

DECLARATION

18th ParlAmericas Plenary Assembly
Rebuilding the Social Contract
November 26 and 29 and December 10, 2021 | Virtual sessions

We, parliamentarians from 20 countries¹ of the Americas and the Caribbean, met virtually on November 26 and 29 and December 10, 2021, with the support of the Senate of Chile, on the occasion of the 18th ParlAmericas Plenary Assembly titled *Rebuilding the Social Contract*.²

This Plenary Assembly provided a space for productive inter-parliamentary exchanges, including with representatives of civil society organizations and youth, about seizing the unprecedented opportunity presented by post-COVID-19 recovery processes to rebuild the social contract and re-invent and transform fragile models of governance and development on the basis of inclusive, sustainable, and democratic principles that leave no one behind.

The world is confronting a complex political and socio-economic situation characterized by serious challenges to democratic governance, political polarization, citizen distrust of institutions, and structural difficulties for States in promoting equitable and sustainable economic progress.

Given this reality, as parliamentarians of the Americas and the Caribbean, we call on all State and non-State actors to promote, through democratic dialogue, the consensus needed to respond to growing citizen demands for systemic transformations and the rebuilding of the social contract according to democratic paradigms.

Considering the above and,

Recognizing

1. That the health and socioeconomic crisis created by the COVID-19 pandemic is occurring in a context of social discontent and citizen distrust of institutions and has exacerbated the political polarization and stark pre-existing inequalities in the Americas and the Caribbean.

¹ Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago.

² The term “social contract” refers to the theory developed during the Enlightenment that addresses the legitimacy of the State’s authority over the individual. In general, the social contract asserts that individuals agree, either explicitly or tacitly, to renounce some of their freedoms in exchange for the protection of their remaining rights or the maintenance of social order.

2. That citizens, particularly youth, their organizations, and movements, are confronting States with a series of urgent calls to transform the social contract, which include, among other issues, strengthening democratic models and practices, improving mechanisms for citizen participation on public issues, strengthening social protection systems, transforming production and consumption models under a sustainable paradigm, and halting climate change and adapting to its unavoidable impacts.
3. That the rebuilding of the social contract must be a democratic, participatory, collective, and inclusive process that recognizes equality among individuals as a fundamental principle upon which the inhabitants of the Americas and the Caribbean can develop their life goals according to the tenets of solidarity, tolerance, and respect for differences.
4. That twenty years after the creation of ParlAmericas and the adoption of the Inter-American Democratic Charter of the Organization of American States, it is opportune to highlight the commitment of the countries of the Americas and the Caribbean to cooperative political dialogue, the ongoing pursuit of consensus, and the promotion of democracy, peace, and development in the hemisphere, under the principle of respect among Member States.
5. That dialogues to rebuild the social contract require meaningful participation and contributions by women and population groups that were marginalized from the historical and social processes that resulted in the current social contract, including those living in poverty, people with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendant peoples, Indo-descendant peoples, and indentured-descendant peoples, members of the LGBTI community, and displaced people and migrants, among others.
6. That by providing guidelines for policies and actions in favour of people and the planet, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement, among other international instruments, establish priorities for the creation of initiatives aimed at rebuilding the social contract rooted in the principles of equity, justice, and equality as fundamental human rights.
7. That digital disinformation and computational propaganda have had harmful effects on democratic governance, have contributed to undermining public trust in democratic institutions, and have exacerbated political and social polarization, hindering constructive dialogue.
8. That the fight against the effects of climate change, one of the most important challenges of our time, requires a transformation of current production and consumption models towards more sustainable and socially just development alternatives that promote resilient and low-emission economies, which favour the sovereignty and security of food and nutrition systems.
9. That the eradication of phenomena such as corruption, clientelism, and lack of transparency in the management of public affairs remains among the multitude of challenges to be addressed by States, institutions, political parties, and those who participate in politics.
10. That the serious socio-economic and public health consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted the urgent need to strengthen and update social protection systems and programs,

particularly with respect to their differential impacts on women given disproportionate burdens of care work, job insecurity and overrepresentation in informal employment, and gender-based violence.

11. That in an increasingly globalized, interconnected, and interdependent world, it is essential to strengthen spaces for regional and hemispheric integration and cooperation among the countries of the Americas and the Caribbean.
12. That as established by ECLAC,³ the pandemic has shown that access to the internet and information and communication technologies plays a leading role in the fight against COVID-19, as these facilitate social distancing, allow for the socioeconomic system to remain viable to a certain degree, and are important in supporting educational, relational, and leisure activities.

We commit to:

1. Defend democratic principles and fundamental human rights in accordance with the rule of law and as essential for the social, political, economic, cultural, and environmental development of the peoples of the Americas and the Caribbean.
2. Take on post-pandemic recovery processes as an opportunity to rebuild the social contract, build back better and undertake urgent systemic transformations called for by various communities, social movements, and civil society organizations.
3. Promote democratic and inclusive social dialogue that brings together diverse sectors of civil society, particularly those that have historically been and/or are still marginalized, to advance discussions that facilitate the consensus needed to build the social contract of the future.
4. Convene our governments, the media, civil society organizations, social movements, and technology companies to agree on actions aimed at mitigating the harmful effects of digital disinformation and computational propaganda on democracy, good governance, and peaceful co-existence in compliance with international standards on freedom of expression.
5. Reiterate the importance of accelerating ongoing efforts in our respective countries to respond to the serious effects of climate change by increasing the ambition of climate actions, following the recommendations made by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. It is also imperative to provide oversight of compliance with the commitments made by our countries under related international instruments, such as the Nationally Determined Contributions, making use of tools such as the document [Parliaments and the Paris Agreement](#) published by ParlAmericas, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, GLOBE, and INTERPARES.
6. Advocate for the incorporation of just and democratic transition policies, as well as anti-poverty policies, in post-pandemic recovery processes to promote transformations towards low-emission

³[Universalizing access to digital technologies to address the consequences of COVID-19](#), ECLAC, 2020

economies and provide workers in the formal and informal sectors affected by the transition with opportunities and high-quality green jobs.

7. Strengthen processes towards legislative openness in our parliaments to guarantee transparency, accountability, citizen participation, and ethics and probity in parliamentary work, using as a reference the [ParlAmericas Road Map towards Legislative Openness](#) and the [Legislative Transparency Toolkit published by the Network for Transparency and Access to Public Information, EUROsocial and ParlAmericas](#).
8. Develop communication strategies and spaces for dialogue aimed especially at young people and their organizations to promote their substantive participation in parliamentary work, seeking to incorporate their views and contributions into decision-making processes.
9. Strengthen and update social protection systems and programs with special attention to population groups that have historically faced difficulties in accessing them, ensuring universal coverage, as well as sustainable and progressive fiscal policies.
10. Urge our governments to ensure that the budgets for post-pandemic recovery efforts be designed according to an intersectional, intercultural, and gender-sensitive approaches that respond to the differential impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on women, particularly young women, women employed in the informal sector, pregnant women, mothers who are heads of households, as well as children and adolescents.
11. Promote the importance of strengthening international governance, multilateralism, and coordinated work among countries in the hemisphere on issues such as the defense of democracy, the promotion of human rights and gender equality, the protection of migrants, and the fight against climate change based on respect, independence, sovereignty, and self-determination.
12. Urge our governments to redouble their efforts to reduce the digital divide in terms of access, use, and quality of use, through comprehensive policies that address, among other aspects, the strengthening of infrastructure and geographic coverage, especially in rural areas; subsidies to facilitate internet access among the most disadvantaged populations; the reduction of taxes and duties on low-cost devices; and user empowerment through training in digital skills.

Adopted on December 10, 2021