



# 12th Gathering of the Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality

#ParlAmericasGEN

The 12th Gathering of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality (PNGE), hosted virtually by the Congress of Colombia and the Parliament of Grenada, brought together parliamentarians and youth leaders from across the Americas and the Caribbean to discuss strategies to advance gender equality goals through collaborations between parliaments and youth. Under the theme of [Designing inclusive futures in partnership with youth](#), the gathering's online activities facilitated proactive dialogue around key gender equality goals, established the importance of intergenerational dialogue, and highlighted parliamentary and political mechanisms to promote youth involvement.



Access the videos of this Gathering's keynote interviews and other PNGE videos on [this playlist](#)

## THEME

Designing inclusive futures in partnership with youth

## LOCATION

Online, hosted by the Congress of Colombia and the Parliament of Grenada

## DATE

September 23 and 25, October 2, 2020

## PARTICIPANTS

More than 165 parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, youth delegates and representatives of civil society and multilateral organizations from more than 25 countries



This activity aligned with SDG 5

## Keynote intergenerational dialogues

The gathering began with the release of two intergenerational dialogues structured as interviews, one in [English](#) and one in [Spanish](#), featuring a former parliamentarian and a young woman leader. These interviews, which were shared in video and podcast format for participants' viewing convenience, establish a foundation for the theme of the gathering on advancing gender equality through the engagement of youth in political processes.

The English keynote interview features Ms. **Ashlee Burnett**, youth leader and gender equality activist and chair of the Caribbean Women in Leadership (CIWiL) Trinidad and Tobago chapter, who speaks with the Honourable Dr. **Jean Augustine**, a Grenadian-Canadian former parliamentarian and minister and prominent social justice advocate. In their conversation, Ms. Burnett and Dr. Augustine explore important issues related to young women's leadership and political participation, and they share insight from their respective leadership journeys.

The Spanish keynote interview features Ms. **Solangel Robinson**, a Panamanian young leader and member of the National Forum for Women of Political Parties (FONAMUPP), and Ms. **Cecilia López**, a Colombian former senator and economist with a notable political career. In their conversation, Ms. Robinson and Ms. López discuss the need to improve conditions for women's political participation, and the importance of recognizing, reducing, and redistributing unpaid care work, among other topics of regional interest.

A youth-friendly parliament would involve having young people around. Mentorship, giving them opportunities. Making it clear that 'this is your house,' not a mystical place, but one where we work for the people. It would involve having parliamentarians giving spaces to young volunteers in their constituencies to incorporate their inputs.



The Honourable **Jean Augustine**,  
former parliamentarian (Canada)

Ms. **Cecilia López**, former  
parliamentarian (Colombia)



The message is very clear: the world is yours (youth). Commit to eradicating the inequality in our region. Unite, as a new youth, and build a new Latin America.

Part of the challenges associated with our societies is the multiplicity of ideas, perspectives, life experiences and ideologies, which are also present among members of different generations. Thus, it is necessary to build greater intergenerational cooperation to achieve common gender equality goals.

Ms. **Solangel Robinson**, young leader and member of FONAMUPP



Experiences with parliaments are so important. When ParlAmericas and CIWiL organized YWiLTT, I sat there (in Trinidad and Tobago's Parliament, during the historic all-women parliamentary sitting) and thought to myself: "I can actually be here one day." It was very empowering. I think those experiences need to happen often.

Ms. **Ashlee Burnett**, gender equality activist and chair of the CIWiL Trinidad and Tobago chapter



## Working group sessions

The gathering included two working group sessions, one in English on September 23 and one in Spanish on September 25, entitled "Advancing gender equality solutions with youth partners." These sessions allowed participants to engage in focused discussions on a gender equality topic of interest to them in collaboration with parliamentary colleagues and youth advocates. The topics selected for the breakout group sessions corresponded with the themes explored in the UN Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality) and [Generation Equality](#) frameworks, and included: gender-based violence, women's health, STEM and the future of work, climate change and disasters, co-responsibility in care work, and women's leadership.

The English session was inaugurated with interventions by the Honourable **Chester Humphrey**, co-host of the meeting, President of the Senate of Grenada, and Vice-President for the Caribbean of the PNGE; and by the Honourable **Bridgid Annisette-George** (Trinidad and Tobago), Speaker of the House of Representatives and member of the ParlAmericas Board. The Spanish session featured inaugural remarks by the Honourable **Germán Blanco**, co-host of the meeting and President of the Chamber of Representatives of Colombia; and by Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Maya Fernández Allende** (Chile), President of the ParlAmericas PNGE.

Both sessions also featured presentations on Generation Equality, a movement emphasizing the importance of intergenerational partnerships for the achievement of gender equality 25 years after the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The English presentation was delivered by Ms. **Tonni Brodber**, representative of the UN Women Multi-Country Office for the Caribbean; and the Spanish presentation was delivered by Ms. **Lucía Martelotte**, programme coordinator at UN Women - Argentina.

After these initial remarks and presentations in plenary, participants were divided into their respective virtual working groups. Each group was facilitated by young activists working in different fields towards gender equality objectives. The youth activists leading the working groups gave a presentation showcasing the work of young people and youth organizations, and highlighting the importance of youth involvement in political decision-making to achieve progress on their specific topic. They also moderated the dialogue between fellow young leaders and parliamentarians. A parliamentary rapporteur from each group captured the key points of their dialogue and later delivered a short presentation of these during the gathering's plenary session the following week.

*ParlAmericas extends its gratitude to all the young leaders and activists who participated in the PNGE gathering, and in particular to those who facilitated their respective working group sessions (see the chart on p. 5 and 6 for an overview of the outcomes from each group).*

It is critical not to lose sight of these goals to ensure that this progress continues to manifest well into the future; the prominence of diverse voices in all decision-making is essential to ensuring that the legislation and policies we enact are responsive to the varied needs of our populations.



The Honourable **Chester Humphrey**, co-host of the gathering, President of the Senate of Grenada, and Vice-President for the Caribbean of the PNGE

The youth of the Americas and the Caribbean have called on the State and society as a whole with their demands, and the parliaments of the hemisphere, heeding this call, have opened the doors of congress to welcome them and listen to their voices.



The Honourable **Germán Blanco**, co-host of the gathering and President of the Chamber of Representatives of Colombia

Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Maya Fernández Allende** (Chile), President of the PNGE



The diversity of youth must be considered when proposing public policies for them. We must insist on the need for disaggregated information that accounts for this wide and varied universe of people.

## Plenary session

The gathering additionally convened a hemispheric-wide plenary session, which brought together the learning from previous gathering activities to explore youth-inclusive and gender-responsive parliamentary and political mechanisms. The session was inaugurated with remarks by the Honourable **Germán Blanco**; the Honourable **Chester Humphrey**; Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Maya Fernández Allende**; as well as Member of the National Assembly **Elizabeth Cabezas** (Ecuador), President of ParlAmericas.

Following the inauguration, parliamentarian rapporteurs delivered presentations summarizing the key conclusions from their respective working groups.

| Youth moderator   | Rapporteur  | Working group and main takeaways  |
|---|---|---|
| Cindy Andrews, Public Relations Officer at CIWiL's Trinidad and Tobago National Chapter                 | Senator Julie Miville-Dechêne (Canada)  | <p>Girls, STEM, and the future of work</p> <p>Women in STEM have a significant transformative potential for society. Initiatives to foster the success of girls and young women in STEM fields should consider their perspectives and diversity (e.g. urban vs. rural), including how women with disabilities, Indigenous, and LBTQ individuals, access technologies and education.</p>   |
| Sol Scavino Solari, Sociologist and PhD Candidate at the University of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay | Ivannia Rivera, Member of the Chamber of Deputies (Dominican Republic)  | <p>Promoting co-responsibility in care work</p> <p>Parliamentarians and youth-led organizations should work together to ensure that initiatives to promote cultural changes around co-responsibility in care work go hand in hand with adequate legislation, such as parental leave policies. In turn, parliaments should continue to support youth-led initiatives that raise awareness about the importance of co-responsibility, promote positive masculinities, and work to quantify the economic value of care work.</p> |
| María Boada, Program Officer for Climate Change and Sustainability at ParlAmericas (Canada)             | Senator Ranard Henfield (The Bahamas), Vice-President for the Caribbean of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network | <p>Climate change and disasters</p> <p>Parliamentarians and other decision-makers should seek out information from individuals from diverse backgrounds and fields; they should value the expertise shared by young people and allow them to set the agenda in these exchanges. The wealth of perspectives that can inform climate and disaster management is a strength for decision-making.</p>   |

| Youth moderator  | Rapporteur  | Working group and main takeaways  |
|--|---|---|
| Alejo Quiquinto, Medical Student at the National University of Santiago del Estero (Argentina) | Nielsen Pérez Pérez, Member of the Legislative Assembly (Costa Rica)                          | <p>Promoting women's health</p> <p>Policies that promote and protect women's health, including sexual and reproductive health, should be holistic and defended from a human rights approach. To be youth-friendly and accessible, they must also incorporate contributions from a plurality of youth-led advocacy organizations.</p>  |
| Leah Thompson, Project Officer at CIWiL (Trinidad and Tobago)                                  | Senator Yokymma Bethelmy (Trinidad and Tobago)  | <p>Women's leadership and decision-making (English session)</p> <p>It is important to create spaces and meaningful opportunities for young women and their organizations to be involved in all phases of parliamentary decision-making and programming, from design to implementation to evaluation: no decisions about youth, without them at the table. It is imperative to close the gap between policymaking and what is happening locally, by bringing CSOs working on the ground into conversations for global networking and agenda-setting.</p> |
| Adriana Silverio and Franklin Gómez, leaders of the campaign "Resetéate" (Dominican Republic)  | Senator Verónica Camino (Mexico), Vice-President for North America of the PNGE                | <p>Gender-based violence</p> <p>While there is a need to ensure that legal frameworks exist - and that individuals know their rights and responsibilities - the existence of laws is insufficient as a response to violence against women. Cultural change is paramount, and attention must also be paid to sufficient resourcing and political will for the full implementation of the adopted laws and policies.</p>  |
| Lía Nohelia Zevallos, Director General of Ashanti Perú   | Maritza Espinales, Member of the National Assembly (Nicaragua), and ParlAmericas Board member | <p>Women's leadership and decision-making (Spanish session)</p> <p>It is necessary to focus on laws and public policy that are specifically designed for women and youth. Youth -- especially women, LGTBI, indigenous and afro descendent youth -- experience obstacles to the enjoyment of their rights, including education, decent work, health and civic participation.</p>  |

## Parliamentary and political mechanisms for collaborations with youth

In addition to issue-specific recommendations, the working group discussions highlighted concrete pathways for collaboration between youth and parliamentary institutions. These mechanisms included:

- **Youth parliaments, forums, and councils** with an emphasis on youth-led agenda setting to promote greater political participation and influence of youth in relation to key policy topics like climate change, gender-based violence, and education;
- **Mentorship programmes** to build relationships between and among parliamentarians and young leaders from different generations;
- **Consultations with youth and youth-led organizations** to include their perspectives in policy making;
- **National youth policies and laws** aligned with standards outlined in international conventions and resolutions such as those of the [UN](#), [ILO](#), and [IPU](#);
- **Youth quotas in parliaments and political parties** to increase the number of young members; and
- **Social media strategies** to better inform youth and the public at large about parliamentary affairs.

The session continued with the panel discussion “Making parliamentary politics more youth-inclusive,” moderated by the youngest member of the National Assembly of Panama, **Juan Diego Vásquez**. The panel included interventions by young leaders and parliamentarians with experience in gender- and youth-inclusive parliamentary initiatives. Ms. **Nancy Mitchell** (Canada), a member of the Prime Minister’s Youth Council, presented on her consultative role and the importance of such institutionalized spaces for young voices where gender equality concerns can be brought to the table. Senator **María Eugenia Catalfamo** (Argentina), the youngest member of the Senate of Argentina and strong youth advocate, presented on a proposed youth committee and a comprehensive youth law. Ms. **Naomi Ephraim** (Antigua and Barbuda) then shared her experience participating in the **President’s 10 mentorship programme**, established by the Honourable **Alíncia Williams-Grant**, President of the Senate of Antigua and Barbuda. Lastly, President Williams-Grant read a statement prepared by Ms. **J’Nelle Bellizaire**, a participant in the President’s 10, on what she has gained through the program. President Williams-Grant also shared brief reflections on the program’s ability to foster youth familiarity and engagement with parliamentary processes. The panel concluded with a period of open dialogue.

## The President's 10 Mentorship Programme

The President's 10 is a mentorship programme aimed at young women in their third year of secondary school in Antigua and Barbuda. The 10-week training course, conceptualized by Senator the Hon. Alincia Williams-Grant, President of the Senate, is designed to give the young women hands-on experience working with Antigua and Barbuda's political system and to equip them with the skills necessary to compete in the workforce.

The programme supports the development of the participants' leadership abilities and provides them with an opportunity to interact with women parliamentarians and women in public life and private businesses. In the context of underrepresentation of young women in politics, this programme's emphasis on mentorship represents a promising vehicle for empowering the next generation of young women leaders.

## The Prime Minister's Youth Council

The [Prime Minister's Youth Council](#) is a group of young Canadians who meet online and in person several times a year to provide non-partisan advice to the Prime Minister and the Government of Canada on issues of importance to them and to all Canadians. The Council provided inputs on projects such as Canada's Youth Policy, Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence, and the Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces.

Council members are from regions all across Canada, and they reflect a range of educational, employment, and life experiences. Such councils represent powerful mechanisms through which young people can engage in meaningful ways with government actors and parliamentarians, especially those with ministerial portfolios.

## Declaration highlights

The 12th Gathering of the ParlAmericas PNGE concluded with the reading of the [declaration](#) by Senator **Cathisha Williams** (Grenada) and Member of the Chamber of Representatives, **Adriana Matiz** (Colombia). Discussion around the declaration was followed by closing remarks delivered by Member of the National Assembly **Karina Arteaga** (Ecuador), Vice-President for South America of the PNGE.

Among the commitments adopted by the convened parliamentary delegations are:

1. Advocate within our parties on the need to establish favourable conditions for young women and youth participation through measures promoting their recruitment and substantial participation in leadership positions, such as youth quotas and mentoring programs, and the incorporation of their needs and perspectives in statutes and programmatic documents;
2. Incorporate good practices to make our parliaments more open to young people and their organizations through, for example, training programs to increase the political participation of young women leaders and youth parliaments or committees in charge of mainstreaming these perspectives in bills;
3. Promote the drafting and approval of youth laws and allocate the necessary budget for their implementation, insisting on the need to collect disaggregated data and statistical information on youth;
4. Promote intergenerational dialogue through democratic and participatory spaces in which the voices of different groups are heard and taken into account in legislative work.



## Parliaments Represented



Antigua and Barbuda



Chile



Guyana



Paraguay



Argentina



Colombia



Honduras



Saint Lucia



Barbados



Costa Rica



Jamaica



Suriname



Bahamas



Dominican Republic



Mexico



Trinidad and Tobago



Bolivia



Ecuador



Nicaragua



Uruguay



Canada



Grenada



Panama



Venezuela

Canada



This gathering was made possible with the generous support of the Parliament of Grenada, the Congress of Colombia, and the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada.

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ParlAmericas facilitates the exchange of parliamentary **BEST PRACTICES AND** promotes **COOPERATIVE POLITICAL DIALOGUE**



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