



Organization of  
American States



SUMMITS OF THE AMERICAS VIRTUAL COMMUNITY  
Washington, D.C.

OEA/Ser.E  
CVC/FV-8/12  
5 November 2012  
Original: Spanish

---

## **CONNECTING THE AMERICAS: ADVANCING PARTNERSHIPS TO PROMOTE SOCIAL INCLUSION AND EQUITY IN THE AMERICAS**

(Report of the Virtual Forum held from October 9 to November 4, 2012)

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

This summary sets out the principal observations and recommendations arising from the virtual consultation **Connecting the Americas: Advancing Partnerships to Promote Social Inclusion and Equity in the Americas**, conducted by the Summits Secretariat from October 9 to November 4, 2012. This virtual consultation is part of the follow-up program “Connecting the Americas: Advancing Partnerships for Action,” launched by the Secretariat, the objective of which is to move toward implementation of the commitments made at the Sixth Summit of the Americas.

The forum made it possible to shed light, through first-hand experiences, on the situations encountered by many people in the region in the areas of education, decent employment, health, and necessary conditions for achieving equity, social inclusion, and poverty eradication. Through an exchange of experiences and opinions, it was able to underscore the major challenges still confronting the Americas with regard to inequality, poverty, and social inclusion, and to propose some solutions.

### **2. PARTICIPANTS’ PRINCIPAL OBSERVATIONS AND CONCERNS**

During the forum, the participants focused on poverty and its effects as one of the main burdens borne by societies in the region. Reference was made on several occasions to the fact that, even in boom times, economic earnings did not have an impact on the well-being of society as a whole. In that regard, special emphasis was placed on the difficulties encountered by various groups of society to have access to inclusive, high-quality health care.

One of the conditions deemed most important for eradicating poverty was the opportunity for decent employment for all. However, the concern was expressed that a large percentage of the population did not have access to jobs enabling them to meet their needs.

Furthermore, attention was drawn to the urgent need to shore up education in the region in order to create conditions that make it possible to escape poverty and to develop critical thinking that could provide people with tools for understanding their situation and being able to change it.

Another major challenge facing the region according to the participants was social inclusion of all population groups. Special attention was given to the exclusion suffered by indigenous peoples, populations of African descent, and women. In line with the above, the fact was frequently mentioned that governments and institutions in general were not guided by the general interest of society but rather by the interests of a few or exclusively by electoral considerations, without giving a voice to a large part of civil society.

### **3. PRINCIPAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSALS**

Several measures were proposed to tackle the aforementioned problems:

- Allowing and encouraging the genuine participation of civil society in decision-making processes. The involvement of those affected will lead to a better understanding of the problems by providing more specific details and thus will result in more effective and tangible solutions.
- Fostering institutional transparency and accountability.
- Promoting the establishment of social initiatives to help the poorest communities. One example is the GAVe program (Support Group for University Entrance Exam Candidates), whose objective is to help students in poor communities in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, prepare for these entrance exams (*vestibulares*).
- Designing real and effective inclusion policies for at-risk populations.
- Fostering intercultural dialogue among the different peoples of the Americas.
- Promoting synergies and finding common ground among the different social actors (government, international organizations, civil society, the private sector) in order to establish a shared vision for the social sphere that will constitute a long-term commitment and create responsibilities.
- Reviewing existing government commitments in the areas of employment, education, social inclusion, equity, and poverty. Validating these agreements in the light of diverse studies and diagnostic assessments, and monitoring their progress.
- Encouraging tripartite mechanisms for evaluating public policy results.
- Promoting the creation of an inclusive and affordable educational system that creates a culture of respect, peace, and tolerance. This educational system must also establish the conditions necessary to prevent people from falling into poverty and must ensure that citizens are aware of their rights and have the tools required to play an active role in decision making in their communities.
- Creating more and better employment opportunities and reducing inequalities in the labor sector.
- Opening up more credit opportunities for the most disadvantaged.