

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **ParlAmericas celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary as the institution that promotes parliamentary diplomacy and participation in the inter-American system**

ParlAmericas officially began the celebration of its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary last week in the framework of the [5<sup>th</sup> Gathering of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network](#). Twenty years ago this month, in March 2001, the Parliament of Canada hosted the meeting at which the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA; as ParlAmericas was known until 2011) was formally created by parliamentarians from across the Americas and the Caribbean to serve as a space for inter-parliamentary exchange and cooperation on issues of hemispheric concern.

“It was always a concept of mine and colleagues of mine that [Canada] was not sufficiently active in the Americas and we were becoming more and more active in what we called parliamentary diplomacy ... and from there it was natural that we should be active in trying to establish a forum in the Americas that Canada could participate in – and, as it would turn out, provide the leadership role in forming – an organization that would bring parliamentarians together and allow parliamentary diplomacy to take place with the Americas and with the Caribbean, thus enhancing our relationship in the Americas,” said the inaugural President of FIPA the Honourable Bill Graham, former Canadian parliamentarian and Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the House of Commons in 2001, on the impetus for Canada’s leading role in establishing FIPA.

In commemoration of this landmark occasion, and as a tribute to its role in ParlAmericas’ founding, the Parliament of Canada is hosting the OPN Gathering, which is taking place virtually throughout the month of March. The Honourable Anthony Rota (Canada), Speaker of the House of Commons, the Honourable George Furey (Canada), Speaker of the Senate, along with members of the Executive Committee of the [Canadian Section of ParlAmericas](#) shared [video messages](#) that commenced the anniversary celebrations and invited parliamentary participation in the Gathering. ParlAmericas also premiered a [digital timeline](#) at the opening sessions of the Gathering, which details significant milestones in the institution’s history.

Throughout its 20 years, ParlAmericas has significantly expanded its role in the region, its network of partnerships and collaborations, and the ways in which it continues to uphold its founding mission of facilitating inter-parliamentary exchange on hemispheric priorities. The institution develops tailored resources, provides technical assistance, and coordinates activities related to its three key program pillars: [gender equality](#), [open parliament](#), and [climate change](#). ParlAmericas’ work remains governed by and for

parliamentarians, with members of the Board of Directors and Executive Committee of each programmatic pillar elected in representation of each sub-region of the hemisphere.

Reflecting on the institution's growth, Senator Blanca Ovelar (Paraguay), President of ParlAmericas, shared the following message: "ParlAmericas has become one of the foremost spaces for parliamentary diplomacy in our hemisphere, allowing for rich dialogue and the sharing of parliamentary good practices on themes that are crucial to sustainable development, equal growth, and good governance in the Americas and the Caribbean. This dynamic working space provides access to expertise and resources that support all parliamentarians and legislatures in successfully carrying out our roles in achieving each of these objectives. It is an honour to be part of this organization and I extend my congratulations to all who have contributed to ParlAmericas' past and future success."

The celebration of ParlAmericas' 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary will continue throughout this year, in alignment with each of the organization's major hemispheric gatherings. This will include the launch of a series of video interviews with leaders and partners who have contributed to ParlAmericas' work throughout the last two decades.

For further information on the work carried out by ParlAmericas, and to follow the rest of our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, visit [www.parlamericas.org](http://www.parlamericas.org) and follow @ParlAmericas on social media.