



PODER LEGISLATIVO
Cámara de Senadores



Preliminary Agenda

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

Building Partnerships to Strengthen Democracy and Promote Human Rights

May 8-10, 2024
Asunción, Paraguay

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Times shown correspond to the local time in Asunción.

Tuesday, May 7

Arrival of parliamentary delegations

Wednesday, May 8

08:15 - 08:30 Transfer of participants to the National Congress of the Republic of Paraguay

09:00 - 10:00 **Inauguration and welcoming remarks**

Room: to be confirmed

- Senator **Blanca Ovelar** (Paraguay), President of ParlAmericas
- Senator **Javier Macaya** (Chile), Second Vice-President of ParlAmericas and President of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network
- Senator **Silvio Ovelar**, President of the National Congress of Paraguay (to be confirmed)

10:00 - 10:30 **Official photograph and coffee break**

Location: to be confirmed

10:30 - 11:30 **Session 1: Panel discussion – Human rights and democracy: Challenges for the future**

Room: to be confirmed

- Panellists to be confirmed

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: to be confirmed

- Panellists to be confirmed

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**

Location: Acosta Ñu Hall

14:30 - 16:30 **Session 3: Parliaments in action – Addressing current challenges linked to democracy and human rights (Working tables)**

Room: to be confirmed

Panellist:

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

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
- Citizen participation and civic space
- Public integrity and oversight



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- 17:00 - 19:00 **Welcome reception**
Room: to be confirmed
- 19:00 Transfer of participants to the official hotel

Thursday, May 9

- 08:00 - 08:30 Transfer of participants to the National Congress of the Republic of Paraguay
- 09:00 - 10:30 **Session 4: Leaving no one behind: Democratic and inclusive participation**
Room: to be confirmed

- Panellists to be confirmed

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: to be confirmed
- 10:45 - 11:00 **Coffee break**
- 11:00 - 13:00 **Session 5: Media pluralism, access to information and its effects on democratic processes (panel discussion and working tables)**
Room: to be confirmed

Panellists:

- **Ernesto Fernández Polcuch**, Regional Director and UNESCO Representative to Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay
- To be confirmed

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*
- *Freedom of expression*
- *Media pluralism*
- *Disinformation and its impacts on democratic processes*

13:00 - 14:30

Lunch

Room: to be confirmed

14:30 - 15:30

Session 6: Presentation of advances on open parliament commitments and actions

Room: to be confirmed

- Presentations by parliamentary delegations

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: to be confirmed

- Panellists to be confirmed

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

08:00 - 08:30

Transfer of participants to the National Congress of the Republic of Paraguay



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09:00 - 10:30 **Session 8: Parliamentary diplomacy and hemispheric instruments for democratic strengthening and the protection of human rights**

Room: to be confirmed

Panellists:

- **María Celina Conte**, Director, Summits of the Americas Secretariat, OAS
- To be confirmed

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**

- Presentation of annual reports by the Presidents of ParlAmericas Parliamentary Networks who also serve as 2nd Vice-Presidents of ParlAmericas.
 - Senator **Verónica Noemí Camino Farjat** (Mexico), President of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality
 - Senator **Javier Macaya** (Chile), President of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network
 - Senator **Rosa Galvez** (Canada), President of the ParlAmericas 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, 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 20th Plenary Assembly and the 8th Gathering of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network**



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- 11:30 - 12:00 **Closing remarks**
Room: to be confirmed
- Representatives of the Paraguayan National Congress (to be confirmed)
 - Representatives of ParlAmericas
- 12:00 - 13:30 **Lunch**
Room: to be confirmed
- 13:30 Transfer of participants to the official hotel



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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.