

# PARTICIPATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE SUMMITS OF THE AMERICAS PROCESS

Summits of the Americas Secretariat  
Organization of American States (OAS)



Summits of the Americas Secretariat

# BACKGROUND



## First Summit

(Miami, December 1994)



## Summit of the Americas on Sustainable Development

(Santa Cruz de la Sierra, December 1996)



## Second Summit

(Santiago, April 1998)



## Third Summit

(Québec, April 2001)



## Special Summit

(Monterrey, January 2004)



## Fourth Summit

(Mar del Plata, November 2005)



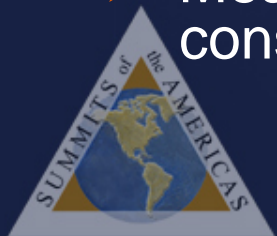
# CIVIL SOCIETY AS KEY PARTICIPANT IN THE SUMMITS PROCESS

- Civil society's participation in the Summits Process represents the most direct linkage between the Organization, the Member States, and citizens.
- Civil society participation is essential and has become institutionalized in the Summits Process.
  - For example, in the year 2005 in preparation for the Fourth Summit, 392 specific recommendations from civil society related to the themes of the Summit were collected and compiled in a series of 10 regional, sub-regional, hemispheric, virtual, and thematic forums with civil society organizations.
- These recommendations and suggestions are transmitted to the Member States and to the OAS in the dialogues that are held in the framework of the Summits.



# IMPORTANCE OF CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION IN THE SUMMITS PROCESS

- Enriches the debate on every topic of the Summits Process
- Gives voice to diverse points of view held by civil society
- Assists member states to implement and follow-up policies, special initiatives, and mandates
- Increases accountability in execution of Summits commitments by member states
- Contributes to the distribution of political agreements among society and to legitimizing the Summits Process
- Produces more efficient and effective results when implementing development policies and government initiatives
- Strengthens existing channels of communication between government and citizens and opens new opportunities for dialogue
- Meaningful participation by social actors helps to strengthen and consolidate democracy



# CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE SUMMITS PROCESS

The Summits of the Americas Process has recognized and promoted civil society participation. Below are some examples of statements made by Heads of States and Government in the various Summits commitment documents:



## **I Summit of the Americas (1994 - Miami):**

Civil participation in public affairs is crucial for the strengthening of democracy.



**Summit of the Americas on Sustainable Development (1996 - Santa Cruz):** The exchange of experiences and information between governments and civil society is necessary for the formulation, implementation and improvement of programs and policies on sustainable development.



**II Summit of the Americas (1998 - Santiago):** Civil society participation in educational development is a determining factor of political, social and economic development.

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# CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE SUMMITS PROCESS



## **III Summit of the Americas (2001 - Québec)**

Civil society plays a key role in the consolidation of democracy. Civil society participation in governmental programs is an important means to the success of development policies.



## **Special Summit of the Americas (2004 - Monterrey, México)**

The Heads of State agreed on the importance of Civil society's contributions in the design, execution and evaluation of public policies promoted by distinct areas of government. It was also recognized that civil society participation is important in the public arena and the consolidation of new associations that allow a constructive engagement among different social actors, governments and international organisms working to promote development and democracy.



## **IV Summit of the Americas (2005 - Mar del Plata)**

Strengthened citizen and community participation, and civil society will contribute to ensure that the benefits of democracy are shared by society as a whole.

# CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE SUMMITS PROCESS

- The relevance of the Summits Process relies on the recognition by Heads of State and Government of civil society's role in the development and implementation of government programs and hemispheric agenda.
- It is important to highlight that public participation has significantly advanced and is an institutionalized component of the Process.
  - The Summits Process has benefited from increased participation by civil society. Significant work has been done through civil society networks to review and monitor progress made by countries in implementing Summits commitments.
- The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Host Government of the Fifth Summit, has expressed on numerous occasions its intention to implement a strategy to engage participation by citizens in the Fifth Summit preparatory process.



# CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION IN THE FIFTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS

## Virtual Forums

Thematic virtual forums lasting 2 weeks in length will be moderated by experts from diverse sectors with extensive knowledge on the themes in question and a history of participation in the inter-American system.

## Meetings with Civil Society

A calendar of meetings of consultation with civil society is being planned. Meetings will provide opportunities for civil society organizations to formulate and refine recommendations for the consideration of the OAS member states as they negotiate the Draft Declaration of Commitment of Port of Spain.

Meetings will be regional, sub-regional, and thematic in nature and will include a specific focus on promoting participation by historically marginalized groups, including indigenous peoples, women, afro descendents, and youth.





## Additional Information

For additional information on civil society participation in the Summits of the Americas Process, please visit the following internal and external websites:

- OAS Civil Society Website: [www.civil-society.oas.org](http://www.civil-society.oas.org)
- National Secretariat for the Fifth Summit of the Americas of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago: [www.fifthsummitoftheamericas.org](http://www.fifthsummitoftheamericas.org)
- Active Democracy Network: [www.sociedadcivil.net](http://www.sociedadcivil.net)
- Partners of the Americas Civil Society Center: [www.partners.net/partners/Summit\\_of\\_the\\_Americas\\_EN.asp?SnID=1143691095](http://www.partners.net/partners/Summit_of_the_Americas_EN.asp?SnID=1143691095)





**SUMMITS OF THE AMERICAS SECRETARIAT OF THE  
ORGANIZATION OF THE AMERICAN STATES**

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