



## **OAS Secretary General Elect Addresses Parliamentary Gathering in Panama**

April 11, 2015

The Organization of American States (OAS) will continue its collaboration with ParlAmericas and Parlatino.

This was confirmed by the Secretary General Elect of the OAS and former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uruguay, Luis Almagro, during the keynote address of the parliamentary gathering held at Parlatino's headquarters in Panama. The event drew the participation of over 80 parliamentarians from across the American continent.

"It is essential that citizens be able to work together to find a solution to the main problems afflicting Latin American society," emphasized Almagro. He also pointed out that the OAS offers important resources and spaces to facilitate permanent parliamentary dialogue and engagement with civil society.

During the opening ceremony, Rob Nicholson, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, highlighted that "regional efforts must be directed towards promoting freedom and human rights in all communities across the Americas. Democracy must be cultivated," he stressed to the parliamentarians in attendance.

The parliamentary gathering was organized by Marcela Guerra, President of ParlAmericas and Senator of Mexico, in collaboration with her colleague and Secretary General of Parlatino, Blanca Alcalá.

President Guerra underlined that since 2009, "we have been involved in the Summit of the Americas."

"I hope this gathering serves to remind us that, as members of the legislative bodies of our countries, we are directly responsible for promoting and developing democratic governments," the senator stated.

Senator Alcalá, Secretary General of Parlatino, added that it is important to encourage peace agreements in the Americas and that it is necessary to "foster serious discussions and express differing ideas in order to enrich the legislative debate with the goal of devising legislative bills at a regional level."

The President of Parlatino and Member of the National Assembly of Panama, Elías Castillo, noted that Parlatino is implementing a Latin American Network on Parliamentary Communication, the first phase of which is already being carried out. The project is called Parlatino Web TV, and it provides live transmission of the organization's events to keep the Latin American community informed. The service is made possible by technical and financial support provided by the Senate of Argentina.

Additionally, the President of the National Assembly of Panama, Adolfo Valderrama, confirmed that, "we have a challenge before us to strengthen democracy and combat corruption, fortify our institutions and at the same time respect the independence of the three branches of the state."