop a greater awareness of these topics and will act accordingly. The forum participants stated that intersectoral and public-private partnerships were vital in bringing about cultural and political change to ensure sustainability in the use made of energy resources.

They also spoke of technological progress, which offers opportunities to make more effective use of resources. For example, the use of nanotechnology increases the efficiency of photovoltaic panels and so private investment in technologies of that kind must be encouraged, the use of wind energy requires locations where windmills can be installed; hydroelectric developments must be implemented in such a way as to minimize the impact of the reservoirs they create, etc. These are some ideas related to the level of investment required by the development and introduction of nonconventional energy sources. Technological progress can be achieved through financial and fiscal incentives for research and development.

Mention was made of a series of obstacles that hamper the expansion of decentralized renewable-source micro-generation projects. For example, preference is generally given to large-scale electricity generation projects, intended to supply large urban areas, to the detriment of small-scale projects that would benefit small communities in greater need. The economic interests in projects of this kind play against the decentralized expansion of renewable sources.

The economic interests and financial needs associated with the development of new, more sustainable energy infrastructure stand as unavoidable obstacles to progress with new sources of energy. A dialogue must be established with the owners of conventional generation sources, and with the agencies that fund the development of nonconventional sources. At the same time, the public—as a sovereign power and also as the provider of the state’s tax revenue—must not only be present at that dialogue, but also guide it.

The topic of government policies related to renewable energy was also addressed on the agenda. It was noted that the implementation of policies and standards to promote sustainability and energy efficiency must also address the social, economic, and environmental dimensions. A segmented view of reality is ineffective when it comes to defining policies and guidelines for action. At the same time, energy is a crosscutting topic that affects the economy, growth, industry, employment, the environment, national security, etc. All these are different aspects or facets of the three realities referred to above. An energy policy that does not offer a complete approach and concentrates on one single dimension, ignoring the others, is doomed to failure.

A unified state policy that encourages the use of renewable energy must be a long-term proposition, requiring a framework of institutional and financial stability in order to attain the goals set for it. Through laws that promote the deployment of renewable energy technologies and studies that determine the viability and potential of different sources, governments can create confidence among the investors interested in developing them. At the same time, government policies in favor of renewable energy create new sources of employment and strengthen national energy security. One final aspect of this effort is the interconnection of electricity systems at the national, supranational, and regional levels. This not only strengthens the energy security of each country and its

interconnected systems; it also creates greater stability in the flow of electricity that, in the case of renewable sources, tends to be intermittent by nature, with the exception of geothermal energy.

Emphasis was placed on the importance of a complete regional diagnostic assessment related to the availability of renewable sources of energy, to include projections of demand in the medium and long terms. That diagnostic assessment would also serve as a way to promote best practices in the areas of renewable energy, energy efficiency, and climate change.

One key topic raised by several of the participants was energy development and its relationship with indigenous communities and aboriginal peoples. The ties between indigenous communities and the land are very close. For these peoples, it is more than a simple equation in which land offers an economic value that can be exploited. For aboriginal communities, land has a deep-rooted spiritual value. Reconciling the spiritual and economic approaches to land is a difficult task. Indigenous communities and aboriginal peoples have much to offer in the debate on the innate value of land, respect for the environment, and the importance given to nature. In a certain way, the modern view of “sustainable development” responds to some of those concerns, but not to all of them.

Finally, reference was made to the global benefits offered by energy mixes based on renewable resources. Burning oil creates carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas that is causing the increased rapidity of global warming. By reducing its carbon footprint, a country creates environmental benefits for itself and for the entire planet.

C. MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSALS

1. Awareness campaigns related to renewable energy, energy efficiency, and the importance of a healthy environment for lasting economic and social development, climate change, and human rights; together with the need for environmental restoration, taking into account the experience and wisdom of local inhabitants.
 - a. Promote processes to exchange knowledge with indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, and *campesinos*, to identify sustainable ways of protecting the environment.
2. Promotion of inter-sectoral and public-private partnerships as a tool to bring about cultural and political change toward sustainability in tapping energy resources. Coordination must take place with the regional and global organizations that work on this topic and have information about energy, the environment, and infrastructure in the region, such as the IDB, World Bank, MERCOSUR, CAF, UNASUR, ECLAC, etc., avoiding the duplication of efforts.
3. Promotion of financial and fiscal incentives to encourage research and development in renewable energy, innovation, respect for economic rights arising from inventions, and sharing economic benefits through binding agreements.
4. Strengthening and creating the capacity for dialogue among governments, indigenous and aboriginal peoples, companies, funding agencies, and involved sectors of civil society,

regarding both conventional and nonconventional energy sources, with a view to establishing development programs and taking advantage of renewable energy, in accordance with the socioeconomic, environmental, and cultural realities of the communities, while respecting the communities' human rights and placing priority on local and community solutions.

- a. Multi-sectoral networks for publicizing information on projects and processes will be created and strengthened, to connect organizations and governments that are taking action on topics related to the mandates of the Sixth Summit of the Americas.
5. Implementation of long-term policies and standards to promote sustainability and energy efficiency, addressing the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of energy and taking human rights into account.
 - a. Preparation of a guide for the development and implementation of infrastructure projects, the result of reviewing and standardizing the region's regulations and practices to produce effective evaluations that pay attention to the social (human rights), environmental, and economic impact.
 6. Strengthening the institutional and financial frameworks that are geared toward economic and social growth with low carbon emissions, respecting human rights and undertaking to abide by those institutional and financial frameworks.
 - a. Incorporation of instruments for strategic evaluations of the impact on human and social rights for decision-making on projects, policies, and institutional and financial frameworks, including civil society in those evaluations.
 7. Expansion of renewable energy markets as a tool for creating jobs and developing the regional economy and its component national economies.
 8. Comprehensively assess the best possible option for improving access to and the availability of energy, considering the economic, environmental, and social implications of interconnecting both national and supranational/regional electricity systems as a way to consolidate the region's energy security and to create greater stability in the flow of electricity which, in the case of renewable sources, tends to be intermittent because of their very nature.
 9. Respect the rights of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, including the promotion of participation by indigenous communities and aboriginal peoples in the debate on the use of energy resources.
 10. Incorporate the possible impacts of the suggested policies and projects on climate change and energy—for example, the possible greenhouse gas emissions of large dams—in appraising the global benefits offered by energy mixes based on renewable resources as a way to combat global warming.

General recommendations:

The OAS should establish, as a reference framework for crosscutting application, principles to ensure the inclusion of a sustainable approach in the development of energy and infrastructure in the region, including:

- Assessments of the environmental impact of projects and activities;
- The principle of precaution;
- The principle of non-regression.

TOPIC II: SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INCLUSION

The working group on social and economic inclusion opened with a presentation by the OAS Department of Social Development and Employment, reporting on progress with the adoption of the Inter-American Social Charter over the past seven years. The seven areas of social policy were explained, along with the conditions necessary for their realization. The topics and crosscutting approaches it contains were also presented, as well as a description of the work that was currently underway in designing a plan of action for the Charter.

It was further explained that this plan of action is informed by the OAS's historical efforts in dialoguing with the labor ministries through the Ministerial Meetings and through the Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL), and in strengthening labor inspections in order to strengthen justice in the workplace.

Against that backdrop, the group agreed with the approach being developed by the OAS, on the basis of the terms of the Charter, regarding the urgency of achieving social and economic inclusion through decent work, without any discrimination, particularly of a racial or ethnic nature.

The working group agreed that the workplace was a privileged location, where the macroeconomy directly connects with the well-being of families.

The participants stated that in dealing with the topic of people of African descent, the Charter was very limited from the point of view of democracy and Afro-descendants in that it failed to address the relationship between poverty, ethnic origin, and race, which causes questions to arise about the very existence of truly democratic systems throughout the region. They said that in countries with high rates of racism and social discrimination, those factors were combining, and the statistics were reflecting the relationship between ethnic groups and the poverty of Afro-descendant and indigenous groups.

It was therefore necessary to extend policies for underprivileged groups, particularly for employment among excluded Afro-descendant and indigenous youth, who are the ones who lack high-level education. There was consequently a need for policies targeting these groups to close the gaps of inequality in the areas of health, employment, and social protection.

Mention was made of the challenge posed by the unfavorable relationship between formal and informal work, with the latter prevailing in the region, particularly given the fact that labor ministries only supervise formal work. That leads to other matters, including the topic of pensions and those companies that manage pension funds, which gives rise to the problem of people who, at the end of their working lives, will receive pensions that are tiny in comparison to the wages they earned while employed. This problem is particularly serious in countries like Chile, where the population is aging rapidly.

Emphasis was placed on the employment problems of young people, particularly younger women, who are on occasions overqualified and must accept jobs with a lower added value. That leads again to the structural problem of decent work, and to true corporate social responsibility, in which business ethics that go further than their instrumental use for mere image purposes are essential. The topic of corporate social responsibility has enormous potential, but the idea is not to create a foundation in parallel to the company without respecting labor rights: such respect must be the central point.

Emphasis was placed on relations within the government for developing promotional policies to encourage the economy and decent work, to carry out inspections of working conditions, to involve civil society in monitoring compliance with that, and to involve private enterprise in the creation of wealth and decent work.

There was consensus regarding the importance of inquiring as to who hires people and why they hire them. In other words, what are the true reasons and incentives of employers in hiring workers: whether they do so to meet the labor legislation and other obligations, or whether they do so merely to create the greatest possible levels of profit. In addition, to inquire as to what the value proposal of those businesses is.

Mention was made of the limitations faced by states in creating jobs, on account of which entrepreneurship and SMEs—the region's main employers—needed to be promoted.

Questions were also raised about the supposed role of ministries in labor intermediation, in which it had to be acknowledged that in reality, neither the ministries nor the government in general were job creators (other than positions in the public sector, logically); instead, they are essentially promoters and supervisors, except as regards the production of development policies. The value they add is, in some cases, very low. This could be merely an opportunity for them to request increased resources for programs and projects, which do not translate into benefits. Labor ministries have a role to play, regarding minimum employment regulations.

Statistics for NEETs (young people involved in neither education, employment nor training) indicate that a third of them are women. The idea is that in each of the areas, we conduct an analysis and determine what should be done with each of them.

Reference was made to the problem of low union membership in our countries. The topic of multinationals was raised, together with how they monopolize work, facilitate precarious contracting, and reduce unionization rates. Note was made of the ILO's efforts in promoting the adoption of social protection floors.

In all the variables in the areas of education and poverty is where we see the major stumbling blocks, and it is in those topics that the crosscutting nature of the Charter applies. On the topic of youth, the classical concept holds that an individual is in a process of development, for the family and society--those premises are not met in the case of Afro-descendant communities.

As an example, it was stated that in countries like Costa Rica and Colombia, the cities closest to the ports were those with the highest poverty rates, in spite of being in the areas with the greatest economic impact, and that was where Afro-descendant populations were found. That is in contrast to developed countries, where cities with ports report the highest levels of development.

It is imperative that those sectors be supplied with minimal conditions of health, education, and food for those groups. In Colombia there is a very delicate situation vis-à-vis the topic of armed groups and drug trafficking and, combined with the topic of access to justice, it is in that scenario that Afro-descendant youth must be seen.

Mention was made of the importance that development initiatives include the local viewpoint, in order to reduce the disconnect between development and communities. The topic of economic geographical development, upon analysis, appeared to be a matter of equality.

It was remarked that the region continues to extract its nonrenewable natural resources, which leads to the paradox of having populations excluded from those activities that see their own resources being taken away while they live in poverty.

Finally, the topic of indicators and specific goals was discussed. It was described as one of the challenges of this process, which had to be interconnected with the Millennium Development Goals, and the meeting expressed regret that some countries did not allow themselves to be measured.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Democracy, dialogue, and national and international social participation (permanent forum for Afro-descendant groups in the OAS, allowing them to participate, in particular, at Summits and General Assemblies, and to present specific proposals);
- Education, training, and retraining for participation and inclusion in work, and also for sustainable development (Article 6 of the framework convention on the environment);
- Sustainable development linked to the topic of decent work and decent employment;
- Public policies for social inclusion, with a particular emphasis on the most vulnerable and marginalized groups and sectors;
- Effective policies for territorial development;
- Policies for incentives, investment, and responsible and sustainable development with decent jobs, and with systems for transparency and verifications;
- Basic social protection floors for all;
- Territorial development and inclusion of communities;
- Address the topic of the distribution of resources and regional programs;
- Assess needs from the point of view of small communities;
- Systematize strategies for inclusion and social development that exist in the region and that can be used as a database to benefit from experiences;

- Governments should give more thorough consideration to incentives and market logic;
- Governments should implement public policies for social inclusion and basic social protection floors, allowing the entire population access to basic services;
- Produce a diagnostic study of living conditions and development levels in the most vulnerable communities and sectors, reflecting their realities as closely as possible, and use it to create viable scenarios and projections on the effects of effective public policies;
- To improve the quality of the job market, questions must be asked about those who hire workers: regarding why they do so, the value of their proposals, and the market motivations for hiring. This is of vital importance in identifying whether the motivation is to meet their obligations and thus be more competitive, or whether they merely do so in order to generate more profit;
- The ratification and enforcement of the ILO's basic conventions is essential, along with their effective enforcement, in order to ensure a legal framework that is fair, transparent, and inclusive (Conventions Nos. 81, 87, 98, 29, 105, 118, 138, 182, 100, 111, and 169).

TOPIC III: CITIZEN SECURITY

The working group on the citizen security and transnational organized crime mandates handed down by the Sixth Summit of the Americas noted the following shortcomings in the implementation of those mandates and suggested the following measures in order to overcome them.

A. Conclusions and general proposals

1. **General conclusions**
 - a) Noncompliance. There are shortcomings in compliance with the citizen security mandates on the part of the various authorities involved. This situation arises in all regions of the Hemisphere, English-speaking and Latin America alike;
 - b) Corruption is the main weakness in the institutions responsible for ensuring citizen security and the reason for noncompliance with the mandates;
 - c) Mandates cannot be mere declarations. Summits are not just a photo opportunity.
2. **General proposals**
 - a) States must have concrete goals, with defined actions and time frames. Indicators for the mandates should be established to facilitate the monitoring and evaluation of compliance;
 - b) Empower civil society to audit mandate compliance (regular and more frequent social auditing);
 - c) Create an international observatory, between the OAS and civil society, to deal with the different topics and provide regular, impartial reports.
 - d) Establish consequences for noncompliance.

3. **Specific issues**

- a) Noncompliance or nonratification of conventions. Some countries fail to abide by inter-American conventions that are essential for individual dignity or have not yet ratified them.
- b) Manipulation of statistics. Governments manipulate statistics or make reliable information on crime difficult to obtain. An external auditing system for statistics should be created, the information should be centralized, and states should be obliged to promote access to that information.
- c) Insecurity. The population does not trust the agencies charged with enforcing the law. The security forces should be decentralized, and proposals for local-level citizen security should be strengthened.
- d) In some countries, legal systems are manipulated in pursuit of the political persecution of citizens.
- e) The undertakings of civil society organizations must also be transparent and consistent with the international instruments that protect human rights.