




# 18<sup>TH</sup> PLENARY ASSEMBLY


#ParlAmericas2021

 **TITLE:** Rebuilding the Social Contract

 **THEMES:** Democracy, human rights, climate change, gender equality, open parliament

 **DATES:** November 26, 29 and December 10

 **LOCATION:** Virtual

 **PARTICIPANTS:** Parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, representatives of civil society and youth organizations from 23 countries.

 **HOST:** Senate of Chile



These activities are in line with SDGs 5, 8, 10, 12, 13, y 16.

The Plenary Assembly brought together parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, and representatives of youth and civil society organizations from the Americas and the Caribbean to discuss the need to rebuild the social contract in the context of post-pandemic recovery efforts and in response to the demands of civil society, particularly youth movements, requiring the reinvention and transformation of governance and development models based on inclusive, sustainable, and democratic principles that leave no one behind.

The event, which coincided with the 20th anniversary of the creation of ParlAmericas and the adoption of the [Inter-American Democratic Charter of the Organization of American States](#) (OAS), took place in three sessions: an inter-parliamentary dialogue on November 26, a parliamentary dialogue with civil society and youth organizations from the Americas and the Caribbean on November 29, and a plenary session on December 10.

Throughout the sessions, panellists and other participants exchanged reflections on the importance of taking advantage of the historic opportunity offered by the post-pandemic recovery processes to renew the social contract. It was noted that this would involve undertaking systemic reforms to strengthen democratic models, overcome the serious inequalities in the region, reinforce mechanisms for citizen participation, and bolster social protection systems, among other issues that are at the core of this political agenda.

The participants agreed that a renewed social contract must be based on the unequivocal recognition of democratic principles and human rights and must address central issues of concern to the peoples of the Hemisphere, key among them social and economic inequalities.

As was highlighted in the discussions, rebuilding the social contract must be the result of a broad and diverse intergenerational dialogue that brings together the social groups that were marginalized from the historical and social processes that led to the construction of the classic social contract.

Accordingly, the parliamentarians called on all state and non-state actors to foster the necessary consensus to better respond to the growing citizen demands for social, economic, environmental, political transformations as a foundation for a renewed social contract.



## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SESSIONS

Opening remarks:

- Senator **Blanca Ovelar** (Paraguay), President of ParlAmericas
- The Honourable **Bridgid Annisette-George** (Trinidad and Tobago), Speaker of the House of Representatives and Vice-President of ParlAmericas
- Senator **Marcela Sabat** (Chile), representative of the host parliament of the Plenary Assembly to the Board of ParlAmericas
- Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Javier Macaya** (Chile), President of the ParlAmericas OPN
- The Honourable **Alincia Williams Grant** (Antigua and Barbuda), President of the Senate and ParlAmericas Board Member
- The Honourable Senator **Rosa Galvez** (Canada), President of the ParlAmericas PNCC

Keynote speaker:

- **Luis Almagro**, Secretary General of the OAS

Dialogues moderated by:

- Senator **Verónica Camino** (Mexico), President of the ParlAmericas PNGE
- Member of Parliament **Marc Serré** (Canada), ParlAmericas Board Member
- Member of the Legislative Assembly **María Inés Solís** (Costa Rica), ParlAmericas Board Member

Panellists:

- His Honour **Reginald Farley** (Barbados), President of the Senate
- Member of the Legislative Assembly **Paola Vega** (Costa Rica), Vice-President of the ParlAmericas PNCC Central America
- Representative **Juan Carlos Losada** (Colombia)
- Ms. **Paulina Valenzuela**, Member of the Chilean Constitutional Convention;
- **Mr. Jorge Marín**, representative of the Panamanian Youth Legislative Impact project

Closing remarks:

- The Honourable **Manzoor Nadir** (Guyana), Speaker of the National Assembly and ParlAmericas Board Member
- Senator **Antares Vázquez** (Mexico), ParlAmericas Board Member

## Inter-Parliamentary Dialogue (November 26)

Main reflections during the session:

- Rebuilding the social contract must be the result of a democratic, participatory, collective and inclusive exercise that brings together a broad and diverse spectrum of state and non-state actors to, leveraging existing accomplishments and achievements, build a new social contract that better responds to the needs of citizens.
- In rebuilding the social contract, it will be essential to provide spaces for the substantive participation of social groups that were marginalized from historical and social processes that led the creation of the current contract.
- Given its profound implications for human survival, the fight against climate change should be one of the main elements of the social contract of the future and needs to involve a transformation of current economic models towards more sustainable and socially just development alternatives.
- Post-pandemic recovery processes provide a window of opportunity to rebuild the social contract, build back better, and undertake some of the structural transformations demanded by communities, social movements, and civil society organizations.
- In the process of rebuilding the social contract, parliamentarians can support the facilitation of necessary political consensus and represent the will of the people, articulating new citizen demands to shape the social contract of the future..

## Parliamentary Dialogue with Civil Society and Youth Representatives (November 29)

Main reflections during the session:

- The youth of the Americas and the Caribbean have been leading social movements centered on a series of issues such as the defense of human rights and social inclusion, the fight against climate change, overcoming inequality and the expansion of participation mechanisms, among others. This political agenda implies undertaking structural transformations that must be reflected in a new social contract.
- It is essential that dialogues between state and non-state actors intended to direct and shape the eventual process of rebuilding the social contract, include the substantive participation of young people: their expectations for the future and their proposals for change should inform and enrich the discussions that address the social contract of the future.
- Experiences such as the events that lead to the creation of the Chilean Constitutional Convention, show that activism, social mobilization and young peoples' participation in politics can lead to democratic and inclusive transformational processes for rethinking the social contract and renewing rights, duties, institutions, and the relationship between citizens and the state.

- It is imperative to address the lack of confidence among young people in political parties, institutions, and democracy in general, which is particularly evident in the Americas and the Caribbean. Restoring young people's confidence will involve, among other actions and initiatives, strengthening the mechanisms for advancing their participation in public affairs, developing tools for their political empowerment, and fostering an inter-generational dialogue that results in policies aimed at promoting well-being and inclusive growth.
- Parliaments need to implement strategies and programs to empower young people, promote their political leadership, and facilitate their substantive participation in public affairs, particularly in decision-making processes related to matters that affect them. The [Youth Legislative Impact](#) and [Young Women in Leadership in the Caribbean](#) projects (both supported by ParlAmericas) provide insights to guide strategies for achieving this goal.

## Plenary Session (December 10)

During the session, the following parliamentary delegations presented some of the legislative initiatives that they have been undertaking in different areas, with the collaboration of civil society and young people, to rebuild the social contract: Barbados, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Saint Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago.



**Luis Almagro**, Secretary General of the Organization of American States

*"The Organization of American States has been a faithful advocate for inter-parliamentary engagement and cooperation. In fact, ParlAmericas was established by a resolution of the OAS General Assembly to promote the essential work of establishing an independent network aimed at fostering inter-parliamentary dialogue, sharing experiences, and strengthening the role of parliaments in the hemisphere's democracies, which have gathered here today to discuss the need to rebuild the social contract, the very essence of each of our communities."*



Senator **Blanca Ovelar** (Paraguay), President of ParlAmericas

*"This 18th Plenary Assembly coincides with the 20th anniversary of the creation of ParlAmericas. We have offered a space to address the process of rebuilding the social contract. This discussion is exceedingly relevant today, in a complex political context characterized by serious challenges to democratic governance, political polarization, and citizen distrust of institutions."*



The Honourable Senator **Rosa Galvez** (Canada), President of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network on Climate Change

*"It is necessary to establish a new social contract that better meets the needs and demands of citizens, which require that we strengthen the democratic model, reinforce mechanisms of participation in public affairs, bolster social protection systems, transform production and consumption models under sustainable paradigms, and address the effects of climate change."*



Senator **Marcela Sabat** (Chile), representative of the host parliament of the 18th Plenary Assembly to the Board of Directors of ParlAmericas

*"The extent of citizens' demands require effective and efficient action by the government to understand their needs and channel the energy and force they generate through institutional and legal channels. It is there where the institutions of popular representation must play -by definition- a leading role."*



Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Javier Macaya** (Chile), President of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network

*"Recently, young people have made a clear and eloquent call for the reinvention and transformation of fragile governance and development models, based on inclusive, sustainable and democratic principles. We have undertaken the responsibility to answer that call by providing a space for dialogue to listen to the youth of the Americas and the Caribbean."*



The Honourable **Manzoor Nadir** (Guyana), Speaker of the National Assembly and member of the ParlAmericas Board of Directors

*"Rebuilding the social contract must be, above all, the product of an intentionally democratic, collective, and inclusive process that brings together broad social actors under the guiding premise of the 2030 Agenda of leaving no one behind. A dialogue convening state and non-state actors based on the unequivocal conviction that democracy has been and will be instrumental to achieving positive change."*



The Honourable **Alincia Williams Grant** (Antigua and Barbuda), President of the Senate and member of the ParlAmericas Board of Directors

*"This 18th Plenary Assembly coincides with the 20th anniversary of the creation of ParlAmericas. We have offered a space to address the process of rebuilding the social contract. This discussion is exceedingly relevant today, in a complex political context characterized by serious challenges to democratic governance, political polarization, and citizen distrust of institutions."*



The Honourable **Bridgid Annisette-George** (Trinidad and Tobago), Speaker of the House of Representatives and Vice-President of ParlAmericas

*"ParlAmericas, wishing to foster the consistent dialogue between state and non-state actors necessary to undertake the rebuilding of the social contract, conceived this Plenary Assembly as a space for the exchange of ideas and best practices on some of the key topics which are fundamental to this greater social conversation."*



Senator **Antares Vázquez** (Mexico), ParlAmericas Board Member

*"The political agendas of youth organizations and movements in the Americas and the Caribbean include urgent issues that need to be a part of these social dialogues and our legislative work: the fight against the effects of climate change and the resulting transformation of current production and consumption models, the expansion of spaces for substantive citizen participation in public affairs and the strengthening of open government initiatives."*



## Results of the Elections for the Board of Directors of ParlAmericas 2022-2024

ParlAmericas is run by parliamentarians, for parliamentarians, with a Board of Directors composed of 21 seats, representing countries from North, South, and Central America and the Caribbean. The Board also includes *ex officio* representatives from the host country of the Plenary Assembly, the immediate past president of ParlAmericas, the directors of the ParlAmericas Corporation, the ParlAmericas International Secretariat, and the OAS General Secretariat. Board members are elected for a two-year term on a rotational basis by the member parliaments of ParlAmericas during the Annual Plenary Assembly. The following Board positions were filled during this Plenary Assembly:

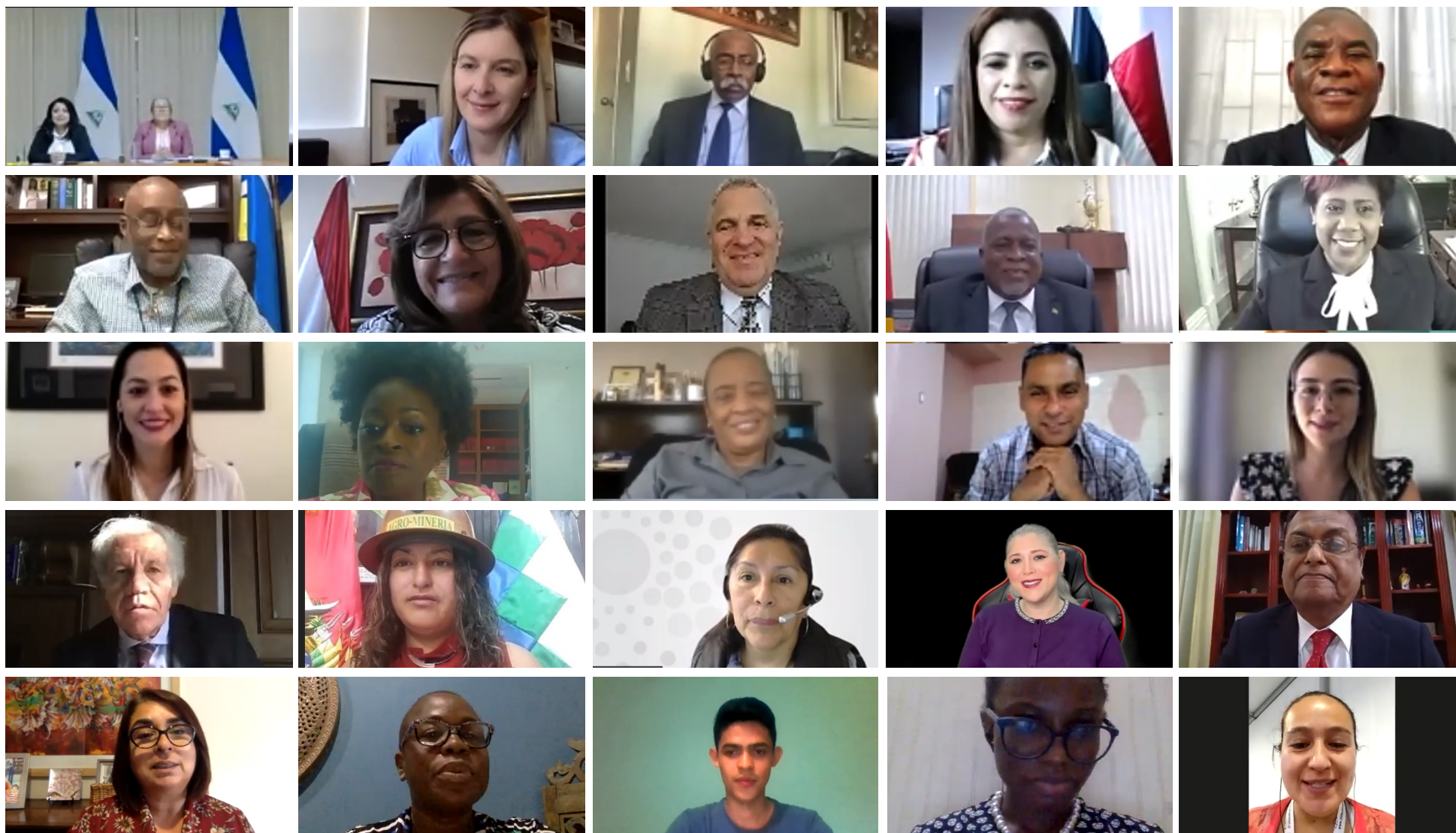
- Representatives from Central America – Belize and Panama
- Representative of South America – Chile
- Representative of the Caribbean – Saint Lucia



## Declaration

The 18th Plenary Assembly concluded with the reading of the [declaration](#). The commitments made by the participating parliamentary delegations included the following:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.



The complete agendas (November [26](#) and [29](#) and December [10](#)), [press release](#) and [videos](#) of the sessions are available on the ParlAmericas website.

## PARTICIPATING PARLIAMENTS



Antigua and Barbuda



Chile



Guyana



Paraguay



Barbados



Colombia



Haiti



Saint Kitts and Nevis



Belize



Costa Rica



Mexico



Saint Lucia



Bolivia



Ecuador



Nicaragua



Suriname



Canada



Guatemala



Panama



Trinidad and Tobago

Canada



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ParlAmericas is the institution that promotes **PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY** in the **INTER-AMERICAN SYSTEM**



ParlAmericas mainstreams **GENDER EQUALITY** by advocating for women's political empowerment and the application of a gender lens in legislative work



ParlAmericas works towards strengthening democracy and governance by accompanying **ELECTORAL PROCESSES**



ParlAmericas is composed of the **35 NATIONAL LEGISLATURES** of the countries of North, Central and South America and the Caribbean



ParlAmericas fosters **OPEN PARLIAMENTS** by advancing the principles of transparency, accountability, citizen participation, ethics and probity



ParlAmericas organizes consultations and builds **MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS** with young leaders and civil society organizations



ParlAmericas facilitates the exchange of parliamentary **GOOD PRACTICES** and promotes **COOPERATIVE POLITICAL DIALOGUE** in pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals



ParlAmericas promotes policies and legislative measures to mitigate and adapt to the effects of **CLIMATE CHANGE**



ParlAmericas is headquartered in **OTTAWA, CANADA**

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