

FINAL DOCUMENT
RECOMMENDATIONS BY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS
FOR THE 2001 QUEBEC CITY SUMMIT
(Hemispheric meeting, Miami, January 18-20, 2001)

PRESENTATION

The following document contains proposals drafted at the “Final Meeting of the Consultation Process with Civil Society Organizations”, on themes to be discussed at the III Summit of the Americas to be held in Quebec City in April 2001. They are presented in the form of action items, similar to those included in the Action Plans of prior Summits. The meeting took place in Miami on January 18-20, 2001.

The proposals presented in this Final Document arose from a six month long consultation process, organized and coordinated by Corporación PARTICIPA of Chile, in partnership with the ESQUEL Group Foundation (United States) and FOCAL (Canada). This process included 18 national consultations and 6 with networks, besides the functioning of the web page <http://www.sociedadcivil.org> created for this purpose. Nearly 900 organizations took part in these consultations and 243 proposals on the Thematic Areas of the Summit Action Plan were elaborated. A summary of the proposals was published as a Working Document in preparation for the Miami event which was disseminated before and during the meeting.

The Miami meeting brought together representatives of civil society organizations who guided the consultations in their countries, along with representatives of regional thematic civil society networks. The participants discussed and prioritized the proposals of the Working Document, and then agreed upon the proposals for this Final Document. In this meeting there were also representatives from governments, international organisms and cooperation agencies.

The document does not pretend to be representative of civil society in its entirety, and the final version does not necessarily reflect a complete consensus among the meeting participants or the organizations that took part in the consultation process. It is, however, an accurate reflection of the opinions and priorities of the individuals consulted.

The following proposals are organized by thematic area and issue:

1. STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY

1. Towards a more Effective Democracy

Reaffirming that democracy in the Americas is a fundamental condition for economic prosperity and human development, we, the Heads of State and Governments, commit to further strengthen democracy in our countries, to collectively address at the highest political level any interruption of democratic institutional processes in any of the parties involved in the Summit of the Americas process, including the FTAA, and to recommend appropriate mechanisms to reestablish the democratic process.

Governments will:

Request that the OAS continue its support for democracy in the continent and, in accordance with resolution 1080, when events occur that result in an interruption of the democratic process, they will take measures to reestablish democracy in the affected country. Events that merit such a response are: the systematic elimination of independence of the judiciary, holding electoral processes that do not meet minimum international standards, the practice of systematic violations of freedom of expression and human rights, and the interference of the armed forces in electoral processes.

2. Transparency and Good Governance

Transparency is a necessary responsibility, value and practice among institutions and citizens. Lack of transparency has become a daily practice in many of our societies, too often leading to corruption.

Creating a culture of transparency requires the decisive and sustained action by the state as well as an active and committed citizenry to participate in and monitor public activity.

Heads of State have made important commitments to fight corruption at the two Summits of the Americas and in the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption. To translate these commitments into concrete action, leaders commit to:

Proposals:

1. Call for the universal ratification of the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption by the year 2002.
2. Implement an OAS Mutual Review Mechanism and ensure that it has adequate authority and funding as well as a clear mandate for consultations with civil society. Submit an annual progress report on implementation of the Convention to the OAS General Assembly.

3. Establish legal requirements to regularly publish laws, regulations, judicial and administrative actions, and other information, including on procurement, all budgets and expenditures, and audits. Make best efforts to place such information on-line and call on the IDB to provide financial and technical assistance. Guarantee access to information and promote meaningful citizen participation through suitable mechanisms, such as public hearings.
4. Institute procedures to promote independence and integrity of judges and prosecutors including merit-based criteria for selection, public review of candidates, ethics training, disclosure of assets and oversight mechanisms.
5. Carry out and publish at all levels audits for all public institutions. Adopt accounting and auditing practices that meet or exceed international standards.
6. Enact legal requirement for the timely disclosure of income and expenditures of political parties and candidates in order to enhance the transparency of the electoral process.
7. Enact legal requirements for implementation by 2002 of procedures to enhance transparency in public purchases of goods and contracting of services, establishing competitive bidding systems and public awards of contracts. Support the use of "integrity pacts" in public procurement and support the prompt adoption of uniform documents and policies of the highest standards by all multilateral development banks.
8. Create and fund an independent agency to promote, monitor and coordinate anti-corruption programs.
9. Propose legislation to create and use civil society councils to monitor and promote transparency in government programs, backed by the necessary resources and training.
10. Call for an annual report to the OAS General Assembly on steps taken to implement these commitments.

3. Human Rights

3.1. Strengthening Human Rights

Mechanisms for the protection of human rights must be strengthened in order to provide an integral guarantee of citizens' rights in the region. Leaders commit to:

Proposals:

Formulate and implement a National Program for the Promotion of Human Rights in accordance with the commitments made at the 1993 Vienna World Conference. In addition, present an annual report to the OAS Permanent Council and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on advances in the implementation of that program and the status of human rights.

3.2. Strengthening Human Rights Systems

The implementation of the decisions of the Inter-American Commission and Court of Human Rights is indispensable for the existence of an effective system of protection and for the credibility of the Inter-American system itself.

Proposal:

Strengthen and improve the Inter-American Human Rights System in terms of its overall operation, effectiveness, funding and universality of its instruments. Provide support to the Plan for the Promotion of the Inter-American Human Rights System, prepared by the Inter-American Institute for Human Rights.

3.3. Human Rights of Women, Youth and Children

The vulnerability and exclusion suffered by numerous sectors of the population works against the very essence of democracy. The discrimination that exists against women, children and youth represents a violation of the principle of equality before the law and respect for their rights and dignity.

Proposal:

Governments will:

Implement the Inter-American Program for the Promotion of Women's Human Rights and Gender Equality and Equity, and develop indicators to monitor fulfillment of this and other commitments made in various international accords.

3.4. Strengthening Freedom of Expression

The right to freedom of expression is fundamental in the democratic process and the guarantee of access to information leads to transparency in governmental activities.

Governments will:

Implement the Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression that were approved by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights during its 108th Session.

3.5. Strengthening the Justice System and other Judicial Entities

In order to reduce human rights violations, levels of impunity must be reduced and the justice system strengthened.

Proposal:

Governments will:

1. Restrict the immunity of military justice to crimes typically committed by the military.
2. Sign and ratify the International Penal Court Treaty.
3. Review and improve local and constitutional systems of access to justice, placing special emphasis on the most vulnerable and marginalized sectors of society.

4. Strengthening Civil Society

4.1. Strengthening Participation in National Processes

Citizenship, as the exercise of rights and responsibilities, should be a basic element of the social and political reality of our countries. Therefore, the construction of citizenship is of primary importance to achieve democracy at all levels of our societies.

Civil society organizations, as a group of diverse actors and social expressions characterized by political, ideological and cultural plurality, play a fundamental role in this process. Strengthening these organizations implies increasing operational skills as well as the effectiveness of their work to solve problems in our countries in a context of shared responsibility with the public and private sectors.

Strengthening civil society in this framework requires promoting PARTICIPATION and ASSOCIATION, guaranteeing social inclusion and equity.

To this end, leaders commit to:

Proposals:

1. Adapt, and where necessary, establish legal and regulatory frameworks to strengthen:
 - A. PARTICIPATION. These frameworks should:
 - Guarantee equal access to objective, frequent and systematic information for citizens.
 - Institutionalize a partnership between the state and civil society to make participation effective.
 - B. ASSOCIATION, based on the Plan of Action of the Santiago Declaration in relation to Civil Society and under the principle of free association.

These frameworks should be agile and effective and recognize the autonomy of civil society, its diversity and the public interest in its objectives.

C. The flow of resources in support of PARTICIPATION and ASSOCIATION. This would require adapting and/or introducing mechanisms to facilitate fundraising. These could include, for example, contracting services, fiscal incentives, subsidies and donations.

1. Ensure adequate application of the legal and regulatory frameworks, avoiding discretionary treatment.
2. Because of the importance of strong and participatory local governments in the creation and sustainability of an effective civil society, we urge the Presidents to implement in their policies, concrete measures for the immediate strengthening of local governments.

4.2 Strengthening Participation in Inter-American Process

Proposals:

1. Ensure dissemination, among the citizens of the signatory countries, of information on the Summits of the Americas Process and the commitments assumed by the Heads of State.
2. Call for an annual progress report on Summit commitments to be presented to the appropriate bodies. This report should be publicly available and should seek to reflect, in addition to information provided by the Governments, reports made by Civil Society Organizations, academic centers and others with relation to the Summit.
3. Continue and strengthen the participation mechanisms established at the OAS, especially the Accreditation System for Civil Society Organizations, the Special Committee on Inter-American Summits Management and the Committee on Civil Society Participation in OAS Activities.
4. Establish a mechanism for Civil Society participation in the actual Quebec City Summit.
5. Establish, with Civil Society, mechanisms to monitor and evaluate progress with the Agreements.
6. Consolidate the State-Civil Society relation within the Summit process, which will provide for a constructive exchange around the priorities of the national agenda.
7. Encourage media coverage to provide information on efforts by Civil Society and the Governments before, during and after the Quebec City Summit.

2. CREATING PROSPERITY

1. Commerce and Investment

Synchronize the FTAA negotiations with the Summit Process through a mechanism in which Civil Society Participation is transparent, inclusive, effective and permanent, allowing for Civil Society involvement in the processes which define policies and the monitoring of their implementation.

1. Establish clear rules of access to complete and timely information for civil society on the negotiating text and process.
2. Support independent research, financed at least by a Tripartite Committee, which will examine the global implications of the FTAA process and not just of trade, and place special emphasis on the impact on small economies, taking into consideration the recommendations of the Consultative Group on Small Economies (included in the Santiago Plan of Action) as well as orient and inform the establishment of a Regional Development Fund to assist the more vulnerable countries.

2. Financial Mechanisms

Review the efforts being made to reform and strengthen the international financial system, with a framework conducive to accessing to long-term resources and assisting in support of sustainable development, with new and innovative funding mechanisms in coordination with the responsible implementation bodies of the strategies of the hemispheric sustainable development agenda.

3. Environment

1. Reinforce commitments made in Miami, Santa Cruz and Santiago with respect to the domestic implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and international environmental standards and practices cooperatively and in partnership with civil society.
2. Recognize that environmental security is an increasing regional priority and that frameworks for environmental governance should be strengthened to address growing concerns over resource claims, depletion and degradation that can imperil the health and well being of citizens, impede or disrupt economic prosperity, and threaten national and regional stability.
3. Establish a high-level policy dialogue in the environment, defense and finance communities to explore the linkage between environmental and development concerns and the security of citizens and states in the Americas with a view to:
 - defining priorities at a regional and domestic level,
 - strengthening governance frameworks to meet those priorities,
 - monitoring progress through measurable indicators, and

- pursuing projects in environmental governance as a means to address environmental security concerns, including through technical assistance.

4. Inequalities

Share the opportunities for creating prosperity amongst all segments of society, taking affirmative action to support vulnerable groups (including women, children, indigenous communities and racial or ethnic minorities), and support the comprehensive sustainable development of all productive sectors in rural life in order to create an urban-rural balance for the well-being of all the citizens. This includes:

- Creating and supporting mechanisms for dialogue among all elements of civil society and governments.
- Encouraging social responsibility within the private sector.
- Strengthening the promotion of policies which facilitate the generation of new microenterprises and their ability to flourish in a competitive environment.
- Facilitating increased and equitable access to information technology and telecommunication services.

3. REALIZING HUMAN POTENTIAL

1. Education

1. Initiate or reinforce educational reform programs to offer quality education to all children, from pre-school on.
2. Decentralize education and provide municipal and local levels with greater autonomy and facilitate the participation of parents and other local actors in the administration and development of the educational process.
3. Promote and improve the professionalization of agents of the educational system through the development of training programs that encourage greater consideration and valuation of the sector.
4. Develop programs of formation in values to shape responsible citizens.

Proposals:

1. Encourage governments to heighten their efforts to provide universal coverage in elementary and secondary education, and also increase pre-school education, which was not included as a priority in the Santiago Summit.
2. Call a meeting including representatives of governments, civil society and cooperation agencies to examine the fulfillment of the goals of the educational Action Plan of the Summits.
3. Promote the development of partnerships among different actors to share responsibilities in educational administration involving the public and private sectors, providing greater levels of school autonomy in financial, administrative and pedagogical areas.
4. Increase investment in public education to a recommended minimum of 5% of GDP and increase the expenditure per student to narrow gaps in equity and quality between public and private education.
5. Promote and facilitate the effective participation of civil society organizations in the definition and implementation of policies and programs of educational development.
6. Create channels that allow participation of the most diverse range of civil society actors in the monitoring, follow-up and evaluation of the results of Summit Accords.