



PODER LEGISLATIVO
Cámara de Senadores



DECLARATION

20th ParlAmericas Plenary Assembly and 8th Gathering of the Open Parliament Network Building Partnerships to Strengthen Democracy and Promote Human Rights

May 8-10, 2024
Asunción, Paraguay

We, parliamentarian delegates from 20 countries¹ in the Americas and the Caribbean, have convened on May 8, 9 and 10, 2024, in Asunción, in the National Congress of the Republic of Paraguay, for the the 20th ParlAmericas Plenary Assembly and 8th Gathering of the Open Parliament Network, held jointly under the title ***Building Partnerships to Strengthen Democracy and Promote Human Rights***.

In a year of pivotal elections and increasing threats to rights and democracy around the world, this gathering provided an opportunity to reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the defense of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. In our dialogues, we addressed the state of democracy in the region and reaffirmed the critical role that parliaments play in fostering active democracies, maintaining peace, building consensus, promoting inclusive policies, and striving for social justice.

Considering the above and,

Recognizing:

1. That democracy, as a system of government founded on the right of all people to equal participation in public affairs, is the best model for ensuring a framework of freedoms under which societies can achieve peace, prosperity, equality, sustainable development and security, as established in international instruments and agreements such as the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), the [Inter-American Democratic Charter](#), the [American Convention on Human Rights](#), the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#), the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#), the [Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women](#) and the [Inter-American Action Plan on Democratic Governance](#).
2. That democracy is founded on a series of inherent principles and characteristics such as the periodic holding of free and fair elections; the separation of State powers; a system of checks and balances; the existence of the rule of law; the peaceful transition of power; the existence of

¹ Antigua & Barbuda, Argentina, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Brazil, Bolivia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago, and Uruguay. A parliamentary delegation representing the Parliament of St. Maarten also participated.

independent media; the will to protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms; and access to citizen participation mechanisms, among others.

3. That multilateral spaces are essential to strengthen and revitalize our democracies, maintain peace, uphold human rights and respond to transnational challenges in a coordinated manner.
4. That building, upholding and strengthening democratic societies is an ongoing process that requires broad and inclusive participation of all social actors in a climate of peaceful coexistence in which constructive dialogue is fostered between people, their organizations and public authorities.
5. That issues such as the deepening of poverty and inequality; the worsening of human security; the infringement of rights; the erosion of the rule of law; the abuse of power; the restriction of civic space; the existence of large-scale corruption; the escalation of armed conflicts; the strengthening of transnational criminal networks; and the dissemination of massive disinformation campaigns and computational propaganda, among other phenomena, are undermining citizens' trust in democracy and its institutions.
6. That, in the institutional framework of a democracy, the parliament plays a fundamental and irreplaceable role in safeguarding democratic principles, upholding the rule of law, representing the interests of citizens and protecting human rights.
7. That the separation of powers and the system of institutional checks and balances are essential in a democracy and that, in this context, the role of parliaments in providing oversight and accountability over the actions of the executive branch is vital to ensuring that the exercise of power and the administration of the government are transparent and lawful.
8. That human rights are universal, inalienable, indivisible and inherent to the dignity of all persons without distinction due to race, colour, sex, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, nationality, ethnicity, socioeconomic position or background, sexual orientation, birth or other status.
9. That, as documented by multilateral agencies and civil society organizations, human rights and environmental defenders face alarming situations of insecurity and danger in the hemisphere.
10. That the meaningful participation of citizens in public affairs and decision making processes through diverse and inclusive mechanisms is a right and an indispensable condition for the full and effective exercise of democracy.
11. That despite the equality of all persons being intrinsic to democracy, women remain under-represented across government and other positions of influence; and that ensuring their

full and equitable participation in politics and public affairs, free from violence and discrimination, is essential for achieving gender equality, sustainable development, peace and good governance.

12. That the open parliament model offers tools to build -- in collaboration with citizens and their organizations -- stronger, more inclusive and participatory democracies by strengthening transparency and access to public information, promoting citizen participation, fortifying accountability measures, and fostering ethics and probity in legislative work.
13. That the rights to freedom of expression, opinion, assembly, association and peaceful protest to express ideas, visions or values of dissent, opposition, condemnation or vindication are critical to the existence and consolidation of democratic and pluralistic societies.
14. That democracy thrives when there is a free, independent, diverse and inclusive media ecosystem in which these actors can operate without censorship, harassment or reprisals.
15. That digitalization, artificial intelligence and other technological innovations have already demonstrated significant potential to increase social welfare and inclusive and sustainable economic prosperity, while also presenting considerable challenges and risks to democratic governance, peaceful coexistence, the reduction of socio-economic disparities, and the rights to personal data protection and privacy.
16. That the need to respond to shared transnational problems in a concerted manner renders multilateralism, regional integration, and the promotion of human rights and democracy in international relations increasingly important and requires the active participation of parliaments in international affairs.

We commit to:

1. 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.
2. Redouble political oversight actions to ensure that our States comply with human rights obligations under international instruments and national legislation.
3. 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.

4. Uphold the vision and principles enshrined in the [Inter-American Democratic Charter](#) as the foundation of the democratic culture of the Americas and the Caribbean.
5. 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.
6. Work collaboratively through ParlAmericas, and in our respective national contexts, to respond in a coordinated manner to the transnational challenges facing democracy and the rule of law, including the persistence of corruption and inequalities, the impacts of digital disinformation and computational propaganda, the escalation of regional conflicts, the strengthening of organized crime and the emergence of authoritarian political tendencies.
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. Strengthen the recognition and protection of human rights and environmental defenders and their organizations, in accordance with international and regional instruments including the [United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders](#) and the [Escazú Agreement](#).
11. Promote and protect the freedom of the press and freedom of expression by ensuring that journalists, activists, media workers in general and civil society organizations can work without fear of censorship, harassment or reprisals.

12. Strengthen legislation, and the political oversight of existing legislation, to guarantee the right to timely access to public information; and ensure that government and parliament proactively disclose information that is relevant to public accountability.
13. Continue efforts to prevent and combat corruption in all its forms through mechanisms and instances of international cooperation and by incorporating into our regulatory frameworks the recommendations and commitments set out in international instruments such as the [Lima Commitment on Democratic Governance against Corruption](#), the [Inter-American Convention against Corruption](#), the [United Nations Convention against Corruption](#) and the [United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime](#).
14. Work through spaces such as the Digital Caucus of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network to convene state and non-state actors to champion digital governance models that protect human rights and democracy, foster sustainable development and promote inclusion and social cohesion.

Adopted in Asunción, Paraguay, on May 10, 2024