



-  **TITLE:** Building Partnerships to Strengthen Democracy and Promote Human Rights
-  **THEMES:** Democracy, human rights, inclusive digital governance, parliamentary diplomacy, open parliament
-  **DATES:** May 8, 9 and 10, 2024
-  **LOCATION:** Asunción, Paraguay
-  **PARTICIPANTS:** More than 90 parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, representatives of international and civil society organizations and academia from 22 countries in the Americas and the Caribbean
-  **HOST:** Chamber of Senators of Paraguay



*This activity aligned with SDGs 5, 16, and 17.*



## 20th ParlAmericas Plenary Assembly and 8th Gathering of the Open Parliament Network

This meeting provided a space for exchanging actions and strategies related to democracy and human rights. It considered challenges and future opportunities, parliamentary mechanisms for promoting human rights, media pluralism, and the impact of new technologies on digital governance. Additionally, the meeting fostered dialogue on democratic and inclusive participation and explored strategies to strengthen regional cooperation, reaffirming the importance of parliamentary diplomacy in consensus-building based on shared democratic principles.



## AGENDA HIGHLIGHTS

### Opening remarks:

- Senator **Silvio Ovelar** (Paraguay), President of the National Congress
- Hon. Representative **Catherine Juvinao** (Colombia), Vice-President for South America of ParlAmericas' Open Parliament Network
- Senator **Blanca Ovelar** (Paraguay), President of ParlAmericas

### Dialogues moderated by:

- Hon. Senator **Rene Cormier** (Canada), Vice-President for North America of the Open Parliament Network
- Senator **Esperanza Martínez** (Paraguay)
- Member of the Chamber of Representatives **Rodrigo Goñi** (Uruguay), President of the Committee on the Future
- Senator **Osbert Frederick** (Antigua and Barbuda), Vice-President of the Senate
- Hon. **Julie Lashell Adderley** (The Bahamas), President of the Senate
- His Honour **Arthur E. Holder** (Barbados), Speaker of the House of Assembly and ParlAmericas Board Member
- Member of Parliament **Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné** (Canada)
- Hon. **Carolyn Trench-Sandiford** (Belize), President of the Senate and ParlAmericas Board Member

### Specialists:

- **Marta Lagos**, Director and Founder, Corporación Latinobarómetro
- Dr. **Rosina Wiltshire**, International development and human rights specialist
- Dr. **María Fernanda Boidi**, Director of Fieldwork and Regional Partnerships, LAPOP Lab at Vanderbilt University, United States
- **Renee Atwell**, Founder & Executive Director, Girls of Impact
- **Francisco Samaniego**, Executive Project Coordinator, Center for Information and Resources for Development (CIRD by its Spanish acronym)
- **Ernesto Fernández Polcuch**, Regional Director and UNESCO Representative to Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay
- **Lorena Zapata**, News Director, Esfera Pública
- **Lika Døhl Diouf**, Associate Programme Management Officer, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean - ECLAC
- **Jorge Srur**, South Regional Manager, CAF - Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean
- **Valentina Muñoz Rabanal**, Founder, Young Women for Ideas Association
- **María Celina Conte**, Director, Summits of the Americas Secretariat, Organization of American States - OAS
- **Jimena Arias Feijóo**, Social Affairs Officer of the Secretariat of the Commission, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean - ECLAC

### Closing remarks:

Senator **Derlis Maidana** (Paraguay), Member of the Special Committee on Open Parliament



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Senator **Silvio Ovelar** (Paraguay), President of the National Congress

*"Our unity not only strengthens democracy and dialogue between nations but also enables us to share experiences and find joint solutions to the challenges we face as a region."*



Hon. Representative **Catherine Juvinao** (Colombia), Vice-President for South America of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network

*"There are many challenges before us, and in this meeting, by sharing our experiences, knowledge, and legislative agendas, we will return to our congresses, parliaments, and countries with clear ideas and pathways to address the crises of democracy and human rights."*



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

*"As representatives of our fellow citizens, we feel compelled to join forces in the defense and promotion of democracy, its institutions, its achievements, and its gains. [...] Democracy remains the best model for ensuring the framework of freedoms under which societies can achieve peace, prosperity, equality, inclusive development, and security."*



Dr. **Rosina Wiltshire**, specialist in international development and human rights

*"UN Women research shows that when women are in power, overlooked policy issues, which are central to human rights, democracy, and peace, tend to be given higher priority. So we have a better chance of addressing the challenges if more women are in leadership."*



Hon. **Julie Lashell Adderley** (The Bahamas), President of the Senate

*"To ensure inclusive and democratic political and social debate, it is essential to advocate for media pluralism, broad civic space, and the limiting of misinformation and hate speech, as the latter issue also has the potential to influence democratic processes."*



Hon. Senator **René Cormier** (Canada), Second Vice-President for North America of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network

*"As parliamentarians, we have the critical responsibility and important opportunity to work, through the different angles and functions of our roles, towards democratic strengthening and the promotion and protection of human rights."*



**María Celina Conte**, Director, Summits of the Americas Secretariat, Organization of American States - OAS

*"It is through the Summit process that parliamentarians have a crucial opportunity not only to influence the preparation and identification of priorities that the States turn into consensual mandates for the region but, most importantly, to concretely convert and transfer those mandates and commitments into public policy or to promote legislation during the implementation phase."*



Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Duda Salabert** (Brazil)

*"If we want to deepen the defense of democracy, that means fostering greater diversity in parliament. Without democracy, there will be no forests. Without democracy, there are no human rights. Without democracy, there is no diversity. Without democracy, there is no sustainable development."*



**Valentina Muñoz Rabanal**, Founder, Young Women for Ideas Association, Chile

*"When we talk about digital governance, we always end up discussing dilemmas of authority and power as well. That is why it is so important and necessary to focus on groups that have been historically marginalized and vulnerable around the world, such as children, adolescents, and women. What happens when it comes to young women? There is double discrimination: we face both adultism and gender stereotypes."*



## ELECTIONS RESULTS

During the gathering, new members were elected for the vacant positions on the ParlAmericas Board of Directors and the Executive Committee of the Open Parliament Network.

### **The following parliaments were elected to be part of the ParlAmericas Board of Directors:**

Representatives of the Caribbean

- Dominica
- Saint Lucia

Representatives of Central America

- Belize
- Guatemala
- Panama

Representatives of South America

- Chile
- Peru

### **The Executive Committee of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network is composed as follows:**

President

- Senator **Javier Macaya Danús** (Chile)

First Vice-President – North America

- Senator **Bertha Alicia Caraveo Camarena** (Mexico)

Second Vice-President – North America

- Hon. Senator **René Cormier** (Canada)

First Vice-President – Central America

- Member of the National Assembly **Luz Mary Alpízar** (Costa Rica)

Second Vice-President – Central America

- Member of the National Assembly **Corina Cano** (Panama)

First Vice-President – South America

- The Hon. Representative **Catherine Juvinao** (Colombia)

Second Vice-President – South America

- Member of the National Assembly **Luzmila Abad Morocho** (Ecuador)

Vice-President - Caribbean

- The Hon. **Leo Cato** (Grenada), Speaker of the House of Representatives



## DECLARATION

During the gathering, parliamentarians adopted a declaration that, among its commitments, includes:

- Unequivocally safeguard democracy, human rights, gender equality and the rule of law through our legislative work, guided by our convictions grounded in cooperative political dialogue, consensus building, the peaceful resolution of differences and the maintenance of peace and security.
- Coalesce our efforts to face the growing challenges to democracy and human rights around the world by rejecting authoritarianism, corruption and attempts to undermine the rule of law, and by participating in cooperative and inclusive political dialogue.
- Strengthen and update electoral and political party laws using as a guide the principles of impartiality, neutrality, inclusiveness, representation, transparency and equality, taking into account the recommendations issued by election observation missions and civil society organizations.
- Develop legal reforms in support of women's political rights that promote parity and include provisions for financing women's candidacies; and strengthen political oversight to ensure compliance with existing regulations guaranteeing conditions for women's political participation to be equal and free from violence
- Strengthen and expand civic space and mechanisms for citizen participation, particularly in parliamentary work, so that decision making processes incorporate the views and contributions of citizens, and especially those of population groups historically marginalized from public affairs, such as women, youth, Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendant people, people with disabilities, and older persons, among others.
- Actively participate through ParlAmericas in the different multilateral spaces of the Inter-American System to, through the exercise of parliamentary diplomacy, influence international decisions that impact the well-being of our citizens, exchange good legislative practices to contribute to actions that address common problems and support consensus building under shared democratic principles.

## COUNTRIES REPRESENTED



Antigua and Barbuda



Canada



Guatemala



The Bahamas



Argentina



Chile



Mexico



Trinidad and Tobago



Barbados



Colombia



Paraguay



United States



Belize



Costa Rica



Peru



Uruguay



Bolivia



El Salvador



Suriname



Brazil



Grenada



Sint Maarten

## ORGANIZING PARTNERS



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



Works towards strengthening democracy and governance by accompanying **ELECTORAL PROCESSES**



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



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



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



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



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



Is headquartered in **OTTAWA, CANADA**

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