



Organization of
American States

MANUAL FOR CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION IN OAS ACTIVITIES

José Miguel Insulza
Secretary General

Albert R. Ramdin
Assistant Secretary General

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Department of International Affairs
Secretariat for External Relations
Organization of American States
19th street and Constitution Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006 - USA
Telephone: 202-370-0746
Fax: 202-458-3555

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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 and 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 of 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 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 ongoing 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.

Jose 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

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
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
DEPM	Department for Effective Public Management
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
DHDEE	Department of Human Development, Education, and Employment
DESD	Department of Economic and Social Development
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	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

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

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 (1996).

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 it established the suspension of a member state from the OAS if its democratically elected government is 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 how to address the situation.

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

On September 11, 2001, Member States adopted the Inter-American Democratic Charter in a special session of the General Assembly held in Lima, Peru, thus reinforcing their commitment to democracy. This Charter is the most important instrument for strengthening democratic institutions in the region.

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

The Social Charter of the Americas was adopted by Member States at the XLII General Assembly, which took place in Cochabamba, Bolivia in 2012. Through this Charter, Member States commit to 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 development" 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 have the right to one vote in the General Assembly.

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.

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 Working Group of the Draft Plan of Action 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 Americas Process”

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.

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.

CIDI has the following Ministerial Meetings:

- Ministerial on Education
- Ministerial on Social Development
- Ministerial on Sustainable Development
- Ministerial on Labor
- Ministerial on Culture
- Ministerial on Science and Technology
- Ministerial on Tourism

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.

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
- Executive Secretariat for the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

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

PROMOTING DEMOCRACY IN THE AMERICAS

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.

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 Public Management

DEPARTMENT OF ELECTORAL COOPERATION AND OBSERVATION

The Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation (DECO) offers professional electoral observation services for Member States to support the electoral cycles in Member States. This Department coordinates the electoral observation missions at the request of Member States. These missions foster the positive recognition of political rights, particularly the citizens' right to choose and to be elected in an inclusive, free and transparent way.

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

- Electoral Technical Cooperation: 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 prevention, management and the resolution of crisis and conflicts. To that end, DSDSM coordinates Special Missions and Political Observation Missions and administers the OAS Peace Fund to contribute to the peaceful settlement of controversies, such as the territorial dispute between Belize and Guatemala.

DSDSM is composed 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). This system combines qualitative and

quantitative tools that help to systematize political analysis and forecast.

- 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.

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 demobilization and reintegration process 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.

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 through the strengthening of democratic institutions. It works in the following areas:

- Hemispheric Cooperation Mechanism for Effective Public Management: fosters dialogue among Member States through an Inter-American forum in which countries share and exchange perspectives and opinions on their public sector institutional reforms.
- Innovation and Modernization: through the Guide of Strategies and Mechanisms for Effective Public Management, offers experiences on key issues of public administration.
- Access to Public Information and Open Government: promotes transparency, integrity and responsibility in public administration as a means of combating corruption and increasing accountability.
- 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.
- E-Government: promotes public sector modernization through the opportunities provided by Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

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; and serves as a depository and source of information for inter-American treaties and the agreements of the OAS and its organs.

Furthermore, SLA coordinates the Inter-American Program of Judicial Facilitators (IPJF) with the aim of reinforcing 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 by assisting judges in processing paperwork, disseminating laws and civic norms among the population and coordinate actions with local governments.

In the field of the rights of persons with disabilities, SLA 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).

In addition, SLA supports the Consumer Safety and Health Network (CSHN) and the Working Group on the Protection of the Rights of Older Persons.

SLA is composed 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; and matters relating to indigenous peoples.

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. Also, the Department promotes courses on legal topics of interest to the Hemisphere.

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

In relation to afro-descendants in the Americas, DIL promotes the training of afro-descendent leaders, as well as the incorporation of this theme into OAS policies and programs.

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 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 also promotes regional cooperation, the exchange of information and investigation of cybercrime.

DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS

The Inter-American Human Rights System; is composed of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), created in 1959, 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) -based in Washington, D.C.- is composed of seven independent commissioners elected by the Member States to promote the observance and defense of human rights, and is in charge of publishing an annual report on this matter.

Since 1959, the Commission has processed more than 13.000 cases and receives, analyzes and investigates more than 1.000 individual petitions with the objective of determining States' responsibility on the violation of the human rights that are guaranteed in the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, and other related inter-American treaties.

Regarding the cases that are presented, 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 is composed 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.

- 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 LGBTI 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, and 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.

GUARANTEEING A MULTIDIMENSIONAL FOCUS ON 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 trafficking, and transnational organized crime, among others. Through this new focus, the OAS security agenda aims to confront these challenges.

This Secretariat for Multidimensional Security consists of the following dependencies:

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

INTER-AMERICAN DRUG ABUSE CONTROL COMMISSION (CICAD)

The mission of the 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 sanitary, social and penal consequences.

CICAD manages and 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 in addressing the issue.

In 1999, the Multilateral Evaluation Mechanism (MEM) was established as a key instrument to assess the anti-drug activities of the Member States. This evaluation is carried out through the elaboration and publication of national and hemispheric reports on the progress made 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.

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

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

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.

Since 2010, OAS Member States adopted a hemispheric strategy on drugs that emphasizes the respect for human rights, addresses addiction as a chronic and a recurring disease, and proposes a broader approach on the treatment of the drug problem.

Following up on a mandate of the VI Summit of the Americas, the OAS developed –under the leadership of Secretary General Insulza– the Report “The Drug Problem in the Americas”. This report consists of an analytical study that examines each one of the aspects of the problem, such as health, development, security, production, legal alternatives and the costs of the illegal market and the current environment of drug policies in the hemisphere. In addition, it includes four possible scenarios in addressing the problem through 2025 that provide an analysis of the current situation in the region, and an evaluation of best practices and new approaches that are being undertaken in different countries, as well as a description of the basic challenges and obstacles to improve results.

Three conclusions of the Secretary General:

1. The drug problem should be managed considering the situation of each country;
2. Countries with fewer resources and less institutional structure have more difficulties with the impact of drug trafficking; and
3. A multifaceted and flexible public health approach is required that considers the differences among countries.

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.

In addition, CICTE supports Member States to fulfill their obligations emanating from Resolution 1373 of the Security Council of the United Nations and the Inter-American Convention against Terrorism.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SECURITY

The Department of Public Security follows up with the resolutions approved by the OAS political organs in the areas of its competence in demining, trafficking in persons, organized crime and gangs, small arms and light weapons, the security of small island States, the prevention of threats against public security.

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 Executive Secretary and consists of the following departments:

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

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

The Department of Human Development, Education, and Employment (DHDEE) supports OAS Member States in their efforts to ensure quality education and to promote human development, decent work and job creation. DHDEE serves as the Technical Secretariat of the Inter-American Committee on Education (CIE), and fosters political dialogue and technical cooperation in areas that the Ministers of Education and Labor identify as priorities.

The DHDEE is responsible for promoting academic and professional development of the youth in the Americas, and administers the OAS scholarship program that facilitates access to higher education and professional training. Additionally, the Department supports the Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL) and the Inter-American Teacher Network.

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The Department of Economic and Social Development (DESD) supports Member States to optimize the advantages to be gained from trade and tourism and corporate responsibility of businesses, as well as competitiveness, 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, through the Migration and Development Program (MIDE) and the Continuous Reporting System on International Migration (SICREMI) it promotes the development of public policies aimed at improving migratory management in the Americas. Moreover, the DESD promotes the preservation and protection of the cultural heritage of the Americas.

The OAS Program of Competitiveness fosters the productivity and competitiveness of Member States, through dialogue, cooperation, exchange of experiences and good practices, and the adoption of initiatives orientated to strengthening public policies, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSEs), and human and institutional capacity building.

DESD supports the Inter-American Social Protection Network (IASPN), and the Inter-American Competitiveness Network with the goal of promoting horizontal, south-south and triangular cooperation between authorities and councils of competitiveness.

This Department is the Technical Secretariat of the Joint Working Group in charge of drafting the Plan of Action of the Social Charter of the Americas.

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 executes technical cooperation projects and promotes 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.

SPECIALIZED ORGANIZATIONS AND OTHER ENTITIES



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 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 CJ has the capacity to submit independent legal opinions regarding the themes of the inter-American agenda.



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 conducts programs in the areas of health, education, social legislation, social services and information. Offers technical assistance in policy formulation and in activities for the development, monitoring, and evaluation of programs designed to improve management in homes that care for children and in national agencies that coordinate such programs.



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 the Member States and of associate members representing private telecommunication enterprises and entities, permanent observers, and regional and international organizations.



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.



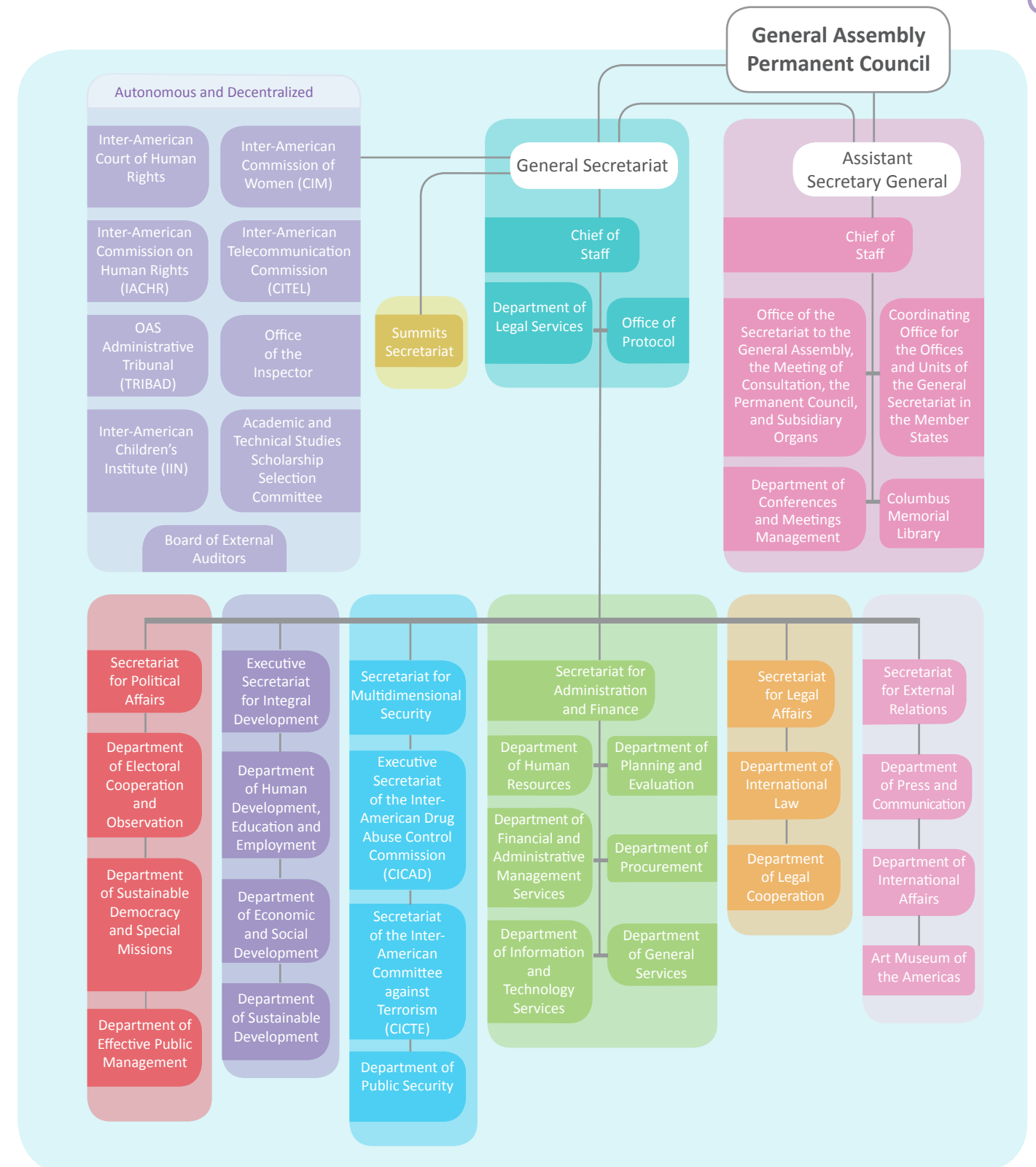
INTER-AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON PORTS (CIP)

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 is the main 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 INSTITUTE OF HUMAN RIGHTS (IIGH)

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 IIGH 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. IIGH cooperates with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights; it works with all sectors of civil society, with Member States, as well as with international organizations.



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 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

Civil society inputs contribute to the policy making of the Member States. These organizations have the chance to strengthen the exchange of information and knowledge with the public sector at a regional and international level.

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 resolution outlines:

- 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.

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

- The Civil Society Registry
- Participation 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 can 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 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 afford a degree of independence in managing the financial resources obtained from its affiliates or individual members
- The CSO must conduct its activities in one or more 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
- Ability to receive the resolutions adopted by the OAS General Assembly at its annual regular session
- With the Chair's authorization, participation in closed meetings of the Permanent Council, the 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 the CIDI. With prior authorization, the CSO may make a statement and have it distributed to Member States for their consideration
- 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
ADM-109
19th street and Constitution Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
U.S.A.

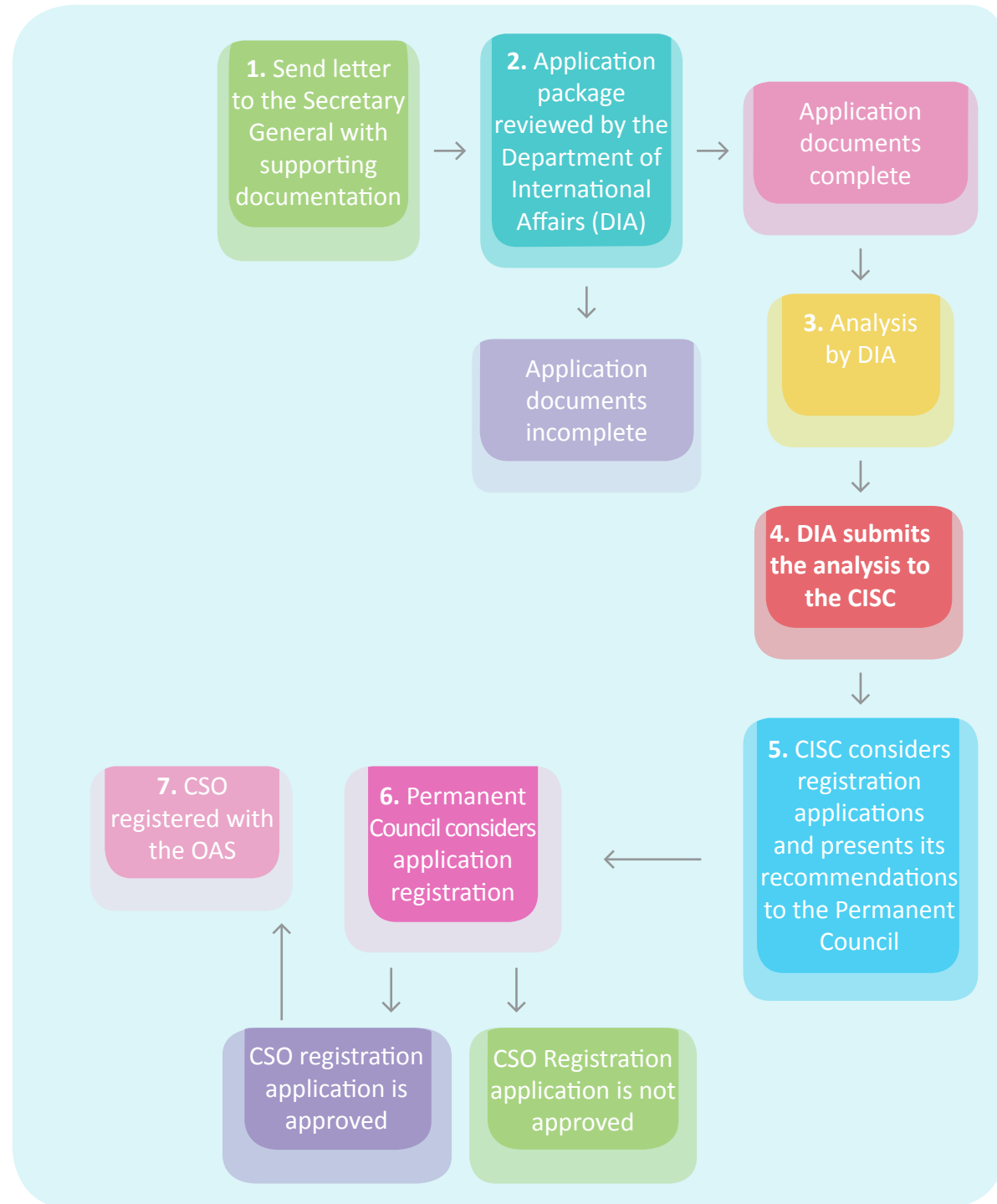
Fax: 202-458-3555
Email: civilsociety@oas.org

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).



AT OAS MEETINGS

Registered civil society organizations may participate, 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).

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.

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, with the prior approval of the meeting, 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 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.

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 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 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

Another mechanism for participation is requesting to be invited to an OAS-related meeting, conference, or ministerial-level meeting. Under this option, the CSO should 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.”

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.

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 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



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 is made, and implementation and follow-up of Summit mandates is carried out.

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. As such, 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 OAS chairs 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 Summit process.

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 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 the partner institutions 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 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

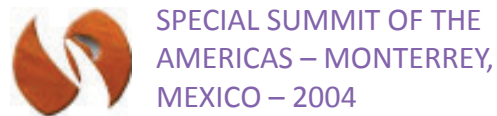
At the Third Summit of the Americas, the Heads of State and Government expressed appreciation for civil society's contributions to the Quebec City Plan of Action and recognized civil society's important role in the consolidation of democracy and its participation in government programs, as one of the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



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.



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, 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> and/or write to summit-info@oas.org to sign up for the OAS Summit distribution list.

THE SECRETARIAT FOR EXTERNAL RELATIONS

supports the work of all the OAS technical areas, as the principal regional political forum of the Hemisphere, by promoting a broad knowledge of the Organization and to stimulate concrete support to its activities. Moreover, the Secretariat strengthens the institutional relations with Member States, Permanent Observers, regional and international organizations, civil society, academic institutions and the private sector in order to implement the inter-American agenda agreed by the 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 Lecture Series of the Americas Program; establishing and maintaining 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 secretariat 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:

Department of International Affairs
Organization of American States
19th street and Constitution Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006 - USA

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