



## DECLARATION

### **15<sup>th</sup> ParlAmericas Plenary Assembly** ***Promoting Inclusive Societies for Sustainable Development***

September 9–12, 2018 | Victoria, Canada

We, parliamentarians representing 26 countries of the Americas and the Caribbean, gathered in Victoria, Canada, from September 9 to 12, 2018, on the occasion of the 15<sup>th</sup> ParlAmericas Plenary Assembly, ***Promoting Inclusive Societies for Sustainable Development***.

During the meeting, we shared valuable experiences and discussed the role of parliaments in contributing to political discourse and action to promote more inclusive societies. Through the dialogue and working sessions, we held productive exchanges on the economic, political and social dynamics that must be considered to ensure that all people, particularly underrepresented or marginalized groups such as those that were the focus of this year's Plenary working sessions -Indigenous women, youth, migrants and forcibly displaced people- can fully access resources, opportunities and human rights, participate in political decision-making, and benefit from economic growth. Our dialogue contemplated the many intersecting factors that can shape experiences of exclusion of these and other groups, including disability, age, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, or economic and other status.

In view of the above and,

#### ***Recognizing:***

That there is an intrinsic and critical relationship between the promotion of inclusive societies and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and that neither can be fully accomplished without the other;

That inclusive societies are those where all people can enjoy human rights and fully participate in social, cultural and political life, and where public authorities, institutions and norms foster democracy, diversity, pluralism, acceptance, non-discrimination, non-violence, equality of opportunity, dignity, solidarity and security;

That the legislative branch plays a vital role in consolidating more inclusive societies through the exercise of its powers of representation, lawmaking and political oversight of actions by the public administration;

That gender inequality is a significant determinant of poverty and undermines the effectiveness of sustainable development policies, limiting women's access to resources and their effective participation in all levels of policy and decision-making processes;

That our countries face challenges in promoting inclusive economic growth, equal access to labour markets for women, youth, migrants and forcibly displaced people, and other underrepresented



or marginalized populations, as well as in reducing income inequality and creating the conditions that foster social mobility;

That our region is experiencing significant population displacement and cross-border movements due to economic, social, political and environmental factors, including violence and insecurity, and is facing a pressing need to respond to humanitarian emergencies and other crises and to effectively integrate refugees and migrants;

That the positive impacts of migration and its benefits to our economies, cultures and demographics should also be publicly recognized and considered in political decision-making;

That budgeting is one of the most important governance processes that has direct impacts on the everyday lives of individuals, and that involving civil society in this process allows for a more thorough understanding by policymakers and the public of needs and priorities to inform more effective resource allocations;

That coordination and dialogue between parliaments, governments and civil society -including advocacy groups, academia and the private sector- are essential to the success of actions aimed at building inclusive societies and achieving suitable development;

That diplomacy and cooperation between parliaments and their members on good practices to achieve social, political and economic inclusion of all people is fundamental for the adoption of effective national legislation and for the promotion of common strategies in the inter-American system.

***We commit to:***

1. Adopting legislation, regulatory frameworks and practices that foster the conditions for effective economic, social and political inclusion of all members of our societies, including women, Indigenous peoples, youth, migrants, forcibly displaced people and other underrepresented or marginalized groups;
2. Working alongside our governments, civil society organizations and communities to address the sources of exclusion that limit the ability of individuals to fully enjoy their rights and to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;
3. Fostering democracy and a political environment that recognizes and values diversity, pluralism, solidarity and equality of opportunity for all people, and that welcomes the contributions of migrants and forcibly displaced populations to the economy and culture of host countries;
4. Reviewing and adopting legislative frameworks to promote fiscal strategies and access to education and vocational training that will contribute to the creation of favourable conditions for all members of society, including women, Indigenous peoples, youth and other underrepresented or marginalized groups to access labour markets and actively participate in the economy;



5. Advancing the participation and leadership of women, with special attention to Indigenous women, in decision-making and efforts to build more inclusive societies, as well as applying gender mainstreaming in all mechanisms and strategies implemented by our parliaments to achieve sustainable development;
6. Cooperating with our governments, international organizations and civil society, as well as with other parliaments, in the development of effective practices and coordinated regional responses, through legislation and public policies aimed at achieving social inclusion and integration of refugees and migrants, taking into consideration the specific experiences, needs and strengths of migrants and refugees, and addressing these through empathetic and evidence-based policymaking;
7. Promoting the creation of opportunities and tools for public participation in the national budget process as reflected in ParlAmericas' *Toolkit on Citizen Participation in the Legislative Process*, and keeping in mind relevant international standards on this topic;
8. Strengthening our parliaments' actions and mechanisms to promote trust in government institutions, improving transparency and access to information, incentivizing young people to actively participate in decision-making processes, and creating more inclusive and open public institutions;
9. Supporting and contributing to ParlAmericas' efforts to strengthen inter-parliamentary and inter-governmental cooperation and the exchange of legislative good practices related to the promotion of inclusive societies and the achievement of sustainable development in our hemisphere, as well as collaboration to identify external resources that can contribute to establishing cooperation funds.

*Adopted in Victoria, Canada, September 12, 2018*