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REPORT ON THE VIRTUAL FORUM WITH CIVIL SOCIETY AND SOCIAL ACTORS  
IN FOLLOW-UP TO THE SEVENTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS

(March 7 to 31, 2016)

## Contents

I.	Introduction .....	1
II.	Purpose of the virtual forum.....	1
III.	General summary of the results of the forum .....	1
	1. <i>Education</i> .....	2
	2. <i>Health</i> .....	2
	3. <i>Energy and the Environment</i> .....	2
	4. <i>Migration</i> .....	2
	5. <i>Indigenous Peoples</i> .....	3
	6. <i>Citizen Participation</i> .....	3
	7. <i>Democratic Governance</i> .....	3

## I. Introduction

The Seventh Summit of the Americas was held in Panama City on April 10 and 11, 2015, at which the Heads of State and of Government addressed the theme “**Prosperity with Equity: The Challenge of Cooperation in the Americas**” and focused their discussions on education, health, energy, the environment, migration, security, citizen participation, and democratic governance.

To follow up on the Seventh Summit, the Summits of the Americas Secretariat organized a virtual forum with civil society and social actors from the Hemisphere through the Summits Virtual Community.

## II. Purpose of the virtual forum

The virtual forum was held from March 7 to 31, 2016, in English, Spanish, French and Portuguese. The virtual discussion addressed the eight subtopics of the Summit, detailed in the document “**Mandates for Action**”: **Education, Health, Energy, Environment, Migration, Security, Citizen Participation, and Democratic Governance**.

The purpose of the forum was to provide representatives of civil society organizations and social actors with an opportunity to hold a dialogue, share best practices, network with representatives from organizations from all over the region, and offer observations and recommendations to the OAS member states on topics related to the document.

The forum’s moderator was Luis Egusquiza, a Peruvian lawyer whose areas of expertise include political and electoral reform. Mr. Egusquiza is both a professor at the Peruvian University of Applied Sciences and coordinator of the Policy Dialogue Program at the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA).

## III. General summary of the results of the forum

Recognizing the efforts of the Heads of State and Government of the Americas in addressing unmet needs and confronting obstacles to prosperity with equity, as well as the commitment of the Summits of the Americas Secretariat to promoting and facilitating participation by civil society and social actors in the Summits of the Americas process, this report summarizes the recommendations of the forum’s participants on the aforementioned topics.

The virtual forum received contributions from **28 representatives of civil society organizations and social actors in 12 countries**.<sup>1</sup> It is also important to mention that of the participants in the virtual forum **13 (46 %) were women and 15 (54%) were men**.

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1. **Argentina, Bolivia, Canada, Colombia, Guatemala, Guyana, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Puerto Rico, Trinidad and Tobago, United States, and Venezuela.**

1. *Education*

1.1. Recognizing that teacher training and pay are among the underlying problems that affect education, civil society and social actors particularly emphasized the need to invest in training and improve salaries for this sector of the population.

1.2. Civil society and social actors recommend updating and diversifying curricular content in public education as well as strengthening competency-based education and modernizing behaviorist education methods.

1.3. Enrich education through an environmental approach with a holistic vision of natural-resource conservation in the Hemisphere.

1.4. Advocate the need to incorporate new approaches that reinforce the pluricultural and inclusive nature of education so that the lore and cultural legacies of indigenous peoples are welcomed, in addition to highlighting the existence of communities such as the LGBT community and education policies with a gender perspective.

2. *Health*

2.1. Civil society and social actors reaffirm that universal access to health is a priority for the region's development. The need is underscored to invest in public health facilities, in terms of both infrastructure and the purchase and maintenance of equipment.

2.2. Health sector workers should be paid a decent wage and oversight mechanisms should be introduced for the procurement and management of inputs such as surgical and medical supplies and drugs.

3. *Energy and the Environment*

3.1. Civil society and social actors also drew attention to the need to change the energy mix to cleaner, environment-friendly sources.

3.2. It is recommended that a commitment to technology transfer and support for sustainable development be adopted.

3.3. The importance was underscored of investing in educational research and projects aimed at creating renewable-energy technologies.

4. *Migration*

4.1. Civil society and social actors recommend that immigration rules be modernized to ensure the rights of migrants and their options for advancement. The importance was emphasized of viewing the migration phenomenon not only from the point of view of control, but also in a way that takes account of the social problems that it implies, since that can lead to the fundamental rights of the migrant population being overlooked.

4.2. As regards the advancement opportunities that exist for migrants, at present there are not enough arrangements in place to facilitate the migration process for professionals. In that regard, civil society and social actors urge the Heads of State and Government of the Americas to establish inter-university agreements, approved by education ministries, in order to facilitate migration processes for professionals.

## 5. *Indigenous Peoples*

5.1 The need was also stressed to recognize and value indigenous peoples, acknowledge their values and interests, and respect their historical presence.

5.2. Civil society representatives and social actors also call on OAS member states to adopt public policies that expressly address indigenous peoples. They underscored that it is vitally important to establish forums and rules to include this sector's participation in politics through representation. Taking into account their diversity, each country should establish rules that better ensure their representation.

5.3. In the area of education, it is recommended that indigenous peoples be assisted in developing the necessary capacities and knowledge to allow them to operate easily in a culturally diverse and interactive society as consciously interdependent stakeholders.

## 6. *Citizen participation*

6.1. Civil society and social actors recommend that virtual interaction forums be continued and on-site dialogue forums promoted. Such forums encourage the participation of governments, civil society representatives, and social actors from all the countries of the Hemisphere, as well as other actors; they also serve to follow up on decisions, pronouncements, reports, and documents of the Summits of the Americas.

## 7. *Democratic Governance*

7.1 The need is underscored for follow-up on measures that benefit the people of the Americas, who aspire to greater participation in the decision-making process at the political level.

7.2. Civil society organizations and social actors stress the importance of the Inter-American Democratic Charter. They also recommend promoting its implementation so as to have in place reliable rules and mechanisms for its application; in other words, codified considerations that establish what circumstances come into play in enforcing the agreements and penalties set forth in the Democratic Charter. It is emphasized, furthermore, that penalties on authoritarian governments, even if only declarative, are highly positive. The importance is also stressed of the role of OAS electoral observation missions.