



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION INICIATIVES IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE FIRST INTER AMERICAN MEETING OF MINISTERS AND HIGH LEVEL AUTHORITIES ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The overarching and cross-cutting theme for this Meeting comprise public and citizen participation, good governance, gender equality and the inclusion and respect of indigenous peoples. In order to strengthen and guarantee a wide participation of civil society during the preparatory process of the Ministerial Meeting, the OAS' Department of Sustainable Development (DSD) is conducting different kinds of outreach and public consultations processes, in order to inform civil society of the ministerial meeting, and enable different levels of opportunities for civil society to provide input to the ministerial meeting, particularly during its preparatory process. These initiatives are described below:

Informative Bulletin

The first and second informative bulletins, providing information on the agenda and planning steps for the ministerial meeting, were sent to approximately 2,500 civil society groups, through electronic means as well as regular mail (for those groups, including indigenous groups, that may lack access to the internet). The bulletins provide a summary of the recommendations provided in each of the technical workshops, and a summary of the comments posted on the virtual consultation forum. The Informative Bulletins are available at: http://www.oas.org/dsd/MinisterialMeeting/ReunionInterAm_eng_Publicpar.htm

Virtual Consultation Forum

The Forum, being co-managed by the Development Gateway, has been on-line since May 2006. It is intended to provide civil society groups with the opportunity to track the planning of the ministerial meeting, and provide comments and suggestions for governments. Following the experience used by this Department during the 2005 HEMA meeting, the following procedures are suggested. The Department, together with the Summit of the Americas Secretariat, will compile a document of all views expressed by civil society through the virtual forum, and present that document to the Working Group on Sustainable Development at the end of September 2006, with an interim report submitted to the Working Group when it meets at its special session in mid-September. (For more information on the Virtual Forum visit: <http://www.oas.org/dsd/MinisterialMeeting/VirtualForumCSandIP.htm> and/or <http://topics.developmentgateway.org/environment/discussion/default/showDiscussion.do~id=1441?id=1441>)

Local Consultations

In order to facilitate broad-based participation of civil society during the preparatory process of the Ministerial Meeting, and to facilitate the dialogue between civil society and different community groups on the fundamental themes related to regional sustainable development, the DSD, in cooperation with the Canadian International Development Agency and the Summits of the Americas Secretariat, is organizing a series of local consultations with civil society. These consultations will take place in:

- Buenos Aires (August 28)
- La Paz (September 12th)
- Washington, DC. (September 14)
- Panama City (September 15)
- Port of Spain (September 19)



These consultations are being organized with the collaboration of local authorities. They are open to civil society in general. The DDS, in collaboration with the Summits of the Americas Secretariat and local authorities will be sending email announcements regarding these consultations.

The objective of these consultations is to obtain comments from the civil society to be considered in the preparation of the draft **Declaration of Santa Cruz**. The reports of the consultations will be prepared by the civil society groups themselves, under their own responsibility. The OAS Secretariat can provide technical assistance, including for example editing and translation.

The OAS will provide financial support for 1 civil society representative of each sub-region to participate in the Roundtable with Civil Society that will take place in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia on December 3rd, 2006.

Roundtable with Civil Society

There will be a Roundtable with Civil Society Representatives in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia in order to present the results of the local consultations and the Virtual Forum, and finalize the report with recommendations from civil society.

The report will be presented to the Ministers and High Level Authorities on Sustainable Development of the region during the First Plenary Session of the Ministerial Meeting (December 4th) by a civil society representative selected by those civil society representatives who attended the Roundtable the previous day.