

Manual for Civil Society Participation in OAS Activities



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Abbreviations

OAS	Organization of American States
CSO	Civil Society Organization(s)
CIDI	Inter-American Council for Integral Development of the OAS
CAJP	Committee on Juridical and Political Affairs of the Permanent Council of the OAS
CAAP	Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Affairs of the Permanent Council of the OAS
CHS	Committee on Hemispheric Security of the Permanent Council of the OAS
CISC	Committee on Inter-American Summits Management and Civil Society Participation in OAS Activities of the Permanent Council
CEPCIDI	Permanent Executive Committee of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development
DIA	Department of International Affairs
SER	Secretariat for External Relations
SPA	Secretariat for Political Affairs
DECO	Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation
DSDSM	Department of Sustainable Democracy and Special Missions
DSMG	Department of State Modernization and Governance
SLA	Secretariat for Legal Affairs
REMJA	Meetings of Ministers of Justice or of Ministers or Attorneys General of the Americas
IACHR	Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
SMS	Secretariat for Multidimensional Security
CICAD	Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission
MEM	Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism
OID	Inter-American Observatory on Drugs
CICTE	Inter-American Committee against Terrorism
CIFTA	Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials
DPS	Department of Public Security
SEDI	Executive Secretariat for Integral Development
FEMCIDI	Special Multilateral Fund of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development
DHDEC	Department of Human Development, Education and Culture
DEDTT	Department of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
SICE	Foreign Trade Information System
IIN	Inter-American Children's Institute
CIM	Inter-American Commission of Women
JSCA	Justice Studies Center of the Americas
MESICIC	Inter-American Program for Cooperation and the Follow-up Mechanism for the Implementation of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption
DSD	Department of Sustainable Development
IIHR	Inter-American Institute of Human Rights
CJI	Inter-American Juridical Committee
CITEL	Inter-American Telecommunications Commission
PCC	Permanent Consultative Committees
CIP	Inter-American Committee on Ports
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
IICA	Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
ECLAC	UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
CAF	Andean Development Corporation
SIRG	Summit Implementation Review Group
JSWG	Joint Summit Working Group
CABEI	Central American Bank for Economic Integration
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ILO	International Labor Organization
ICA	Institute for Connectivity in the Americas

Preface

Article 6 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, underscores that “it is the right and responsibility of all citizens to participate in decisions relating to their own development” and that “promoting and fostering diverse forms of participation strengthens democracy.” Similarly, Article 26 of the Charter establishes that the Organization of American States (OAS) will consult and cooperate on an ongoing basis with Member States to take into account the contributions of civil society organizations (CSOs) working in those fields.

As a result, the OAS continues to carry out programs and activities designed to promote democratic principles and practices and strengthen a democratic culture in the Hemisphere. The Organization has created spaces for dialogue for civil society to inform and respond to critical issues in the inter-American system and contribute to the initiatives set forth by the OAS General Assembly and by the Heads of State and Government in the Summits of the Americas, as well as Ministerial and other high-level meetings.

The purpose of this *Manual for Civil Society Participation in OAS Activities*, prepared by the Department of International Affairs, is to clarify the mechanisms through which CSOs can participate in OAS activities and contribute to the formulation of hemispheric policies. In addition, the Manual provides a summary of the structure and work areas of the Organization as well as the guiding principles for CSO participation.

This Manual is an on-going effort by the OAS to reach out to CSOs and strengthen their involvement in the formulation and implementation of the inter-American agenda, the Summits of the Americas, and the goals of the OAS. We hope that you find the Manual useful.



José Miguel Insulza
Secretary General
Organization of American States

Modern societies require the participation of all actors to confront the complex challenges in the world. Civil society fulfills a fundamental role in public policies. The generation of democracy is enriched when all parties involved actively participate in the decisions that affect their futures.

—José Miguel Insulza

The Organization of American States and Civil Society



The Organization of American States (OAS) is the foremost political forum in the Hemisphere for multilateral dialogue and the establishment of the inter-American agenda. The OAS plays a fundamental role in promoting peace, democracy, justice, and solidarity, strengthening cooperation, and defending the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence of its Member States. The Organization's vision is based on consensus, dialogue, and cooperation for the economic, social, and political development of the region.

The First International Conference of American States, inaugurated on October 2, 1889 in Washington, D.C., founded the International Union of American Republics and its Commercial Bureau, which served as Secretariat until 1910, until it became the Pan-American Union. For half a century, the Pan-American Union was the forum in which agreements and conventions were concluded to institutionalize legal, economic, social, and cultural cooperation in the Americas.

At the Ninth International Conference of American States, held in Bogotá on April 30, 1948, 21 nations of the Hemisphere adopted the Charter that transformed the Pan-American Union into the OAS. That conference confirmed support for the Organization's common principles and respect for the sovereignty of each Member State. Since that time,

the OAS has expanded to include Canada and the Caribbean states.

The OAS Charter has been amended four times through the Protocol of Buenos Aires (1967), the Protocol of Cartagena de Indias (1985), the Protocol of Washington (1992), and the Protocol of Managua (1993). The Protocol of Buenos Aires established the Organization's present structure and the Protocol of Cartagena de Indias strengthened the Organization's political role in the Hemisphere. Later, additional amendments were introduced through the Protocol of Washington, which provides that one of the essential aims of the OAS is to promote, through cooperative action, the economic, social, and cultural development of Member States and help to eradicate extreme poverty in the region. Finally, the Protocol of Managua established the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI) whose function is to facilitate cooperation among Member States on economic and social issues.

The Inter-American Democratic Charter was adopted on September 11, 2001 by a special session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States, held in Lima, Peru. The Democratic Charter is the most important instrument for strengthening and upholding democratic institutions in the nations of the Americas. The Charter,

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which is binding for all OAS Member States, defines democracy and specifies how it should be defended when it is under threat.

The Inter-American Democratic Charter refers to the importance of civil society participation in Articles 6 and 26 of its text. Recognizing the important role of the OAS on this matter, Article 26 provides that “the OAS will continue to carry out programs and activities designed to promote democratic principles and practices and strengthen a democratic culture in the Hemisphere, bearing in mind that democracy is a way of life based on liberty and enhancement of economic, social, and cultural conditions for the peoples of the Americas. The OAS will consult and cooperate on an ongoing basis with Member States and take into account the contributions of civil society organizations working in those fields.”

It is the right and responsibility of all citizens to participate in decisions relating to their own development. This is also a necessary condition for the full and effective exercise of democracy. Promoting and fostering diverse forms of participation strengthens democracy.

—Article 6, Inter-American Democratic Charter

Bodies of the OAS

The OAS carries out its activities by way of the General Assembly; the Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs; the Councils (the Permanent Council and the Inter-American Council for Integral Development); the General Secretariat; the Inter-American Juridical Committee; the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR); the specialized conferences; the specialized organizations; and other entities established by its governing bodies.

General Assembly

The General Assembly is the supreme organ of the Organization. It gathers the Member States each year in a regular session, and also holds special sessions under particular circumstances. All Member States of the Organization are represented in the General Assembly and have the right to one vote.

The General Assembly decides upon the general action and policy of the Organization, determines the structure and functions of its organs, adopts its program-budget, fixes the quotas, and considers any matter relating to friendly relations among the Member States.

Councils of the OAS

The OAS has two Councils that are directly subordinate to the General Assembly: the Permanent Council and the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI). Each Council has the authority granted to it in the OAS Charter and other inter-American instruments, as well as the functions assigned to it by the General Assembly and the Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs.



Permanent Council

The Permanent Council is composed of one representative of each Member State, appointed with the rank of Ambassador. The purpose of the Permanent Council is to consider matters entrusted to it by the General Assembly or the Meeting of Consultation

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of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and also sees to the maintenance of relations between the Member States, contributes to the peaceful settlement of disputes, and serves as the Preparatory Committee of the General Assembly.

The Permanent Council established five Permanent Committees: the General Committee, the Committee on Juridical and Political Affairs (CAJP), the Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Affairs (CAAP), the Committee on Hemispheric Security (CHS), and the Committee on Inter-American Summits Management and Civil Society Participation in OAS Activities (CISC). If necessary, the Permanent Council establishes ad hoc committees or working groups, such as the Special Committee on Migration Issues and the Joint Working Group of the Permanent Council and CEPCIDI on the drafting of the Social Charter of the Americas.

With regard to civil society participation in the OAS, the Permanent Council approved the following resolutions:

- CP/RES.759 (1217/99), “Guidelines for the Participation of Civil Society Organizations in OAS activities”
- CP/RES. 840 (1361/03), “Strategies for Increasing and Strengthening Participation by Civil Society Organizations in OAS Activities”
- CP/RES. 864 (1413/04), “Specific Fund to Support the Participation of Civil Society Organizations in OAS Activities and in the Summits of the American Process”

Inter-American Council for Integral Development

The Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI) was established in 1996 by the Protocol of Managua with the principal purpose to promote integral and sustainable development in

the Americas, and its mandates are linked to the technical capacity of the General Secretariat.

CIDI is composed of representatives of Ministerial rank appointed by the Member States in light of the topics addressed. The OAS General Secretariat comprises the supporting structure of CIDI and concentrates on policy formulation and design, sharing experiences, and developing cooperation networks and partnerships with other institutions to craft and execute projects.

The Permanent Executive Committee of CIDI (CEPCIDI) is composed of the Member States. The purpose of CEPCIDI is to adopt decisions and make recommendations for the planning, programming, budgeting, management control, follow-up and evaluation of cooperation projects and activities executed in the CIDI.

General Secretariat

The General Secretariat of the OAS executes the programs and policies adopted by the General Assembly and the other policymaking bodies. It is headquartered in Washington, D.C. and has offices in most Member States. The Secretary General and Assistant Secretary General are responsible for the organization of the Secretariat and supervising its staff.

The Secretary General is elected by the General Assembly for a five-year term. The Secretary General may not be re-elected more than once, nor be succeeded by a person of the same nationality. The Secretary General is the legal representative of the General Secretariat and participates, without the right to vote, in all the meetings of the Organization.

The Secretary General may bring to the attention of the General Assembly or the Permanent Council any matter that, in his opinion, might threaten the peace

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and security of the Hemisphere or the development of the Member States.

The Assistant Secretary General acts as the Secretary of the Permanent Council. The Assistant Secretary General serves as advisory officer to the Secretary General. During the temporary absence or disability of the Secretary General, the Assistant Secretary General performs the duties of the Secretary General.

In the event that the office of Secretary General becomes vacant, the Assistant Secretary General shall assume the duties of that office until the General Assembly elects a new Secretary General for a full term, and until the newly-elected Secretary General assumes office.

The structure of the General Secretariat includes:

- Secretariat for Political Affairs
- Executive Secretariat for Integral Development
- Secretariat for Multidimensional Security
- Secretariat for Administration and Finance
- Secretariat for Legal Affairs
- Secretariat for External Relations

The Department of International Affairs (DIA) of the Secretariat for External Relations (SER) is responsible for advising the Secretary General on all matters relating to civil society and developing and executing activities and strategies designed to promote civil society participation in all of the activities related to the work of the Organization. DIA also directs and coordinates activities in this area with all the dependencies of the General Secretariat; provides secretariat services and technical support to the CISC of the Permanent Council, and coordinates the Registry of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the OAS.

If you would like information regarding civil society participation in OAS activities, please contact:

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Pillars of the OAS

The structure of the OAS allows for the development of different activities that facilitate consensus-building and cooperation among Member States and different international organizations, inter-American agencies, CSOs, the private sector, academia, and other stakeholders in the following fields:

- Strengthening democracy and access to justice
- Promotion and protection of human rights
- Multidimensional security
- Integral development

Strengthening Democracy and Access to Justice

The Inter-American Democratic Charter recognizes that representative democracy is vital for the stability, peace and development of the region, and that one of the objectives of the OAS is to promote and consolidate democracy with respect to the principle of non-intervention.

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Secretariat for Political Affairs

The OAS promotes these values with the support of the Secretariat for Political Affairs (SPA) whose mission it is to strengthen political processes in the Member States and to support sustainable democracy as the best option for ensuring peace, security, and development.

SPA consists of the Executive Office of the Secretary for Political Affairs and the following dependencies:

- Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation
- Department of Sustainable Democracy and Special Missions
- Department for State Modernization and Good Governance

Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation

The Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation (DECO) offers professional electoral observation service for Member States based on the continual improvement and strengthening of procedures and practices in this field. This Department is responsible for organizing, coordinating, and executing electoral observation missions, electoral technology missions, and related missions, at the request of Member States. DECO also facilitates and supports discussions, mutual support, and collective learning among electoral bodies in the Hemisphere.

This Department carries out its activities through three work areas:

- Electoral Technical Cooperation Section
- Electoral Observation Section
- Electoral Studies and Projects Section

Department of Sustainable Democracy and Special Missions

The Department of Sustainable Democracy and Special Missions (DSDSM) advises and formulates recommendations, provides information and offers technical support on matters of crisis and conflict prevention, management, and resolution as well as coordinates special missions and political observation missions. The Department administers the OAS Peace Fund and programs for the peaceful resolution of territorial disputes executed under the auspices of the Fund, in coordination with the Secretariat for Multidimensional Security and the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development.

DSDSM is comprised of the following sections:

- Political Analysis and Scenarios Section
- Special Missions Section
- Fund for Peace Section

Department for State Modernization and Governance

The Department for State Modernization and Governance (DSMG) is composed by the following sections:

- Support to Legislative Institutions Section
- Transparency and Governance Section
- Decentralization Section
- Public Administration Support Section
- E-Government Section
- Civil Registry Support Section

Through its different sections, DSMG promotes the adoption of instruments and means of citizen participation in decision-making. The Department

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supports measures to improve systems of representation of all sectors of the population through the various branches of government and contributes to transparency and confidence-building in government institutions.

This Department promotes political dialogue and supports the strengthening of democratic governance at the local level as well as its institutional capacity through the use of information and communication technologies in government. In addition, DMEG supports the creation and accessibility of civil registries in order to contribute to the universalization of civil identity and make effective the right to identity.

Secretariat for Legal Affairs

In order to promote and facilitate access to justice in the Americas, the OAS created the Secretariat for Legal Affairs (SLA). This secretariat develops, promotes, and implements the Inter-American Program for the Development of International Law; provides advisory services concerning international law and the development and codification of inter-American law; supports the follow-up mechanisms for certain inter-American conventions; serves as a depository and source of information for inter-American treaties and the agreements of the OAS and its organs; disseminates information on the legal instruments and programs of the OAS; and provides other services related to inter-American legal cooperation.

SLA is comprised of the Executive Office of the Secretary and the following dependencies:

- Department of International Law
- Department of Legal Cooperation
- Department of Special Legal Programs

Department of International Law

The Department of International Law advises the General Assembly, the Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, the Permanent Council, the General Secretariat, and other organs, agencies, and entities of the OAS on matters of public and private international law and the statutory and regulatory aspects of the functioning of those bodies.

This Department also provides secretariat support to: the Inter-American Juridical Committee; the Working Group to Examine the Progress Reports of the States Parties to the Protocol of San Salvador in accordance with the Standards for the Preparation of Periodic Reports pursuant to Article 19 of the Protocol of San Salvador on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights; subjects relating to indigenous peoples; and the Working Group to Prepare the Draft Inter-American Convention against Racism and All Forms of Discrimination and Intolerance. In coordination with other bodies of the Organization and with governmental institutions, such as the Inter-American Juridical Committee, and non-governmental organizations, the Department promotes courses, meetings, and seminars on legal topics of interest to the Hemisphere.

Department of Legal Cooperation

The Department of Legal Cooperation provides advisory and technical secretariat services to the Meetings of Ministers of Justice or other Ministers or Attorneys General of the Americas (REMJA) and the Conference of State Parties.

This Department also coordinates the Inter-American Program for Cooperation and the Follow-up Mechanism for the Implementation of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption (MESICIC), as a means of strengthening national law,

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supporting institutions that fight corruption, civil society participation, and international organizations to follow up on, evaluate, and report corruption in the region. This program was established after the Inter-American Convention against Corruption was signed in 1996.

The Department of Legal Cooperation also advises the Consultative Committee of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials (CIFTA) as well as carries out projects to promote the ratification, legislative implementation, and application of inter-American juridical and judicial cooperation treaties, in fulfillment of the resolutions of the General Assembly.

Department of Special Legal Programs

The Department of Special Legal Programs advises the specialized organs and entities of the OAS on matters relating to persons with disabilities; children, adolescents, and youth; and consumer rights.

The Department provides technical support to the Technical Secretariat for the Implementation of the Program of Action for the Decade of the Americas for the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities and the Committee of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities. The Department supports the establishment and operations of mechanisms for follow-up on conventions on matters in its area of competence.

Promotion and Protection of Human Rights

The Inter-American Human Rights System promotes justice and provides resources to people in the Americas who

may have suffered alleged violations of their human rights. The pillars of the system are the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), created in 1959 and based in Washington, D.C., and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, established in 1979 and located in San José, Costa Rica.

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) is composed of seven independent commissioners elected by the Member States to promote the observance and defense of human rights. The IACHR receives, analyzes and investigates over one thousand individual petitions annually, and since 1959, more than 13,000 cases have been processed.

One of the key functions of the IACHR is to consider petitions from individuals who claim that the State has violated their rights and that they have been unable to find justice. The Commission may bring together the petitioner and the State to explore a “friendly settlement.” If such an outcome is not possible, the IACHR may recommend specific measures to be carried out by the State to remedy the violation. If the country involved is one of the twenty-one which has accepted the Inter-American Court’s jurisdiction, the case may be submitted to the Court.

The Commission has the autonomy and technical capacity to monitor the human rights situation in the Member States and publishes an annual report, which has been highly effective in documenting and challenging abuses in specific countries. Since 1961, commissioners have completed more than 100 visits throughout the region to review human rights policies and practices and have published over 50 special reports based on those visits.

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The Commission is comprised of seven Rapporteurships that monitor and report on human rights of vulnerable groups, thus generating stronger commitments to protect them, as well as improving domestic laws, policies and practices on priority human rights issues in the region. The Rapporteurships are:

- Special Rapporteurship for Freedom of Expression
- Rapporteurship on the Rights of Women
- Rapporteurship on the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families
- Rapporteurship on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Rapporteurship on the Rights of Persons Deprived of Liberty
- Rapporteurship on the Rights of Afro-Descendants and against Racial Discrimination
- Rapporteurship on the Rights of the Child

Inter-American Court of Human Rights

The Inter-American Court of Human Rights, established in 1979, is an autonomous judicial institution of the OAS whose mission is the application and interpretation of the Inter-American Convention on Human Rights and other related treaties. The Court's goal is to uphold the basic rights and freedoms of men and women of the Americas. The Court consists of seven judges from the Organization's Member States elected in an individual capacity from among jurists of the highest moral authority and of recognized competence in the field of human rights, who possess the qualifications required for the exercise of the highest judicial functions under the law of the State of which they are nationals or of the State that proposes them as candidates.

Multidimensional Security

The mission of the Secretariat for Multidimensional Security (SMS) is to coordinate cooperation among the Member States to fight threats to national and citizen security, and to work to mitigate the harmful effects of those threats on the health and well-being of citizens and societies in the Member States and to prevent the abuse of psychotropic substances, crime, and violence; capacity-building; legal and legislative assistance; and the promotion of health and education.

SMS consists of the following dependencies:

- Executive Secretariat of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission
- Secretariat of the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism
- Department of Public Security

Executive Secretariat of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission

The Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), agency under the coordination of the Secretariat for Multidimensional Security, was established by the General Assembly in 1986 to promote cooperation among Member States to control trafficking, production, and abuse of controlled substances, in accordance with the 1986 Inter-American Program of Action of Rio de Janeiro.

The Executive Secretariat of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission is comprised of the following sections:

- Section on Demand Reduction
- Section on Supply Reduction
- Section on Institutional Strengthening
- Anti-Money Laundering Unit
- Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism
- Inter-American Observatory on Drugs

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CICAD's objectives include promoting programs to strengthen drug abuse prevention and treatment in Member States, fighting money laundering and the production and trafficking of illicit drugs, and promoting research, information-sharing, specialized training, and technical assistance to fight this scourge.

In 1999, the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM) was established as an instrument to assess the anti-drug activities of the Member States of CICAD throughout the Hemisphere. CICAD conceived this instrument in response to a mandate of the Second Summit of the Americas. Its four major focuses are anti-drug strategies, demand reduction, supply reduction, and control measures. The MEM is not only an evaluation mechanism but also a means of cooperation among countries, with long-term continuity. The instrument is available to the public for information on the current drug situation, on positive and negative developments, and on areas in which work is needed or specific activities need to be reinforced.

The Inter-American Observatory on Drugs (OID) is CICAD's statistical, information and scientific research branch. Informed by an evidence-based picture of the drug problem, both nationally and at the hemispheric level, Member States can better understand all the dimensions of the drug problem, and design and implement policies and programs to address them. The Observatory helps countries to improve the collection and analysis of drug-related data by promoting the establishment of national observatories and the use of standardized methods and data; and by providing scientific and technical training for, and the exchange of experiences among, professionals working on drug issues.

Inter-American Committee against Terrorism

The Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (CICTE) serves as the preeminent organization within the inter-American system for the coordination of efforts to protect the citizens of the Member States from terrorism.

CICTE's objectives include improving information exchange among competent national authorities; creating and updating an inter-American database on terrorism matters; formulating a proposal to help Member States draft appropriate antiterrorism legislation; and compiling bilateral, sub-regional, and multilateral treaties and agreements signed by the Member States on this subject. CICTE also promotes universal accession to international antiterrorism conventions, increases cooperation in border areas and security measures related to travel documents, and implements training and crisis management activities.

Department of Public Security

The main functions of the Department of Public Security are to observe the fulfillment of resolutions approved by political organs of the OAS in the areas of its competence in demining, trafficking in persons, organized crime and gangs, small arms and light weapons, and the security of small island states.

The Department is comprised of the following dependencies:

- Office of Humanitarian Mine Action
- Public Security Policies Security
- Section against Transnational Organized Crime

This Department offers support and technical advice to the Member States in the theme of humanitarian action

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against mines, including the humane removal of mines; and education on the risk of the mines for the affected populations.

The Department carries out efforts against trafficking in persons in the Hemisphere, keeping in mind the perspective of gender and children, organizes training seminars and workshops, provides technical assistance to governments, and promotes the exchange of information and international dialogue.



The Department also provides legal and technical aid to the Member States in their fight against organized crime, implements the mandates of the General Assembly on firearms, ammunition and explosives, reinforces the objectives and mandates of the Consultative Committee of the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and other Related materials (CIFTA) and is responsible for coordinating the Plan of Action against Transnational Organized Crime. Lastly, the Department provides support to small states in the area of public security according to General Assembly Resolution AG/RES. 2112 (XXXV-O/05), "Special Security Concerns of the Small Island States of the Caribbean."

This Department is responsible for the planning and development of Ministerial and other high-level meetings

in the areas of public security, such as the Meeting of Ministers of Public Security of the Americas and the Meeting of National Authorities on Trafficking in Persons.

Integral Development

The Executive Secretariat for Integral Development (SEDI) coordinates the implementation of advancing programs of horizontal cooperation, regional ministerial meetings and the Special Multilateral Fund of CIDI (FEMCIDI). SEDI consists of the following departments:

- Department of Human Development, Education and Culture
- Department of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
- Department of Social Development and Employment
- Department of Sustainable Development

Department of Human Development, Education and Culture

The Department of Human Development, Education and Culture (DHDEC) supports OAS Member States in their efforts to ensure quality education for all and to protect and draw on their rich cultural heritage to promote economic, social and human development. The Department carries out this mission through four main strategies: fostering policy dialogue; promoting capacity building; creating and strengthening networks and alliances; and facilitating technical cooperation. In terms of culture, the Department works to develop projects to address the preservation and protection of cultural heritage; culture, identity and diversity; culture, economics and development, and cultural information systems. DHDEC provides technical secretariat services for Ministerial and inter-

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American committee meetings in the areas of education and culture.

Additionally, the Department is responsible for promoting academic and professional development of students and young professionals in the Americas. DHDEC administers scholarships for academic studies and professional development promoting access to higher education and professional advancement in the Member States. The Department carries out technical cooperation activities for the Member States for the application of information and communication technologies in human resource programs.

Department of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism

The Department of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism (DEDTT) supports the efforts of the OAS Member States to expand trade opportunities, increase competitiveness and foster economic integration.

DEDTT is in charge of the following dependencies:

- Office of Trade;
- Office of Tourism;
- Office of Competitiveness ;
- Office of Science, Technology, and Innovation
- Foreign Trade Information System (SICE) Section

This Department offers technical assistance to Member States on issues relating to economic integration, specifically that of small economies, in the design, programming, and execution of cooperation projects. The Department also maintains the Foreign Trade Information System (SICE), which centralizes information on trade policy in the Americas, agreements in force for

OAS Member States, new and ongoing trade policy developments, information on national trade-related legislation, links to international, regional and national sources of trade policy information.

DEDTT provides support to Member States in the area of tourism services as they relate to trade, competitiveness and sustainable development as well as offers support to other areas of the General Secretariat engaged in activities related to tourism. Likewise, the Department provides technical inputs for the planning and programming of Ministerial meetings (Ministers and Vice Ministers of Trade, Ministers of Tourism, and others) in the areas of trade and tourism.

The Department also supports OAS Member States in the formulation of policies in science and technology to promote and guide the socioeconomic development of the countries in the hemisphere, build national capacities and institutional strengthening through the promotion of engineering and innovation in order to improve the competitiveness of companies, with an emphasis on the production sector to create new sources of employment, reduce poverty and strengthen democratic governance. This Department offers technical support in the planning and programming of ministerial meetings in the areas of science and technology.

Department of Sustainable Development

Following the Summit of the Americas on Sustainable Development, held in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, in 1996, the General Secretariat established the Department of Sustainable Development (DSD). The mission of this Department is to support Member States in the design

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and implementation of policies, programs and projects oriented to integrate environmental priorities with poverty alleviation, and socio-economic development goals. DSD supports the execution of projects in integrated water management, renewable energy, land-titling, natural hazards-climate change adaptation, biological diversity, environmental law and policy, and transparency and public participation.

DSD is comprised of five sections including:

- Sustainable Energy and Climate Change Mitigation Section
- Risk Management and Adaptation to Climate Change Section
- Sustainable Biodiversity and Land Management Section
- Environmental Law Policy and Good Governance Section
- Integrated Water Resources Management Section

The Department achieves its mission through the formulation and execution of technical cooperation projects, the exchange of information on sustainable development in the region, the promotion of civil society participation in decision-making on environmental management, and assisting countries and regions in the preparation of investment projects for consideration by regional and international financing mechanisms. DSD offers technical inputs for the planning and development of ministerial meetings, sectoral meetings, and meetings of the Inter-American Committee on Sustainable Development.

Department of Social Development and Employment

The Department of Social Development and Employment (DDSOCE) provides assistance to Member States in their efforts to advance on development with equity, through the promotion of policies and programs of poverty reduction, decent work and employment creation. The Department fulfills its strategic objectives through the promotion of an inter-American dialogue on social development, labor and employment; the promotion of partnerships for development, especially horizontal cooperation activities based on the exchange of knowledge and experiences in planning and implementation of public policies; and the coordination of actions with other international organizations, scholars, private sector and civil society.

This Department is the Technical Secretariat of the Joint Working Group in charge of the drafting of the Social Charter of the Americas. DDSOCE is also responsible for the planning and development of ministerial, sectoral, and/or inter-American committee meetings in the areas of social development and employment, such as the Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labor, and supports cooperation mechanisms, such as the Social Network of Latin America and the Caribbean and the Inter-American Labor Administration Network and the Inter-American Social Protection Network.



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Specialized Organizations and Other Entities

Inter-American Children's Institute

The purpose of the Inter-American Children's Institute (IIN) is to improve the living standards of children and their families. The IIN serves as a social action center and conducts programs in the areas of health, education, social legislation, social services and information.

The Institute offers technical assistance to governmental and non-governmental organizations that serve at-risk children and their families. Its advisory services focus on the development, monitoring, and evaluation of programs and projects designed to improve management in homes that care for children and in national agencies that coordinate such homes. The IIN provides technical assistance in policy formulation and the planning needed for proper multi-sectoral assistance to children and their families.

Inter-American Institute for Human Rights

The Inter-American Institute of Human Rights (IHR) is an independent, international academic institution, created in 1980, with its headquarters in San Jose, Costa Rica. The mission of IHR is to promote and strengthen respect for the human rights set forth in the American Convention on Human Rights and to contribute to the consolidation of democracy through education, academic research, political mediation, training programs, technical assistance and the dissemination of

knowledge by means of specialized publications. IHR cooperates with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights, and it works with all sectors of civil society, Member States, as well as with international organizations.

Inter-American Commission of Women

The Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) is the principal forum for hemispheric policy to advance women's rights and gender equality. Established in 1928, CIM was the first official intergovernmental agency in the world created expressly to ensure recognition of the civil and political rights of women.

One of its accomplishments has been the creation of the Inter-American Convention for the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, which was adopted in 1994 by the OAS General Assembly in Belem do Par , Brazil, and has been ratified by 32 Member States of the OAS. During the last decade, the Convention has contributed to a better awareness that violence against women constitutes a human rights violation, which has led to positive changes in legislation and policies for the protection of women.

CIM promotes and protects women's rights, and supports the Member States in their efforts to ensure full exercise of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights that will make possible equal participation by women and men in all aspects of society.

The Organization of American States and Civil Society

Justice Studies Center of the Americas

The Justice Studies Center of the Americas (JSCA) created in 1999 and located in Santiago, Chile, conducts training activities, studies and empirical research projects in order to develop innovative approaches to judicial reform. JSCA promotes cooperation and the exchange of experiences among key justice sector actors, and disseminates legal instruments to improve the quality of justice in the Americas.

Inter-American Juridical Committee

With headquarters in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the Inter-American Juridical Committee (CJI) serves as the legal advisory body to the OAS. The Committee is made up of 11 members designated by the Member States and elected by the General Assembly. Topics covered include: hemispheric security; administration of justice; laws regarding information and personal data; human rights and biomedicine; illicit enrichment; transnational bribery; and cooperation against terrorism. The Inter-American Juridical Committee supports the preparation of the Draft Inter-American Convention against Racism, Discrimination and Intolerance. The OAS' Department of International Law acts as the technical secretariat to the Committee. The Committee has the capacity to submit independent legal opinions regarding the themes of the inter-American agenda.

Inter-American Telecommunication Commission

The Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL) was established by the OAS General Assembly in 1993 as the region's principal forum in which representatives of Member States and the telecommunications private sector meet to coordinate ongoing development in this sector.

CITEL has Permanent Consultative Committees (PCC) and is composed of all the Member States and of associate members representing telecommunications private enterprises and organizations, permanent observers, and regional and international organizations.

Inter-American Committee on Ports

Since its inception in 1998, the mission of the Inter-American Committee on Ports (CIP) is to serve as a forum for Member States to strengthen cooperation and development of the port sector with the active collaboration and participation of the private sector. CIP acts as the advisory body of the OAS and Member States and is responsible for proposing and promoting policies that respond to the common needs of the port sector in the Hemisphere.

Principles and Means of Civil Society Participation in OAS Activities



The OAS 1948 Charter establishes, as a function of the General Assembly, the possibility of concluding agreements or making special arrangements with “other American agencies of recognized international standing.” For over 61 years of the life of the OAS, the various organs, agencies, and entities of the Organization have developed, in the context of their institutional objectives, various types of linkages with national and international institutions. This process has enriched and given rise to especially important innovations in intergovernmental organizations.

The OAS has made great strides in terms of civil society participation, such as arranging opportunities for dialogue; developing mechanisms for civil society participation in political forums, project execution, cooperation and partnership program development; and the sharing of experiences and information in efforts to make public policy formulation responsive to needs and realities in American societies.



In 1999, the Organization, with the adoption of Resolution CP/RES. 759 (1217/99) of the OAS Permanent Council, “Guidelines for the Participation of Civil Society Organizations in OAS Activities,” defined these organizations as any national or international institution, organization, or entity made up of natural or juridical persons of a nongovernmental nature.

Wishing to increase civil society participation in its activities, the Organization, through its dependencies, adopted various initiatives and resolutions enlarging the role of CSOs at the OAS, particularly:

- CP/RES. 759 (1217/99), “Guidelines for the Participation of Civil Society Organizations in OAS Activities”
- CP/RES. 840 (1361/03), “Strategies for Increasing and Strengthening Participation by Civil Society Organizations in OAS Activities”
- CP/RES. 864 (1413/04), “Specific Fund to Support the Participation of Civil Society Organizations in OAS Activities and in the Summits of the Americas Process”

Civil Society Participation in OAS Activities

Civil society inputs aid in the design of policies consistent with the needs of communities in the Member States. These organizations have the option of developing and strengthening the

Principles and Means of Civil Society Participation in OAS Activities

exchange of information and knowledge with the public sectors at the regional and international levels and promoting and implementing a culture of democratic participation through training and the formation of strategic associations to support, monitor, and evaluate public policy, for the benefit of society in the American Hemisphere.

This interaction was promoted by resolution CP/RES. 759 (1217/99) "Guidelines for the Participation of Civil Society Organizations in OAS Activities," which defined the process by which CSOs can request to apply to participate in the activities of the Organization. This norm includes:

- The activities that CSOs can participate
- The creation of a CSO registry within the OAS
- Responsibilities of CSOs once they are registered in the Organization's system



In resolution CP/RES. 840 (1361/03), "Strategies for Increasing and Strengthening Participation by Civil Society Organizations in OAS Activities," the Organization established strategies that expand the opportunities for civil society participation, including:

- Having knowledge of and access to activities on the hemispheric agenda in the subject areas defined by the Member States

- Developing and executing projects with the OAS General Secretariat to formulate public policy to benefit from the economic, social, and cultural development in the Americas
- Promoting strategic alliances between civil society, the OAS, and private-sector enterprises in the development of the various thematic areas entrusted to the General Secretariat and its technical bodies, in order to provide technical assistance, training, and reciprocal services for better practices
- Establishing organized, legitimate, and broad participation by CSOs in the region and the inter-American system
- Devising proposals for the design and execution of public policy
- Institutionalizing direct dialogue with governments and various organizations and bodies of the inter-American and international system
- Participating in virtual consultations, through the Internet, with government agencies and CSOs, to identify challenges and initiatives in the various areas of endeavor of the OAS

Resolution CP/RES. 864 (1413/04) established the "Specific Fund to Support the Participation of Civil Society Organizations in OAS Activities and in the Summits of the Americas Process." This Fund aims to provide financial support to facilitate participation by registered CSOs in the activities of the political bodies of the OAS, such as the General Assembly and the Permanent Council, through the Committee on Inter-American Summits Management and Civil Society Participation in OAS Activities (CISC), the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG), appropriate ministerial meetings, and other OAS activities.

Of the five Committees of the Permanent Council, CISC was created to

Principles and Means of Civil Society Participation in OAS Activities

establish procedures to ensure that the interaction between CSOs and the political bodies of the OAS. Such participation views CSOs as stakeholders and supervisors of their own development.

The General Secretariat performs the functions and duties entrusted by the General Assembly, the Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, or the Councils. The Department of International Affairs (DIA) of the Secretariat for External Relations is responsible for developing and executing strategies and activities designed to promote and broaden civil society participation in all of the activities related to the work of the Organization.

In compliance with AG/RES. 2395 (XXXVIII-O/08), DIA prepared a coordinated strategy for civil society participation. The Draft Strategy to Strengthen Civil Society Participation in OAS Activities was distributed to Member States, for their consideration, in May and November 2009. The Strategy underscores the importance of access to information, promoting clear and transparent procedures for civil society and expanding opportunities for civil society participation. The Strategy took into consideration the points of view of OAS Member States, civil society organizations, and the General Secretariat and reinforces and proposes existing and new methods of communication and access to the policy-making process within the framework of the OAS.

The OAS established three mechanisms to facilitate civil society participation in its activities, including:

- The Civil Society Registry
- Participating in OAS-related Meetings
- Cooperation Agreements

Registration of Civil Society Organizations in the OAS

Registration, as set out in Permanent Council resolution CP/RES. 759 (1217/99), provides CSOs with an opportunity to be part of the hemispheric network of organizations working in the various thematic areas of interest to the Member States and to have access to information on political, economic, and social processes under way in the OAS, which are part of the inter-American agenda.

Registration facilitates the exchange of information and experiences that enrich the design of governmental policies by means of organized participation and dialogue among CSOs, governments, and inter-American and international organizations.

Requirements for CSO Registration

Resolution CP/RES. 759 (1217/99) establishes the following conditions for a civil society organization to become part of the registry of CSOs in the OAS:

- The CSO shall be of recognized standing within its particular field of competence and shall be of a representative nature
- The CSO shall have an institutional structure that includes appropriate mechanisms for holding its officers accountable and subject to its members, a legal representative, an executive officer, as well as established headquarters
- The CSO must have an institutional structure that is transparent and affords it a degree of independence in managing the financial resources obtained from its affiliates or individual members
- The CSO must conduct its activities in some of the OAS Member States

Principles and Means of Civil Society Participation in OAS Activities



Benefits of Registration

The following benefits are provided to CSOs registered in the OAS:

- Participation in public meetings of the Permanent Council, the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI), and their subsidiary bodies
- Input by means of written documents on questions thematically relevant to meetings of the Permanent Council or CIDI, preferably not to exceed 2,000 words (texts exceeding 2,000 words must be accompanied by executive summaries, which the General Secretariat shall distribute). Likewise, the CSO may give a presentation at the beginning of the deliberations, with prior approval from the relevant Committee of the Permanent Council or CIDI
- Access to draft resolutions and/or resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and authorization to comment on them
- Receive the resolutions adopted by the OAS General Assembly at its annual regular session
- With the Chair's authorization, participate in closed meetings of the Permanent Council and CIDI and their political bodies
- Receipt of documents in advance of the meetings of the working groups or specialized groups of the Permanent Council or CIDI. With prior authorization, the CSO may make a

statement and have it distributed to Member States in order to consider the issue

- Apply for funding from the Specific Fund to Support the Participation of Civil Society Organizations in OAS Activities and in the Summits of the Americas Process

Registration Procedures

CSOs interested in becoming part of the Registry of CSOs in the OAS should direct a letter to the OAS Secretary General, with a copy to the Department of International Affairs:

**Secretary General
Organization of American States
MNB - 20
17th St & Constitution Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20006
USA**

**Director
Department of International Affairs
Organization of American States
MNB - 13
17th St & Constitution Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20006
USA**

**Fax: 202-458-6319
Email: civilsociety@oas.org**

The letter should be accompanied by the following information:

- Official name, address, and date of establishment of the organization and the name(s) of its directors and legal representative(s)
- Primary areas of activity and their relationship to the activities of the OAS organs, agencies, and entities in which it wishes to participate
- Reasons why it believes its proposed contributions to OAS activities would be of interest to the Organization

Principles and Means of Civil Society Participation in OAS Activities

- Identification of the OAS work areas in which it proposes to support ongoing activities or to make recommendations on the best way to achieve OAS objectives

Additionally, the request shall be accompanied by copies of the following documents:

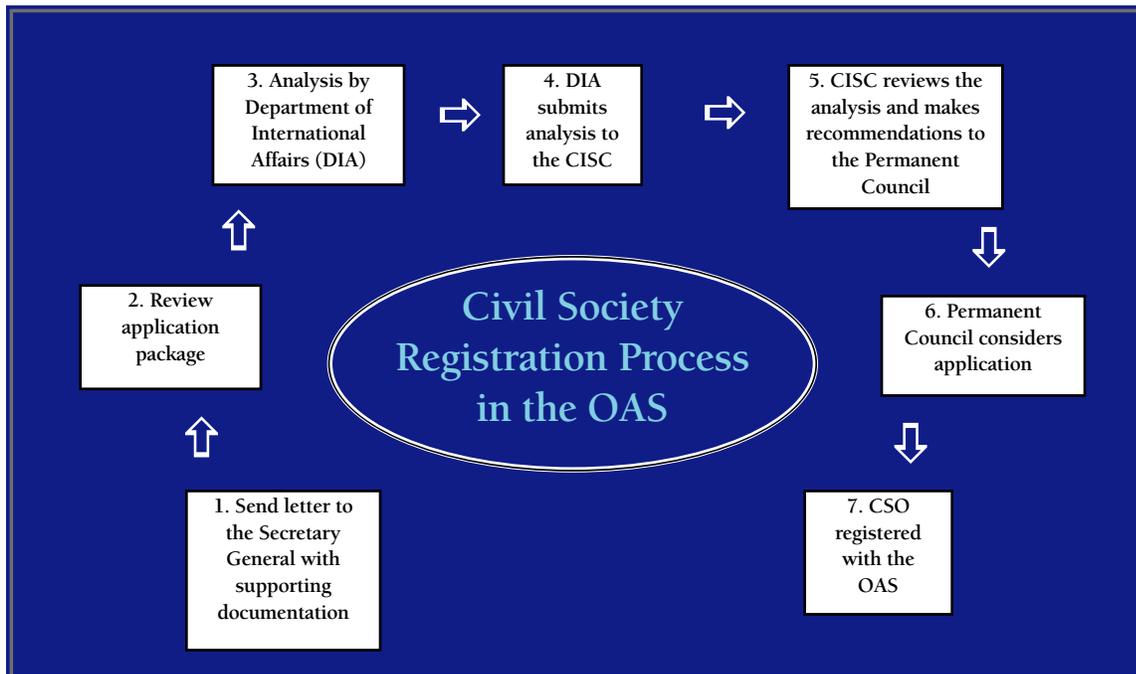
- Charter or Constitution and Statutes of the CSO (notarized copy)
- Most recent annual report of the activities of the organization
- Institutional mission statement (signed by a director or the legal representative)
- Financial statements for the previous fiscal year, including reference to any public and private sources of financing (signed by the financial officer or the public accountant of the organization)

Mechanisms of Civil Society Participation in OAS-related Meetings

Registered civil society organizations may participate in the activities of the OAS, make presentations, provide information, and, at the request of the organs, agencies, and entities of the OAS, provide expert advice, in accordance with resolution CP/RES. 759 (1217/99).

Participation in Meetings of the Permanent Council, CIDI, and their Subsidiary Bodies

Registered CSOs may designate representatives to attend, as observers, public meetings of the Permanent Council, CIDI, and their subsidiary bodies. Non-registered CSOs may also attend, as observers, public meetings of the Permanent Council, CIDI, and their subsidiary bodies as long as they fulfill the requirements specified in CP/RES. 759 (1217/99).



Principles and Means of Civil Society Participation in OAS Activities

Meetings held under OAS auspices are generally open to the public but, can be closed under exceptional circumstances by decision of the Chairman of the meeting due to the nature of the matter. Likewise, it should be noted that each political body, specialized organization, or committee of the OAS can establish specific criteria for civil society participation in its activities.

In the case of meetings of committees of the Permanent Council or of CIDI, registered CSOs may distribute written documents in advance, in accordance with article 13.c of CP/RES. 759 (1217/99), and, with prior approval from the committee in question, may give a presentation at the beginning of the deliberations. Civil society organizations may not participate in deliberations, negotiations, or decisions adopted by Member States.

In the case of meetings of expert groups and working groups of the Permanent Council or of CIDI, registered CSOs that have special competence in the issue to be discussed shall receive the relevant documents in advance and,

may present a statement at the beginning of the deliberations, the text of which may be distributed in advance to the Member States. With such approval, they may also give a presentation once the consideration of the issue has concluded. Civil society organizations may not participate in deliberations, negotiations, or decisions adopted by Member States.

Procedures for Civil Society Participation in OAS-related Meetings

Another mechanism for participation is requesting to be invited to a meeting, conference, or ministerial-level meeting. Under this option, the CSO would send a letter, 30 days prior to the event, indicating that it wished to participate in a meeting or special conference. Should its request be approved, the organization in question would be granted observer status and be classified as a "special guest."

Any CSO wishing to attend the annual OAS General Assembly, independent of their registration status, must send a letter to the Secretary General, with a copy to the Department of International Affairs at least 45 days in advance of the opening session, indicating their interest to observe the proceedings under the category of "Special Guests." The indicated time period is necessary because the Secretary General should submit a final list of organizations to the Permanent Council for approval at least thirty (30) days prior to the General Assembly. Additionally, the organizations on the list must be authorized by the host country. This process is independent of other CSO participation processes in the OAS.

Article 13.c of CP/RES. 759 (1217/99)

A registered civil society organization may present written documents, not exceeding 2,000 words, preferably in two of the official languages of the OAS, on questions that fall within its particular sphere of competence and appear on the agenda or order of business for the meeting. These documents shall be distributed by the General Secretariat to Member States, insofar as possible, in two of the official languages of the OAS. Texts exceeding 2,000 words shall be accompanied by executive summaries in two of the official languages of the OAS, which the Secretariat shall distribute sufficiently ahead of time. The complete text of the document may be distributed in its original language or languages, the cost to be borne by the civil society organization in question.

Principles and Means of Civil Society Participation in OAS Activities



In the case of CSOs not registered in the OAS, once it has sent a letter of request together with the corresponding documents, and the request has been approved by the Permanent Council, the CSO will receive identification giving it access to the meeting as a “special guest.”

PROCEDURES FOR CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION IN OAS-RELATED MEETINGS

To participate in an OAS meeting or activity, a CSO must send a letter of request to the OAS Secretary General, taking the following into consideration:

- If the CSO is registered, it need only send a letter expressing its interest in participating, its name, the title of the meeting in which it wishes to participate, and the name of the representative who will attend
- If the CSO is not registered, the following documents must be attached to the letter of request:
 - Official name and date of establishment of the organization, and the names of its directors and legal representative
 - Statutes and Charter or Constitution
 - Institutional mission statement
 - Most recent annual report and financial statements for the previous fiscal year

Cooperation Agreements

Resolution AG/RES. 57 (I/O-71), “Standards on Cooperative Relations between the Organization of American States and the United Nations, Its Specialized Agencies, and Other National and International Organizations,” authorizes the Secretary General to sign cooperation agreements. The OAS General Secretariat and its departments, offices, and technical secretariats, can sign cooperation agreements on the development and implementation of activities in all work areas of the Organization. Cooperation agreements with the OAS may be classified as follows:

- **General cooperation agreements:** Those intended to provide advisory services to the OAS organs, agencies, and entities and disseminate information on its activities and programs
- **Special cooperation agreements:**
 - Agreements on the development of technical, administrative, or financial programs in order to conduct specific programs in OAS areas of activity
 - Agreements relating to inter-American specialized organizations and coordinated through the OAS
 - Agreements established directly by the Secretary General

Principles and Means of Civil Society Participation in OAS Activities

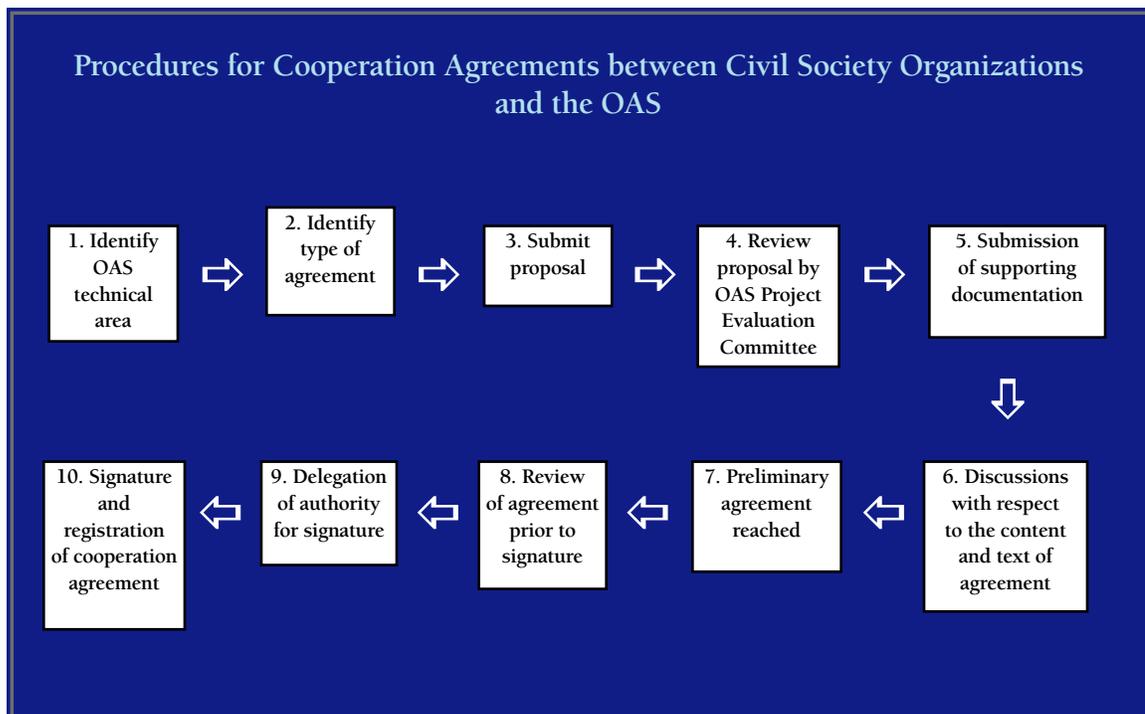
Procedures for Cooperation Agreements between Civil Society Organizations and the OAS

A CSO wishing to establish a cooperation agreement with the OAS must first identify the Department of the General Secretariat that handles the thematic area in question. Second, the organization must submit a proposal with clearly defined objectives and determine the type of agreement it would like to conclude (whether general or specific). Likewise, the CSO must also realize that, under a cooperation agreement with the OAS, it is required to have the economic resources and sufficient staff to fulfill and follow up as necessary on the obligations and stipulations set forth in the agreement. If it meets the aforementioned requirements, the CSO may proceed with its request and transmit copies of

the following documentation to the Organization:

- Charter or Constitution and those documents certifying it as a CSO
- The names of its directors and officers during the previous three years
- The names of its major contributors (provided that this is not in violation of any confidentiality agreements)

If, after submission of the documents, a preliminary agreement is reached between the General Secretariat and the CSO, a document will be drawn up for the Secretary General's approval and signature.



Summits of the Americas and Civil Society



The Summits of the Americas Process is the intergovernmental forum in which the Heads of State and Government of the Member States define and discuss the inter-American agenda. Presiding over this process is the government of the country that is to host the next Summit. The process is guided by shared values and by commonly established institutional mechanisms.

The Summits of the Americas include American countries that have democratically elected governments, free market economies that conduct multilateral international negotiations on an egalitarian basis, and take decisions by consensus. The institutional mechanisms are charged with leading the process, decision-making, and implementation and follow-up of Summit mandates.

At the Summit of the Americas in Quebec in 2001, the Heads of State and Government recognized the central role the OAS plays in supporting the Summits process, as its technical secretariat and institutional memory. The Summits of the Americas Secretariat was established in the OAS to give formal shape to that function.

The Summits of the Americas Secretariat coordinates follow-up on implementation of Summit mandates and supports the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG), the SIRG's Steering Committee and Executive Council, the ministerial meetings, and the OAS Permanent

Council's Committee on Inter-American Summits Management and Civil Society Participation in OAS Activities (CISC). Likewise, the Secretariat coordinates with the host country and the various technical areas of the OAS on preparations for upcoming Summits of the Americas and the participation of diverse social actors in the Summit Process. The Summit Process is presided by the Joint Summit Working Group (JSWG), a group of international and inter-American bodies that coordinate follow-up on Summit mandates.

MEMBERS OF THE JOINT SUMMIT WORKING GROUP

- Organization of American States (OAS)
- Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)
- Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)
- Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)
- Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)
- World Bank
- Andean Development Foundation (CAF)
- Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI)
- Caribbean Development Bank (CDB)
- International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- International Labor Organization (ILO)
- Institute for Connectivity in the Americas (ICA)
- United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

Summits of the Americas and Civil Society

Summit Follow-Up Mechanisms

The SIRG was established in 1995 and is chaired by the Member States, as host countries of the Summits. The host countries have been United States, Chile, Canada, Argentina, and Trinidad and Tobago. Since September 21, 2009, Colombia has chaired the Process in preparation for the VI Summit of the Americas that will take place in 2012.

The SIRG is composed of representatives of the democratically elected governments of the Hemisphere, represented by their national coordinators—usually the Deputy Foreign Minister or person in charge of Western Hemisphere affairs at the Foreign Ministry. The SIRG is responsible for monitoring progress on fulfilling the mandates issued in the various Summits and negotiating the text to be approved at future Summits. The SIRG meets roughly three times a year, with at least one of its meetings at the Ministerial-level in the framework of the OAS General Assembly.

The SIRG has a Steering Committee composed of the future and past Summit hosts. Its function is to assist the chair of the Summit process in preparing for meetings of the SIRG Executive Council.

The SIRG Executive Council was created in the Quebec City Plan of Action (2001) as a regionally representative group of member countries whose role is to support the work of the SIRG and assess and



strengthen the follow-up of Summit initiatives and preparations for future Summits. The members of the Executive Committee include the host countries of the Summits, such as the United States, Chile, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Trinidad and Tobago, and Colombia; a representative of CARICOM; a representative of the Andean Community; Brazil; a representative of the Rio Group; and the country that presides over the Central American Integration System (SICA).

Another focus of the SIRG Executive Council is to deepen partnerships and coordination between the Summit process and its partner institutions, which are members of the JSWG.

Opportunities for Civil Society Participation in the Summits Process

The Summits of the Americas process has established that CSO participation is a valuable and significant means of including social actors in efforts to bring about economic and social development, strengthen democratic institutions, and attain good governance. The Declarations of the Summit of the Americas recognize the important role of civil society and have sought to create opportunities for a continued and sustained interaction between civil society and Member States. In order to exchange views on policy design and the fulfillment of Summit mandates, the discussions between CSOs and high-ranking national officials from ministries of foreign affairs has become institutionalized aspect of each Summit.

The OAS, through the Summits of the Americas Secretariat and the Department of International Affairs, developed a number of initiatives to create opportunities for participation and discussion and to report on Summit policy developments in the inter-American system.

Summits of the Americas and Civil Society

The OAS supports civil society forums to formulate recommendations regarding the inter-American agenda, holds special meetings with the SIRG to exchange information on the Summit process, and works with civil society networks to exchange information and provide feedback on implementation and follow-up of Summit mandates among CSOs, governments, and the organizations of the inter-American and international systems.

Civil Society in the Summits of the Americas

In just over a decade and a half, with five Summits of the Americas, a Summit on Sustainable Development, and a Special Summit of the Americas, the Summit Process has demonstrated the Member States' commitment to engage in discussion and find common solutions to the problems that maintain the Hemisphere's status as a developing region and solutions that promote prosperity and peace.

First Summit of the Americas - Miami, Florida, United States - 1994



At the First Summit of the Americas, the Heads of State and Government expressed an interest in the consolidation and diversification of democracies in the Hemisphere in such a way as to ensure their sustainability. It was primarily for that reason that they underscored the importance of participation by individuals, labor unions, political parties, academics, the private sector, and CSOs in public affairs and recognized that public participation was pivotal to the success of any democracy in a context of accountability and transparency.

Summit on Sustainable Development - Santa Cruz, Bolivia - 1996



At the Summit of the Americas on Sustainable Development, the Heads of State and Government decided to promote increased opportunities for groups, organizations, businesses, and individuals to express ideas and exchange information on sustainable development.

The Heads of State decided to take into account the recommendations of the Inter-American Seminar on Public Participation, held in Montevideo in 1996, and entrusted the OAS with assigning priority to the formulation of the Inter-American Strategy for the Promotion of Public Participation in Decision-making. The strategy was intended to promote the exchange of experiences and information among governments and civil society groups on the formulation, implementation, and improvement of sustainable development programs and policies and in high-level meetings.

Second Summit of the Americas - Santiago, Chile - 1998



At the Second Summit of the Americas, the Heads of State and Government recognized that education was "the determining factor for the political, social, cultural, and economic development of our peoples," and highlighted the need to encourage civil society to participate in developing education. This Summit also reaffirmed the importance of increasing active participation by civil society.

Summits of the Americas and Civil Society

Third Summit of the Americas - Quebec City, Canada - 2001



At the Third Summit of the Americas, the Heads of State and Government expressed appreciation for civil society's contributions to the Quebec City Plan of Action and recognized civil society's important role in the consolidation of democracy and its participation in government programs, as one of the vital elements for the success of development policies.

The Heads of State and Government entrusted the OAS and other multilateral organizations and development banks with developing strategies to enable civil society to participate more fully in the inter-American system. Said measures have increased the institutional capacity of the Member State governments to receive, absorb, and act on CSO input and advocacy.

The Heads of State and Government promoted the role of CSOs, together with technical and educational professionals, in the development and implementation of disaster management policies at both the national and community levels. Moreover, they recognized the contributions made by CSOs to the promotion of national strategies for the sustainable development of agriculture and the improvement of living standards in rural areas.

The Quebec City Plan of Action recognized that democracy is a way of life based on freedom and on improved economic, social, and cultural conditions for the people of the Americas in a context of good governance, management, and values, taking into account the input of CSOs.

Special Summit of the Americas - Monterrey, Mexico - 2004



At the Special Summit of the Americas, the Heads of State and Government agreed that, through citizen participation, civil society organizations should contribute to the design, implementation, and evaluation of public policies adopted by different orders or levels of government.

They also recognized the role of civil society and its contribution to sound public administration and reaffirmed the importance of continuing to forge new partnerships that would enable constructive ties to be built between governments, nongovernmental organizations, international organizations, and the diverse sectors of civil society in order to work in favor of development and democracy. Likewise, they pledged to encourage civil society participation in the Summits of the Americas Process and to institutionalize meetings with civil society and with the academic and private sectors.

Summits of the Americas and Civil Society

Fourth Summit of the Americas - Mar del Plata, Argentina - 2005



During the Fourth Summit of the Americas, the Heads of State and Government agreed that the participation of citizens, communities, and civil society will contribute to ensuring that the benefits of democracy are shared by society as a whole.

During the Summit, the leaders recognized the pivotal role that the OAS plays in the implementation and follow-up of Summit mandates, and instructed the General Secretariat to continue to act as technical secretariat; provide support for meetings of the SIRG, ministerial meetings, and specialized conferences; coordinate the participation of civil society; and ensure the dissemination of information on the Summits Process and the commitments adopted by the countries.

Fifth Summit of the Americas - Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago - 2009



At the Fifth Summit of the Americas, the Heads of State and Government agreed to continue encouraging the participation of citizens, communities, and civil society in the design and execution of development policies and programs, by providing technical and financial assistance, as appropriate, to strengthen and build their capacity to participate more fully in the Inter-American System.



The **Organization of American States (OAS)** brings together the nations of the Western hemisphere to promote democracy, strengthen human rights, foster peace, security and cooperation and advance common interests.

The origins of the Organization date back to 1890 when nations of the region formed the Pan American Union to forge closer hemispheric relations. This union later evolved into the OAS and in 1948, 21 nations signed its governing charter. Since then, the OAS has expanded to include the nations of the English-speaking Caribbean and Canada, and today all of the independent nations of North, Central and South America and the Caribbean make up its 34 Member States.

In support of all the work of all the departments of the OAS, the **Secretariat for External Relations** builds awareness of and encourages concrete support for the activities of the OAS as the premier regional political forum in the Western Hemisphere. It strengthens institutional relations with Member States, Permanent Observer countries, regional and international organizations, civil society, academic institutions, and private sector entities in order to implement the inter-American agenda mandated by hemispheric leaders.

The **Department of International Affairs** is responsible for advising the Secretary General and the OAS Secretariat, as well as the Organization's policy-making bodies, on external relations and resource mobilization. Its main function focuses on strengthening and maintaining relations with the Permanent Observers of the OAS, advising the technical departments on their external relations and resource mobilization activities, carrying out the monthly Lecture Series of the Americas, establishing strategic alliances with civil society, sister agencies in the UN and the Inter-American system to advance the OAS agenda, organizing policy roundtables and briefings for diverse audiences on OAS priorities and work, and coordinating the Model OAS General Assembly for high schools and universities, in order to promote a better understanding of the Organization's mission to improve the lives of all citizens in the Americas.

For additional information regarding civil society participation in OAS activities, please contact:

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