Legislative Modernization Experiences in Latin America

Meeting 1: Strengthening Parliamentary Function
The first meeting of the series explored the concept of legislative modernization and its role in strengthening parliaments. Participants shared information about initiatives undertaken to move towards virtual parliamentary sessions and other open parliament efforts related to transparency, open data, and public integrity. The dialogue also considered the challenges of adaptation faced by the region’s parliaments due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Meeting 2: Innovation and Citizen Participation in Parliamentary Processes
The second meeting focused on legislative modernization from the perspective of innovation and citizen participation mechanisms. Through their exchanges, participants discussed the implications of such mechanisms in the context of evolving political contexts. It was also evident that in addition to adapting the parliament’s functioning to the circumstances of the ongoing pandemic, planning is necessary for disasters, such as the recent case of Hurricane Eta.

Both sessions included open dialogue to share reflections and identify issues that could be linked to a sub-regional agenda for further learning and collaboration.

Among the references shared were:
- Protocol for Remote Parliamentary Work of the Chamber of Deputies (Argentina)
- Citizen Participation Regulation (Chile) in Spanish
- National Agricultural Parliament (Costa Rica) in Spanish
- Institutional Policy on Open Parliament (Costa Rica) in Spanish
- Reform of the Organic Law of the Legislative Function (Ecuador) in Spanish
Interparliamentary Dialogue
Among the topics highlighted was the importance of being able to hold virtual sessions, not only in the context of the pandemic, but also in disastrous situations. For example, Honduras mentioned challenges in traveling from the different districts to parliament after the recent Hurricane Eta. In terms of citizen participation, the importance of expanding beyond only providing information to also incorporating interaction and feedback between the parliament and citizens was highlighted.

Regarding the adoption of new technologies to advance legislative modernization in all forms, important challenges ahead were highlighted. This included achieving political consensus among different parties to adopt new methods and transparent legislative procedures that generate trust of the population as well as ensure that the tools are secure, accessible and easy to adopt for both citizens and legislators.

INTERPARLIAMENTARY AGENDA FOR LEGISLATIVE MODERNIZATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of ICTS</th>
<th>Active mechanisms for citizen participation</th>
<th>Which actions are considered important?</th>
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<td><strong>Citizen participation.</strong> Generate spaces for two-way interaction.</td>
<td><strong>Co-creation of open parliament commitments.</strong> Discussion and exchanges with different sectors in society.</td>
<td><strong>Sectorial and sub-regional agendas in relevant themes such as migration.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Representation.</strong> Connect with other sectors in society.</td>
<td><strong>Transparency.</strong> Make information available to citizens on legislative activities: biographical information of parliamentarians, attendance, voting.</td>
<td><strong>Networking between legislators.</strong> Strengthen subregional relationships within existing parliamentary networks.</td>
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<td><strong>Lawmaking process.</strong> In the phases of socialization and approval (plenary vote) of the content of the law.</td>
<td><strong>Lawmaking process.</strong> In the stages of drafting, reviewing, socialization and approval (through citizen votes) of the content of the law.</td>
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<td><strong>Development and use of applications.</strong></td>
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KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR LEGISLATIVE MODERNIZATION IDENTIFIED IN SESSIONS
- Legislative modernization efforts require: strong bipartisan agreements; stable and committed multi-partisan committees; a long-term outlook; and citizen participation.
- Legislative reform and modernization processes can be useful in addressing citizen distrust of democratic institutions, particularly if they involve expanding opportunities for effective citizen participation.
- In the region’s parliaments, legislative modernization processes focus mainly on the organizational structure (administrative processes). It is important to complement this progress by further strengthening the institutional dimension, that is, the principles, values, and rules that guide legislative work.
- The adoption of ICTs in the legislative processes during a pandemic presents various challenges but it also represents opportunities for modernization in terms of streamlining tools that can overcome the challenges associated with the pandemic and that can be incorporated on a permanent basis.
- Legislative modernization is not only focused on the implementation of ICTs. It also involves betting on reforms and efforts in favour of legislative openness, thus strengthening parliamentary work in agreement with the Sustainable Development Goals.

The agendas ([session 1] & [session 2]) in Spanish, [press release], and [presentations] from these two activities can be accessed on the ParlAmericas website.
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ParlAmericas is headquartered in OTTAWA, CANADA

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