



PODER LEGISLATIVO  
*Cámara de Senadores*



## Agenda

### 20<sup>th</sup> ParlAmericas Plenary Assembly 8<sup>th</sup> Gathering of the Open Parliament Network

#### ***Building Partnerships to Strengthen Democracy and Promote Human Rights***

May 8-10, 2024  
Asunción, Paraguay

*Times shown correspond to the local time in Asunción.*

#### **Tuesday, May 7**

Arrival of parliamentary delegations

#### **Wednesday, May 8**

- 08:15                      Transfer of participants to the National Congress of the Republic of Paraguay
- 09:00 - 10:00          **Inauguration and welcoming remarks**  
Room: Sessions Hall, National Congress of Paraguay
- Senator **Silvio Ovelar**, President of the National Congress of Paraguay
  - The Honourable Representative **Catherine Juvinao** (Colombia), Vice-President for South America of ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network
  - Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Raúl Luis Latorre** (Paraguay), President of the Chamber of Deputies
  - Senator **Blanca Ovelar** (Paraguay), President of ParlAmericas
- 10:00 - 10:30          **Official photograph and coffee break**  
Location: Main access, National Congress of Paraguay
- 10:30 - 11:30          **Session 1: Panel discussion – Human rights and democracy: Challenges for the future**  
Room: Sessions Hall, National Congress of Paraguay
- Moderator: The Honourable **Rene Cormier** (Canada), Vice-President for North America of the Open Parliament Network



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**Panellists:**

- **Marta Lagos**, Director and Founder, Corporación Latinobarómetro, Chile
- **Dr. Rosina Wiltshire**, specialist in international development and human rights, Barbados

*Recent reports and data on the state of democracy and satisfaction with it have revealed that citizens' trust in democracy has been waning for more than a decade, and, in recent years, declines in the indicators for democratic performance have been recorded. As democracy is a system that aims to preserve and promote people's fundamental rights, among other objectives, it is necessary to continue the crucial work of strengthening citizens' trust in democratic institutions while upholding the highest respect for human rights. This panel will highlight the obstacles and challenges ahead with consideration for the role of parliament.*

11:30 - 13:00

**Session 2: Parliamentary mechanisms for the effective promotion and protection of human rights**

Room: Sessions Hall, National Congress of Paraguay

Moderator: Senator **Esperanza Martínez** (Paraguay)

**Panellists:**

- Member of the Legislative Assembly **Yonder Salas Durán** (Costa Rica), President of the Committee on Disability and Elderly Affairs
- The Honourable Senator **Donna Cox** (Trinidad and Tobago), Minister of Social Development and Family Services
- Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Duda Salabert** (Brazil)
- The Honourable Representative **Catherine Juvinao** (Colombia), Vice-President for South America of the Open Parliament Network

*Legislatures, as part of the democratic system, play a crucial role in the promotion and protection of human rights: parliaments have ratified international agreements related to these issues, established parliamentary committees, set up spaces for analysis and research, and developed laws and actions in conjunction with national institutions and local actors that safeguard human rights, among other oversight and accountability initiatives. In this session, the panellists will address the actions and mechanisms advanced by legislatures, sharing lessons learned on parliamentary action in favour of human rights.*

13:00 - 14:30

**Lunch**

Room: Acosta Ñu Hall

14:30 - 16:30

**Session 3: Parliaments in action – Addressing current challenges linked to democracy and human rights (Working tables)**

Room: Sessions Hall, National Congress of Paraguay



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Moderator: Member of the Chamber of Representatives Rodrigo Goñi (Uruguay),  
President of the Committee on the Future

**Panellist:**

- Dr. **María Fernanda Boidi**, Director of Fieldwork and Regional Partnerships,  
LAPOP Lab of Vanderbilt University, United States

*The promotion and protection of human rights have direct implications for the strengthening of democracy and its respective institutions. Yet, democratic systems are currently facing a number of challenges that may erode their legitimacy and capacity to respond effectively to the needs and rights of their citizens as a whole. Through working tables, this session aims to explore some of these challenges and identify actions that parliaments can take.*

Some principles to take into consideration for the roundtables:

- Political plurality and effective representation
  - Chair: The Honourable **Leo Cato** (Grenada), President of the House of Representatives - English
  - Chair: Member of Congress **Rosselli Amuruz** (Peru), Third Vice-President of the Congress of the Republic - Spanish
- Citizen participation and civic space
  - Chair: Senator **Alex Browne** (Antigua and Barbuda) - English
  - Chair: Senator **Ignacio Iramain Chilavert** (Paraguay) - Spanish
- Public integrity
  - Chair: Member of the Chamber of Representatives **Fernando Iglesias** (Argentina), President of the Committee on Foreign Affairs
- Oversight
  - Chair: Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Catalina del Real** (Chile)

- |       |                                                                                    |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 16:30 | Transfer of participants to the official hotel                                     |
| 18:30 | Transfer of participants to the welcome reception                                  |
| 19:00 | <b>Welcome reception</b><br>Location: Carlos Antonio López Central Railway Station |

**Thursday, May 9**

- |       |                                                                                           |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 08:15 | Transfer of participants to the Library and Archives of the National Congress of Paraguay |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|



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09:00 - 10:30 **Session 4: Leaving no one behind: Democratic and inclusive participation**

Room: Reading Hall, Library and Archives of the National Congress of Paraguay

Moderator: Senator **Osbert Frederick** (Antigua and Barbuda), Vice-President of the Senate

**Panellists:**

- Member of the Legislative Assembly **Sonia Rojas** (Costa Rica)
- **Renee Atwell**, Founder & Executive Director, Girls of Impact, Trinidad and Tobago
- **Francisco Samaniego**, Executive Project Coordinator, Centro de Información y Recursos para el Desarrollo - CIRD, Paraguay

*The pillars of democracy not only encompass the access, enjoyment, and full exercise of equal rights for all citizens, but also the right to participate in decision-making processes. It is therefore crucial that democracies in the region guarantee this access and promote effective citizen participation, especially for women and marginalized populations, in order for all citizens' voices to be included. This panel will discuss relevant aspects of guaranteeing democratic and inclusive participation, acknowledging their intrinsic value for democratic consolidation and strategic alliances for effective collaboration on this issue.*

10:30 - 10:45 **Presentation of children's book**

Room: Reading Hall, Library and Archives of the National Congress of Paraguay

10:45 - 11:00 **Coffee break**

Room: Reading Hall, Library and Archives of the National Congress of Paraguay

11:00 - 13:00 **Session 5: Media pluralism, access to information and its effects on democratic processes (panel discussion and working tables)**

Room: Reading Hall, Library and Archives of the National Congress of Paraguay

Moderator: The Honourable **Julie Lashell Adderley** (The Bahamas), President of the Senate

**Panellists:**

- **Ernesto Fernández Polcuch**, Regional Director and UNESCO Representative to Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay
- **Lorena Zapata**, News Director, Esfera Pública, Argentina

*The right of access to information and freedom of expression are key pillars for the functioning of the democratic system. 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 they have the potential to influence democratic processes. This two-part session will begin with a discussion among specialists on media*



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*pluralism, followed by roundtable discussions to identify potential parliamentary actions to be taken on this issue.*

Possible topics to be addressed at the working tables:

- Access and quality of public information
  - Chair: Member of the Legislative Assembly **Leonardo Davinci Lightbourne** (Bahamas) - in English
  - Chair: Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Johanna Ortega Ghiringhelli** (Paraguay), Vice-President of the Committee on Children, Youth, and Development - in Spanish
- Freedom of expression
  - Chair: Senator **Eduardo Nakayama Rojas** (Paraguay)
- Media pluralism
  - Chair: Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Mariella Quispe** (Bolivia)
- Disinformation and its impacts on democratic processes
  - Chair: The Honourable **Sarah A. Wescot-Williams** (St. Maarten), President of the Parliament - in English
  - Chair: Member of the Chamber of Deputies **María Leticia Chávez Pérez** (Mexico) - in Spanish

13:00 - 14:30 **Lunch**

Room: Acosta Ñu Hall

14:30 - 15:30 **Session 6: Presentation of advances on open parliament commitments and actions**

Room: Reading Hall, Library and Archives of the National Congress of Paraguay

Moderator: Honourable **Arthur E. Holder** (Barbados), Speaker of the House of Assembly and ParlAmericas Board Member

- Member of the Chamber of Deputies **José Medeiros** (Brazil)
- Senator **René Cormier** (Canada), Vice-President for North America of ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network
- **Luis Rojas**, Deputy Secretary General, Chamber of Deputies of Chile and General Coordinator of ParlAmericas Parliamentary Staff Network on Open Parliament
- The Honourable Representative **Catherine Juvinao** (Colombia), Vice-President for South America of the Open Parliament Network
- Member of the Legislative Assembly **Luz Mary Alpízar** (Costa Rica), Vice-President for Central America of ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network
- Senator **Rafael Filizzola** (Paraguay), Vice-President of the Special Committee on Open Parliament



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- Member of the National Assembly **Radjendrekoeemar Debie** (Suriname), Second Vice-President for South America of the Parliamentary Network on Climate Change and Sustainability

*Parliamentary delegations are invited to present progress on open parliament commitments and actions, to be included in the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Commitment Tool. Legislators are encouraged to prepare and to submit the relevant information in advance by completing [this form](#).*

15:30 - 16:30

**Session 7: The future of democracy and digital governance**

Room: Reading Hall, Library and Archives of the National Congress of Paraguay

Moderator: Member of Parliament **Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné** (Canadá)

**Panellists:**

- Member of Congress **Nery Rodas** (Guatemala), Third Vice-President of the Congress of the Republic
- **Lika Døhl Diouf**, Associate Programme Management Officer, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean - ECLAC, Trinidad and Tobago
- **Jorge Srur**, South Regional Manager, CAF - Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean
- **Valentina Muñoz Rabanal**, Founder, Young Women for Ideas Association, Chile

*Technological advances have impacted society in multiple ways, resulting in the need to rethink the effects, benefits, and challenges posed to the democratic system that have become increasingly pertinent. Dialogues on digital governance among parliaments in the region have highlighted the importance of regulation and oversight in order to promote people-centred digitisation and the observance of human rights. As a follow-up to these dialogues, this session will address the impacts of new technologies on the democratic system and the parliamentary actions taken in the region to ensure full and inclusive digital governance.*

16:30

Transfer of participants to the official hotel

**Friday, May 10**

08:15

Transfer of participants to the Library and Archives of the National Congress of Paraguay

09:00 - 10:30

**Session 8: Parliamentary diplomacy and hemispheric instruments for democratic strengthening and the protection of human rights**

Room: Reading Hall, Library and Archives of the National Congress of Paraguay



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Moderator: The Honourable **Carolyn Trench-Sandiford** (Belize), President of the Senate and ParlAmericas Board Member

**Panellists:**

- Member of the Chamber of Deputies **Vlado Mirosevic** (Chile), President of the Committee on Foreign Relations, Interparliamentary Affairs and Latin American Integration, and ParlAmericas Board Member
- **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

*On the basis of international agreements and treaties, countries worldwide have joined efforts and established political pacts in favour of human rights, social welfare, and the democratic system. Parliaments play a crucial role in the implementation and oversight of the corresponding international commitments. Recalling the [Inter-American Plan of Action on Democratic Governance](#) approved at the IX [Summit of the Americas](#), the declaration of the last [Summit for Democracy](#) and the [Global Summit of the Open Government Partnership](#) held in 2023, this session will focus on parliamentary actions that can be taken through parliamentary diplomacy to ensure compliance with the commitments made in the region to strengthen democracy and protect human rights.*

10:30 - 11:15

**Plenary session**

Room: Reading Hall, Library and Archives of the National Congress of Paraguay

Chair of the Plenary session: Senator **Blanca Ovelar** (Paraguay), ParlAmericas President

- Presentation of annual reports of ParlAmericas Parliamentary Networks.
  - o Senator **Verónica Noemí Camino Farjat** (Mexico), President of the Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality (video)
  - o Member of Parliament **Luz Mary Alpízar** (Costa Rica), Vice-President for Central America of the Open Parliament Network
  - o Member of the National Assembly **Radjendrekoeemar Debie** (Suriname), Vice-President for South America of the Parliamentary Network on Climate Change and Sustainability
- Elections for the ParlAmericas Board of Directors and the Executive Committee of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network  
*During the meeting, representatives of parliaments will be elected to the ParlAmericas Board of Directors, the 1st and 2nd Vice-Presidency for the Caribbean,*



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*and the 2nd Vice-Presidency for South America of the Executive Committee of the Open Parliament Network.*

*For more information, we invite you to review our election advisories:*

- [ParlAmericas Board of Directors](#)
- [Executive Committee of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network](#)

**11:15 - 11:30    Reading of the Declaration of the 20<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly and the 8<sup>th</sup> Gathering of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network**  
Room: Reading Hall, Library and Archives of the National Congress of Paraguay

**11:30 - 12:00    Closing remarks**  
Room: Reading Hall, Library and Archives of the National Congress of Paraguay

- Senator **Blanca Ovelar** (Paraguay), ParlAmericas President
- Senator **Derlis Maidana** (Paraguay), Member of the Special Committee on Open Parliament

**12:00 - 13:30    Lunch**  
Room: Acosta Ñu Hall

**13:30            Transfer of participants to the official hotel**



*Follow us on social media.*



*Select sessions of this event will be recorded and turned into podcast episodes.*



*This activity is being undertaken with support from the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada and the National Congress of the Republic of Paraguay.*