Manual for Civil Society Participation in OAS Activities

José Miguel Insulza
Secretary General

Albert R. Ramdin
Assistant Secretary General
# Table of Contents

Preface ................................................................................................................................. 4  
Abbreviations ....................................................................................................................... 5  
The Organization of American States and Civil Society .................................................. 6  
  Bodies of the OAS ................................................................................................................ 7  
    General Assembly ............................................................................................................. 7  
    Councils of the OAS ......................................................................................................... 8  
    General Secretariat ......................................................................................................... 9  
  Pillars of the OAS ............................................................................................................... 10  
    Promoting Democracy ................................................................................................. 10  
    Facilitating Access to Justice ....................................................................................... 12  
    Defending Human Rights ............................................................................................. 13  
    Guaranteeing a Multidimensional Focus on Security .................................................... 14  
    Promoting Integral Development and Prosperity .......................................................... 16  
Specialized Organizations and Other Entities .................................................................. 18  
Principles and Means of Civil Society Participation in OAS Activities ....................... 21  
  Civil Society Participation in OAS Activities ................................................................. 21  
  Registration of Civil Society Organizations in the OAS .................................................. 23  
    Requirements for CSO Registration ............................................................................. 23  
    Benefits of Registration ............................................................................................... 23  
    Registration Procedures ............................................................................................... 24  
  Mechanisms of Civil Society Participation in OAS-related Meetings ............................ 24  
    Participation in Meetings of the Permanent Council, CIDI, and their Subsidiary Bodies .......................................................................................................................... 26  
    Procedures for Civil Society Participation in OAS-related Meetings ............................ 26  
  Cooperation Agreements ................................................................................................. 28  
    Procedures for Cooperation Agreements between Civil Society Organizations and the OAS ................................................................. 28  
Summits of the Americas and Civil Society ........................................................................ 30  
  Summit Follow-Up Mechanisms ..................................................................................... 31  
  Opportunities for Civil Society Participation in the Summits Process .......................... 31  
  Civil Society in the Summits of the Americas ................................................................. 32  
    First Summit of the Americas – Miami, Florida, United States – 1994 ....................... 32  
    Summit on Sustainable Development – Santa Cruz, Bolivia – 1996 ............................. 32  
    Second Summit of the Americas – Santiago, Chile – 1998 ........................................... 32  
    Third Summit of the Americas – Quebec City, Canada – 2001 ..................................... 32  
    Special Summit of the Americas – Monterrey, Mexico – 2004 ...................................... 33  
    Fourth Summit of the Americas – Mar del Plata, Argentina – 2005 .............................. 33  
    Fifth Summit of the Americas – Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago – 2009 .............. 33  
    Sixth Summit of the Americas – Cartagena de Indias, Colombia – 2012 .................... 34
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 on 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 disseminate the means by which civil CSOs can participate and take part in OAS activities, promote the participation of civil society in the Inter-American System, and generate awareness on the opportunities to 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 part of an on-going effort by the OAS to strengthen and increase the involvement of civil society organizations in the formulation and implementation of the inter-American agenda, the Summits of the Americas, and the goals of the OAS.

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
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
Section One

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, and justice, fostering 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, when it became the Pan-American Union. For half a century, the Pan-American Union was the forum in which agreements and conventions were concluded, and which also institutionalized 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. Today, the OAS is made up of 35 independent states of the Americas.

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 while 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 stipulates 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, and established the suspension of a member state from the OAS if its democratically elected government was overthrown by force.

Along with the Protocol of Washington, the adoption one year earlier of Resolution AG/RES. 1080 (XXI-O/91) “Representative Democracy” represented a regional effort to strengthen democracy. This resolution established that in the event of any disruption...
of the democratic order there would be a convocation of an immediate meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the hemisphere to make decisions over any unconstitutional alteration of the constitutional regime of a Member State.

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, 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 makes specific references to the importance of civil society participation in Articles 6 and 26 of its text. Article 26 establishes 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.”

The Social Charter of the Americas adopted by the Member States at the XLII General Assembly, which took place in Cochabamba, Bolivia on June, 2012, promotes improved economic, social and cultural development, as well as the eradication of poverty and inequity. The Social Charter acknowledges that citizens have a legitimate aspiration to social justice and their governments have the responsibility to promote it. Furthermore, this Charter recognizes “the contributions of indigenous peoples, afro-descendants, and migrant communities to the historical process of the Hemisphere,” and affirms the necessity of governments “to adopt policies to promote inclusion and to prevent, combat, and eliminate all forms of intolerance and discrimination.”

Bodies of the OAS

The OAS carries out its activities through the following bodies: the General Assembly; Meetings of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs; the Councils (the Permanent Council and the Inter-American Council for Integral Development); the General Secretariat; specialized conferences; 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 Ministers of Foreign Affairs of 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 policies of the Organization, determines the structure and functions of its organs, adopts its program-budget, fixes the quotas, and considers any matter relating to 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 Meetings 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 Meetings of Consultation 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 has 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 has 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.

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

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.

Through the Special Multilateral Fund of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (FEMCIDI) the OAS funds projects aimed at promoting and ensuring human & institutional capacity development in the Member States in eight main areas:
- Social Development and Generation of Productive Employment
- Education
- Economic Diversification and Integration, Trade Liberalization, and Market Access
- Scientific Development and Exchange and Transfer of Technology
- Strengthening of Democratic Institutions
- Sustainable Development of Tourism
- Sustainable Development and Environment
- Culture

Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs

The Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs is held in order to consider problems of an urgent nature and of common interest to the American states. Any member state may request that the Meeting of Consultation be called. The request must be addressed to the Permanent Council of the Organization, which decides by an absolute majority of votes whether a meeting should be held.

The agenda and regulations of the Meeting of Consultation are prepared by the Permanent Council of the Organization and submitted to the member states for consideration.

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

The Assistant Secretary General acts as the Secretary of the Permanent Council. 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.
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:

- Democracy
- Human rights
- Multidimensional security
- Integral development
- Access to justice

Promoting Democracy

The OAS contributes to the strengthening of the political processes of the Member States and to supporting sustainable democracy as the best option to ensure peace, security and development in the region.

Secretariat for Political Affairs

The OAS promotes these values with the support of the Secretariat for Political Affairs (SPA), which 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 Effective Policy Management

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 and coordinating electoral observation missions and electoral techniques, at the request of Member States. DECO also serves as a facilitator and an entity to support discussions and to provide assistance to the electoral bodies in the Hemisphere.

This Department carries out its activities through three areas of work:

- Electoral Technical Cooperation Section: Contributes to the modernization and the improvement of quality of the services provided by electoral organs to citizens and to the strengthening of the institutional capacity to ensure free, inclusive, competitive and transparent elections.

- Electoral Observation Section: Organizes the Electoral Observation Missions and coordinates activities at the national and regional levels with electoral authorities, political parties and civil society representatives during the electoral period.
• Electoral Studies and Projects Section: Performs applied research and identifies the best practices and/or standards related to electoral democracy.

Department of Sustainable Democracy and Special Missions

The Department of Sustainable Democracy and Special Missions (DSDSM) advises and offers technical support on matters of crisis and conflict resolution. Furthermore, it coordinates Special Missions and Political Observation Missions and administers the OAS Peace Fund.

DSDSM is comprised of the following sections:

• Political Analysis and Scenarios Section: Follows the political situations in the countries of the region in order to understand their political processes, identify potential risk factors for democratic stability, and analyze different scenarios. The Section uses a methodology called the “Political Analysis and Multiple Scenarios System” (SAPEM, by its acronym in Spanish). This system combines qualitative and quantitative tools that help to systematize political analysis and forecast different scenarios for the countries of the region.

• Special Missions Section: Supports the OAS member states in the prevention, management, and settlement of conflicts, using the mechanisms established by the inter-American system.

• Peace Fund Section: Seeks to strengthen the capacity and experience of the Organization in the peaceful settlement of disputes, as well as support the development of programs designed to promote a culture of peace.

With respect to the Belize-Guatemala territorial dispute, the OAS provides technical and political support to the two countries through conciliation efforts and activities designed to promote the implementation of confidence-building measures, in line with the provisions of the “Agreement on a Framework for Negotiation and Confidence Building Measures between Belize and Guatemala,” signed in September 2005. At the same time, the Office of the OAS General Secretariat in the Adjacency Zone conducts verifications and carries out activities to support institutions in Belize and Guatemala, including the armed forces. It also implements projects designed to strengthen integration among border communities and supports community resettlement efforts.

Department for Effective Public Management

The Department for Effective Public Management (DEPM) provides support to OAS Member States in matters of public management through strengthening democratic institutions. The DEPM is composed of the following sections:

• Inter American Cooperation Mechanism for Effective Public Management (MECIGEP): aims to create a space for dialogue among member states through an Inter-American forum in which countries share and exchange perspectives and opinions on their public sector institutional reforms.

Since 2004, The OAS Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP/OEA, by its acronym in Spanish) has provided verification and advisory support to Colombia during the process of demobilization and reintegration of illegal armed groups; supported peace and other relevant efforts undertaken by the government and civil society directed at reducing violence, building trust and creating spaces conducive to reconciliation.
Technical Cooperation: seeks to strengthen the governmental administrative structures of the OAS Member States in planning and controlling its public policies.

Transparency and Integrity: directed towards integrating efforts to promote transparency, integrity and responsibility in public administration as a means of combating corruption and increasing accountability in public institutions.

Civil Registry: The Universal Civil Identity Program in the Americas (PUICA) assists OAS Member States by providing technical support to national civil registry institutions and ensuring the right to civil identity for all people in the Hemisphere.

E-Government: promotes public sector modernization through the introduction of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to administrative and management procedures.

Facilitating the Access to Justice

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 implements the Inter-American Program for the Development of International Law; provides advisory services concerning the codification of inter-American law; serves as a depository and source of information for inter-American treaties and the agreements of the OAS and its organs; disseminates information about the legal instruments and programs of the OAS; and provides other services related to inter-American legal cooperation.

Furthermore, SLA coordinates the Inter-American Program of Judicial Facilitators (IPJF) with the aim of reinforcing the access to justice to those citizens who live in more outlying, rural areas. The judicial facilitators are community leaders and are volunteers who serve their office and support justice authorities.

SLA is comprised of the Executive Office of the Secretary and the following dependencies:
- Department of International Law
- Department of Legal Cooperation

Department of International Law

The Department of International Law (DIL) 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; matters 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.

Moreover, the DIL supports efforts of Member States to adopt legislative measures for ensuring access to public information. The 2010 General Assembly approved the Model Inter-American Law on Access to Information, which provided the Member States with the legal and regulatory framework required to guarantee the right of access to information, as well as an Implementation Guide for the law.

In regards to the protection of personal data, the DIL aids the Member States in making decisions related to the coordination of the right of access to information, the improvement of regional cooperation, and the search for substantial relevant elements.

Departments 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 Attorney Generals of the Americas (REMJA), and to the Conference of States 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, 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 signing of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption in 1996.

The Department of Legal Cooperation also promotes regional cooperation, the exchange of information and investigation of cybercrime.

Defending Human Rights

The OAS works to protect and promote Human Rights through The Inter-American Human Rights System; which is composed of 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.

One of the key functions of the IAHCR 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 State involved is one of the twenty-one states 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 denouncing 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.

The Commission is comprised of eight Rapporteurships and two Units that analyze and present reports on the human right conditions of vulnerable groups, which generate stronger commitments to protect them, and thus improve domestic laws, policies and practices on 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 Human Right Defenders
- Rapporteurship on the Rights of the Child
- Unit on the Rights of LGTBI Persons
- Unit on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Inter-American Court of Human Rights

The Inter-American Court of Human Rights 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.

Guaranteeing a Multidimensional Focus on Security

Secretariat for Multidimensional Security

In 2003, the Member States of the OAS adopted the “Declaration on Security in the Americas”, which established a multidimensional focus on security. This new approach included traditional threats and new ones, such as trafficking in persons, terrorism, drug traffic, and transnational organized crime, among others. Through this new focus, the OAS security agenda aims to confront these challenges.

This Secretariat 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 mission of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) is to strengthen the human and institutional capabilities of its member states, in order to reduce the production, trafficking and use of illegal drugs, and to deal with its consequences which pose a growing threat to health, social cohesion, and the rule of law.
CICAD implements action programs focused on preventing and treating substance abuse, reducing the supply and availability of illicit drugs, strengthening national drug control institutions and machinery, developing alternate sources of income for growers of coca, poppy, and marijuana, assisting member governments to improve their data gathering and analysis on all aspects of the drug issue and helping measure their progress over time in addressing the issue.

The Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM) was established as a key instrument to assess the anti-drug activities of the Member States of CICAD throughout the Hemisphere. This evaluation is carried out through the elaboration and publication of national and hemispheric reports on the progress in drug control, which are drafted by government experts designated by OAS member states. This instrument contributes to the systematic collection of information on drugs, the exchange of experiences, and to help the Member States identify the areas requiring higher levels of cooperation.

In 1999, the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM) was established as a key instrument to assess the anti-drug activities of the Member States of CICAD throughout the Hemisphere. This evaluation is carried out through the elaboration and publication of national and hemispheric reports on the progress in drug control, which are drafted by government experts designated by OAS member states. This instrument contributes to the systematic collection of information on drugs, the exchange of experiences, and to help the Member States identify the areas requiring higher levels of cooperation.

Through the Inter-American Observatory on Drugs (OID), the CICAD 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 professionals working on drug issues and the exchange of experiences among themselves.

Inter-American Committee against Terrorism

The Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (CICTE) coordinates efforts to protect Member State citizens from terrorism.

CICTE’s objectives include improving information exchange among competent national authorities; creating and updating an inter-American database on terrorism matters. CICTE works on programs related to border control, cyber security, maritime and port security, legislative assistance, and the fight against financing of terrorism.

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.

This Department offers support and technical advice to the Member States in the field of humanitarian action against mines, including the humane removal of mines; and education on the risk of mines for affected populations.

The Department carries out efforts against trafficking in persons in the Hemisphere, offers training seminars and workshops, promotes the exchange of information and other forms of assistance to police agencies, immigration officials, judges, legislators and
others in the drafting of legislation to combat trafficking; promotes government initiatives to identify existing cases, and pursues criminal prosecution and the protection of victims.

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. Furthermore, 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 also 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 (MISPA) and the Meeting of National Authorities on Trafficking in Persons.

**Promoting Integral Development and Prosperity**

The Executive Secretariat for Integral Development (SEDI) coordinates the implementation of horizontal cooperation programs, regional ministerial meetings, and offers support to the CIDI and the Special Multilateral Fund of CIDI (FEMCIDI). SEDI is made up of the Office of the Secretary Executive and consists of the following departments:

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

**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 human development and culture. As the Technical Secretary of the Inter-American Committee on Education (CIE) and of the Inter-American Committee on Culture (CIC), the OAS fosters political dialogue and promotes technical cooperation in areas that the Ministers of Education and Culture identify as priorities.

Additionally, the DHDEC is responsible for promoting academic and professional development of the youth in the Americas. The Department administers scholarships and interest-free student loans, promoting access to higher education and professional advancement in the Member States.
The programs implemented include the Inter-American Program on Education in Democratic Values and Practices and the Inter-American Teacher Network.

**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 optimize the advantages to be gained from trade and tourism and the social responsibility of businesses. In addition, the DEDTT promotes the use of science, technology and innovation for sustainable growth, through political dialogue, strategic partnerships and the development of business opportunities in the Americas.

Furthermore, DDECT works with regional and international tourism organizations to develop micro enterprises, as a way to increase the competitiveness of tourist destinations in Latin America and the Caribbean in the international market.

DDECT promotes productivity in the Member States by promoting the enactment of public policies aimed at strengthening the work of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSEs), especially through innovation, and the use of information and communications technology (ICTs).

**Department of Sustainable Development**

The mission of the Department of Sustainable Development (DSD) is to support Member States in the design and implementation of policies oriented to integrate environmental priorities with socio-economic development goals at a hemispheric level. DSD supports the execution of sustainable projects in integrated water management, renewable energy, prevention of soil degradation, reduction of the risks of natural disasters, preservation of biological diversity and supports programs related to environmental law, economy and policy.

The Department achieves its mission through the execution of technical cooperation projects; and promoting the exchange of information on sustainable development in the region and the participation of civil society in decision-making on environmental management issues. 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 (DDSE) provides assistance to Member States in their efforts to advance development with equity through the promotion of policies and programs of poverty reduction, as well as fostering decent work and employment creation. In that sense, the DDSE supports the Inter-American Social Protection Network (IASPN), the Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL), and the Consumer Safety and Health Network (CSHN).

In the field of the rights of persons with disabilities, the DDSE is responsible for promoting the two main normative instruments of the Inter-American System on the subject: The Inter-American Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (CIADDIS), and the Program of Action for the Decade of the Americas for the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities (PAD).
Moreover, through the Migration and Development Program (MIDE) and the Continuous Reporting System on International Migration (SICREMI by its Spanish acronym) promotes the development of public policies aimed at improving migratory management in the Americas.

This Department is the Technical Secretariat of the Joint Working Group in charge of the drafting of the Social Charter of the Americas and the Working Group on the Protection of Human Rights of Older Persons (2012-2013)

The DDSE is also responsible for the planning and development of ministerial and sectoral meetings of the inter-American committees in the areas of social development and employment.

**Specialized Organizations and Other Entities**

**Justice Studies Center of the Americas (JSCA)**

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

**Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM)**

The Inter-American Commission of Women 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 main 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 Pará, 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 the full exercise of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights that will allow equal participation for women and men in all aspects of society.

**Inter-American Committee on Ports (CIP)**

Since its inception in 1998, the mission of the Inter-American Committee on Ports has been to serve as an Inter-American forum 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 is responsible for proposing policies that respond to the common needs of the port sector in the Hemisphere.

**Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL)**

The Inter-American Telecommunication Commission 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 the ongoing development in this sector. CITEL has Permanent Consultative Committees (PCC), and is composed of all of the Member States and of associate members representing private telecommunication enterprises and entities, permanent observers, and regional and international organizations.

**Inter-American Juridical Committee (IAJC)**

With headquarters in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the Inter-American Juridical Committee 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 CJI has the capacity to submit independent legal opinions regarding the themes of the inter-American agenda.

**Inter-American Institute for Human Rights (IIHR)**

The Inter-American Institute of Human Rights is an independent, international academic institution, created in 1980, with its headquarters in San Jose, Costa Rica. The mission of IIHR is to promote and strengthen respect for human rights and to contribute to the consolidation of democracy through education, academic research, technical assistance and the dissemination of knowledge on human rights by means of specialized publications. IIHR cooperates with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights; it works with all sectors of civil society, with Member States, as well as with international organizations.

**Inter-American Children’s Institute (IIN)**

The purpose of the Inter-American Children’s Institute 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 IIN offers technical assistance in policy formulation and in activities for 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.
Section Two

Principles and Means of Civil Society Participation in OAS Activities

The 1948 OAS 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.” The various organs, agencies, and entities of the Organization have developed, in the framework 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 the field of 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 exchange of experiences and information in efforts to make public policy formulation responsive to the needs and realities of societies in the Americas.

In 1999, 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,” the Organization defined these organizations as any national or international institution, organization, or entity made up of natural or juridical persons of a non-governmental nature.

Wishing to increase civil society participation in its activities, the Organization, through its dependencies, adopted various initiatives and resolutions strengthening 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

The OAS believes that Civil Society Organizations participation is of vital importance since their inputs aid in the design
of policies consistent with the needs of communities in the Member States. In addition, the OAS has developed various mechanisms for Civil Society Organizations to participate.

This participation 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 in which 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;
- Promoting strategic alliances between civil society, the OAS, and private-sector enterprises, 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;
- Institutionalizing direct dialogue with governments and various organizations and bodies of the inter-American and international system;
- Participating in virtual consultations through the Internet 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.

One of the five Committees of the Permanent Council, the CISC was created to establish procedures to ensure the interaction between CSOs and the political bodies of the OAS. Such participation envisions CSOs as stakeholders and supervisors of their own development.

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.
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 requirements for a civil society organization to be 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 an 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.

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 matters 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 of the 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, the CIDI and their political bodies;

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
• Receipt of documents in advance of the meetings of the working groups or specialized groups of the Permanent Council or the 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 Street and Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
U.S.A.

Director
Department of International Affairs
Organization of American States
GSB – 610
1889 F Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20006
U.S.A.

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 the CSO believes its proposed contributions to OAS activities would be of interest to the Organization;
• 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).
Civil Society Registration Process in the OAS

1. Send letter to the Secretary General with supporting application materials
2. Review of application materials by the Department of International Affairs (DIA)
3. Analysis by the DIA
4. DIA submits analysis to the CISC
5. CISC reviews the analysis and makes recommendations to the Permanent Council
6. Permanent Council considers application
    - CSO Application approved
    - CSO Application not approved

- Application materials complete
- Application materials incomplete
- Supply additional application materials
- 1. Send letter to the Secretary General with supporting application materials
- 7. CSO registered with the OAS
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).

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 the deliberations, negotiations, or decisions adopted by Member States.

### 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.

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 will send a letter, 30 days prior to the event, indicating that it wishes 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 (regardless of whether it is registered or not) wishing to attend the annual OAS General Assembly, 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 issue has concluded. Civil society organizations may not participate in the deliberations, negotiations, or decisions adopted by Member States.
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.

In the case of CSOs not registered in the OAS, once it has sent a letter of request together with the corresponding documents (see box), 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, which are coordinated through the OAS;
  - Agreements established directly by the Secretary General.

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.
Procedures for Cooperation Agreements between Civil Society Organizations and the OAS

1. Identify OAS technical area
2. Identify type of agreement
3. Submit proposal
4. Review proposal by OAS Project Evaluation Committee
5. Submission of supporting documentation
6. Discussions with respect to the content and text of agreement
7. Preliminary agreement reached
8. Review of agreement prior to signature
9. Delegation of authority for signature
10. Signature and registration of cooperation agreement
Section Three

Summits of the Americas and Civil Society

The Summits of the Americas Process is the highest level intergovernmental forum in the Hemisphere, in which the Heads of State and Government of the Member States define and discuss the inter-American agenda. The Chair of the process is the government that is to host or has recently hosted the Summit. The process is guided by shared values and by commonly established institutional mechanisms.

These institutional mechanisms are charged with leading the process, decision-making, 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 of the Americas process, as its technical secretariat and institutional memory. The Summits of the Americas Secretariat was established in the OAS to institutionalize 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 supported and accompanied by the Joint Summit Working Group (JSWG), a group of international and inter-American institutions that coordinate the preparations for and the follow-up to the

Members of the Joint Summit Working Group
- Organization of American States
- Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)
- Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)
- Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)
- Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)
- 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)
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
Summit process.

**Summit Follow-Up Mechanisms**

The SIRG was established in 1995 and is chaired by the Member State hosting the Summit. The host countries have been United States, Bolivia, Chile, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Trinidad and Tobago, and Colombia. Panama currently chairs the Process in preparation for the VII Summit of the Americas that will take place in 2015.

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 texts to be approved at future Summits. The SIRG meets on average three times a year, with at least one meeting held 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 the meetings of the SIRG and its 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 Council include the past host countries of the Summits; 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 objective 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 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 the governments of Member States.

The OAS, through the [Summits of the Americas Secretariat](http://www.summitoftheamericas.org) and the Department of International Affairs, has developed a number of initiatives to create opportunities for participation and discussion, and to report on the follow-up of Summit mandates in the inter-American system.

The OAS supports civil society forums to formulate recommendations in relation to the
Summit Process and inter-American agenda, holds special meetings with the SIRG to exchange information on the Summit Process, and works with various 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 six 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 challenges of the region.

**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 framework 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 educational development. This Summit also reaffirmed the importance of increasing active participation by 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 most valuable resources for the success of development policies.

The Heads of State and Government entrusted the OAS, other multilateral organizations and development banks with developing strategies to enable civil society to participate more fully in the inter-American system.

The Heads of State and Government promoted the role of CSOs, together with technical professionals and regional and educational institutions, 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 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 inputs of CSOs.

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.

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 amongst 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.

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, as well as to strengthen and build their capacity to participate more fully in the Inter-American System.

**Sixth Summit of the Americas – Cartagena de Indias, Colombia – 2012**

At the Sixth Summit of the Americas, the Heads of State and Government expressed appreciation for civil society’s contributions and recommendations on how they can cooperate with governments on the follow-up and implementation of Summit mandates and the five sub-topics of the summit: security; access to and use of technology; natural disasters; poverty, inequality and inequity reduction; and integration of physical infrastructure of the Americas.

For current and updated information on the Summit process and civil society/social actor participation opportunities, please visit the Summit of the Americas Secretariat website: [http://www.summit-americas.org](http://www.summit-americas.org) and/or write to [summit-info@oas.org](mailto:summit-info@oas.org) to sign up for the OAS Summit distribution list.
In support of the work of all 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. Furthermore, 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** (DIA) of the Secretariat for External Relations 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 functions are: 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; all in order to achieve the Organization’s main goal of improving the lives of all citizens in the Americas.

DIA also directs and coordinates the activities in this field with all the other General Secretariat dependencies, provides Technical Secretary services to the CISC of the Permanent Council and is responsible for the Registry of Civil Society Organizations (CSO) in the OAS.

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

**Jorge Sanin, Director**
**Department of International Affairs**
**Organization of American States**
**1889 F Street, NW**
**Washington, D.C. 20006 - USA**

www.civil-society.oas.org  
Telephone: 202-458-6072  
Fax: 202-458-6319  
Email: [civilsociety@oas.org](mailto:civilsociety@oas.org)