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PERIODIC REPORT OF THE SUMMITS OF THE AMERICAS SECRETARIAT ON
ITS WORK TO SUPPORT AND STRENGTHEN THE SUMMITS PROCESS

PERIOD: JANUARY – DECEMBER 2020

(Presented at the CISC meeting of March 9, 2021 by Maria Celina Conte, Acting Director of the
Summits of the Americas Secretariat)



SUMMITS OF THE AMERICAS SECRETARIAT

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Periodic Report of the Summits of the Americas Secretariat on its Work to Support and Strengthen the Summits Process

Period: January – December 2020

This is the periodic report of the work carried out by the Summits of the Americas Secretariat to support and strengthen the Summits Process from January to December 2020, taking into account the crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The report focuses on three main areas: 1) Support for the Chair and the participating states in the various stages of the Summits Process; 2) Strengthening coordination among the organizations of the Joint Summits Working Group (JSWG); and, 3) Promoting the participation of civil society and social actors.

These efforts were designed to support the work carried out by the participating states to implement the “Lima Commitment: Democratic Governance against Corruption,” as well as the initial preparations for the Ninth Summit of the Americas, taking into account the crisis in the region caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In view of the current situation, the Summits Secretariat had to reassess and reformulate much of the work planned, with regard to both content and the working method, to focus on a virtual methodology. The final reports and results of these efforts, including videos and presentations, are available on the webpage of the Summits Secretariat, [here](#).

I. Support for the Chair and the States in the Different Stages of the Summits Process

The Summits Secretariat continued to actively support the work of the Chair and the participating states. In conjunction with the Summits Process Chair at the time, the Peruvian Government, it supported the Mechanism for Follow-Up and Implementation of the Lima Commitment, taking into account the situation caused by the pandemic, as well as efforts to begin preparations for the Ninth Summit with, as of July 2020, the current Chair of the Summits Process, the United States Government.

a. Support and technical assistance in the implementation of the Mechanism of the Lima Commitment

During this time, the Summits Secretariat continued to provide technical assistance and advisory services to the Chair, as well as support to the states in implementing the Eighth Summit, particularly with regard to the second year of implementation of the Mechanism for Follow-Up and Implementation of the Lima Commitment, beginning in January 2019. Thus, based on the information provided by the states and the JSWG on the online platform of that Mechanism, and available [here](#), regarding the progress made in implementing the mandates, as well as the challenges and needs the states encountered in implementing the Lima Commitment¹, and the offer of cooperation by the JSWG institutions—the main inputs used in drawing up the JSWG’s 2019-2021 Action Plan—from May 2019 to May 2020, the Summits Secretariat developed a Bank of Good Practices and Regional Capacities, available [here](#). It also promoted initiatives for cooperation to prevent and combat corruption, as contemplated in the referenced Mechanism and described later on.

b. Transfer Ceremony of the Summits Process Chairmanship

In coordination with the then Chair exercised by the Peruvian Government, the participating states, organizations of the Joint Summits Working Group (JSWG), and civil society and social actors were invited to the ceremony to transfer the Chairmanship of the Process virtually on July 10, 2020. The Chair was represented by Ambassador Luis E. Chávez, the National Coordinator for the Summits of the Americas Process and Director of Multilateral and Global Affairs of the Peruvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The incoming Chair was represented by the Interim Under-Secretary for Western Hemispheric Affairs of the Department of State, Ambassador Michael G. Kozak. In addition, from the OAS General Secretariat, in its capacity as the Technical Secretariat and the institutional memory of the Summits Process, OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro participated. The video and statements made are available [here](#).

c. First Regular Meeting of the SIRG in 2020

It was held through an exchange of documents. Three concept documents were prepared by nongovernmental actors in the United States, from civil society, the private sector, and the JSWG, on the challenges and opportunities facing the Americas on route to the Ninth Summit, which were distributed to the participating states in October. The Chair requested the National Coordinators of the Summits to present comments related to the issues raised in the three documents, including suggestions on other topics and opinions that could be included in a possible program and results of the Summit. As part of this process, the Chair urged states to consult with private sector interest groups and civil society regarding their priorities for hemispheric action, including the follow-up on the 2018 Lima Commitment. The concept documents are available [here](#).

d. Promotion of Initiatives for Cooperation in Preventing and Fighting Corruption

The Summits Secretariat identified possibilities and resources for cooperation among the states and between them and the JSWG entities in the area of preventing and fighting corruption. It also encouraged synergies with other international and regional initiatives and mechanisms that the states are parties to. Creation of these spaces for the states and the JSWG entities to work together was meant to further cooperative activities among them. This was done during the second year of implementation of the Mechanism for Follow Up and Implementation of the Lima Commitment. The cooperative activities were primarily carried out through (i) policy dialogues and virtual seminars and (ii) technical assistance.

1. Dialogue on policies and virtual seminars

- *Policy Dialogue on “Corruption y COVID-19”* (virtual, June 18, 2020). The Summits Secretariat held this dialogue in coordination with the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF), to exchange experiences and ideas regarding the risks of corruption in dealing with emergencies, and the role of judicial operators and control agencies in preserving the integrity of measures to handle the crisis. The event focused on the agenda promoted by the Lima Commitment and was enriched by the main areas involved in fighting corruption referred to in the CAF’s 2019 Economy and Development Report (RED 2019) on “Integrity in public policies; Keys to preventing corruption,” in the context of a state of emergency. The

participants included the Chair of the SIRG, the office of the Attorney-General of Colombia, the Secretariat of Public Integrity of the Office of the President of the Peruvian Council of Ministers, and a member of the Committee of International Experts of the Fight against Corruption from Ecuador. For more information click [here](#).

- *Virtual Seminar on “Democratization of Information: Open data on preventing and combating corruption”* (virtual, May 6, 2020). It sought to further the exchange of experiences and knowledge from the point of governments and civil society on the use of open data to prevent and fight corruption as an effect and a causal factor in the democratization of information. It further addressed the need to include open data in responses to emergency situations such as the current global health crisis. The event was carried out with the collaboration of the Department for Effective Public Management (DEPM) and the participation of government experts from Colombia and Mexico, and other JSWG entities, such as ECLAC and CAF, and civil society. It was inaugurated by the Chair of SIRG. The recommendations ensuing from the exchange represent inputs for states to use in follow up on the mandates on open data and combating corruption of the Eighth Summit. They will also serve to strengthen transparency and accountability in state activities related to the pandemic. For more information click [here](#).
- *Virtual seminar on “Emerging Technologies to Prevent and Combat Corruption”* (Virtual, May 26, 2020). It facilitated the exchange of experiences and further informed government, civil society, and multilateral organizations on the importance and use of emerging technologies as instruments to prevent and combat corruption, including in the response to emergency situations. The event was organized by the Summits Secretariat with the collaboration of DEPM/OAS and the participation of government experts from the Bahamas and the United States, organizations belonging to the JSWG, such as the IDB and the OECD, and representatives of academia (UNAM/UWV Civic Innovation Laboratory). The resulting recommendations serve as inputs for states in their follow-up on mandates on emerging technologies and fighting corruption, with an emphasis on situations of crisis. For more information, click [here](#).

2. Technical Assistance

During this period, the Summits Secretariat, in coordination and cooperation with strategic partners, carried out technical assistance in the area of money laundering and tax crimes, open data, and integrity in the civil service.

Money laundering and tax crimes

- *“Special session on Cooperation in Investigations and Procedures related to Corruption, Tax Crimes, and Associated Money Laundering”* (virtual session on July 16, 2020). The session was organized with the Department against Transnational Organized Crime (OAS/DTOC), in the framework of the XLVIII Meeting of the Group of Experts for Control of Money Laundering (GELAVEX), on the occasion of its 30th anniversary. An exchange of views ensued among the national officials on effective means for fighting corruption, tax crimes, and money laundering in the region. 131 government officials from 25 member states participated. Presentations were made by the Secretariat of the Mechanism for Follow-Up on the Inter-American Convention against Corruption (MESICIC) and experts from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Bank, and the Inter-American Center of Tax Administrations (CIAT). For more information, click [here](#).

- “*Virtual Seminar on National Risk Assessment (NRA) of Money Laundering for Latin America and the Caribbean*” (October 26-28, 2020). It was held to follow up on mandate 43 of the Lima Commitment, which established the need to “Take effective measures against tax evasion, money laundering, and the illicit financial flows derived from corruption, as well as measures to identify beneficial ownership.” The event was organized with the OAS/DTOC, and was designed to provide training and an opportunity for Central American and Caribbean countries to exchange experiences on NRA, with a view to reviewing and updating it. Around 170 government officials from 22 member states participated, in addition to representatives from the World Bank, Executive Secretariats of the Financial Action Task Force of Latin America (GAFILAT) and the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF). The Seminar was led by national officials from Financial Intelligence Units, regulatory and supervisory agencies in the field of anti-money laundering and control of terrorism, and prosecutorial and/or law enforcement entities. For more information, click [here](#).

Open Data

- In the same vein as the support provided by the Summits Secretariat to the technical assistance mission to the Honduran Government in November 2019 through the OAS/DEPM, for socialization and validation of the National Open Data Policy, which facilitated the participation of experts from Colombia and government representatives from El Salvador and the Dominican Republic (click [here](#)), the Summits Secretariat supported a technical assistance by the OAS/DEPM in Ecuador and the Dominican Republic to develop their national open data policies. In Ecuador, the technical assistance provided to the Ministry of Telecommunications and the Information Society (MINTEL) resulted in the approval of an open data policy, which included a preambular paragraph that reflected mandate 20 on open data of the Lima Commitment. In the Dominican Republic, through the General Directorate of Government Integrity and Ethics (DIGEIG), assistance was provided to that country in preparing its policy. To that end, the final open policy document of the Dominican Republic was developed and defined, in observation of various clauses of the Lima Commitment. A virtual session on technical assistance was planned to make the public aware of the document and how to consult it, and to close the policy development cycle, for its transfer to the authority behind its approval and signature, the Ministry of the President.
- The Summits Secretariat sponsored the participation of 75 government officials from Argentina, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Panama, and the Dominican Republic, in a virtual course entitled “Introduction to Open Data,” developed by the OAS School of Government, in coordination with the OAS/DEPM. The purpose of the course is to familiarize and train participants on the processes for ensuring open data to prevent and combat corruption by training groups of officials to serve as agents of change, so that they can share the knowledge acquired in the course and further the opening of data in their countries at both national and local levels. At the start of the course on November 23, 2020, high level officials of the leading open data entities of the six participating countries were in attendance. In addition, there were participants from the CAF, the International Open Data Charter, the Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency, and the Colombian MINTIC. For more information, click [here](#).

Integrity in the Civil Service

- The Summits Secretariat, in coordination with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), held a workshop on “*Integrity in the Civil Service*” (virtual session on

September 30, 2020) for the leading entities on the subject in seven countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Panama, and Peru), to strengthen their capacity in the areas covered by mandates 9, 10, and 11 of the Lima Commitment. The focus was on issues related to systems of integrity for civil servants in the region and covered subjects related to selection by merit and conflicts of interest in public management. Participants included high level officials from the National Department of Strategic Affairs of the Argentine Anti-Corruption Office, the Department for Promotion of Integrity of the Brazilian Office of the Comptroller General, the National Department of the Civil Service and Chair of the Senior Management Civil Service Board of Chile, the Office of the Public Prosecutor for Monitoring of the Civil Service in the National Office of the Attorney General of Colombia, the Office of the Public Prosecutor for Public Ethics in the National Office of the Attorney General of Costa Rica, the Vice-Ministry of Public Service of the Ministry of Labor of Ecuador, and the Office in charge of Civil Service Management Policies in the National Civil Service of Peru. For more information, click [here](#).

- Based on the previous workshop on “Integrity in the Civil service,” in which seven countries shared challenges, experiences, and best practices in building a culture of integrity in their administrations, with an emphasis on the challenges generated by the pandemic, the Summits Secretariat and the OECD prepared a policy document taking up the key points and best practices discussed, as well as policy recommendations for the government administrations in the region. This document will be published shortly. For preliminary inputs, the Secretariat, in coordination with the OECD, worked with consultants on the draft policy note, including a survey of the relevant reforms on the subject of integrity in public office since the adoption of the Lima Commitment, with an emphasis on the countries that participated in the workshop. In-depth interviews with national entities were conducted as part of this process to enrich their efforts.

Government Procurement

- Under the cooperation agreement signed in 2020 between the OAS/SG, as the Technical Secretariat of the Inter-American Government Procurement Network (RICG), and CAF, “Prevention of corruption through transparency and analysis of data in public contracting systems,” the Summits Secretariat, in coordination with the RICG Secretariat, supported contracting consultant services to implement the initial activities under this project, whose purpose is to generate actions to adopt data intelligence and the use of new procurement technologies for the prevention of corruption. These efforts will help strengthen the institutional capacity of public procurement systems in the RICG member countries, to generate and implement effective tools to promote transparency, efficiency, and integrity in national procurement systems. This objective is reflected in mandates 14, 17, and 27 of the Lima Commitment and in Resolution AG/RES. 2927 (XLVIII-O/18) of the 2018 OAS/GA, which calls for promotion of a hemispheric initiative for open procurement in coordination with the competent national authorities, civil society, and the private sector.

Moreover, and in conjunction with generation of knowledge products, the Summits Secretariat, with the support of an independent actor, has been preparing a report on progress achieved in the region under the Lima Commitment, and the challenges encountered in implementing it in a highly volatile political climate characterized by changes in political leadership, and the centrality of the political agenda agreed by the region’s leaders at the Eighth Summit. To move this process forward, Public Space, a center for independent studies based in Chile, was asked to provide its support, as its track

record and experience guarantee a product that will make it possible to bring in key experts on the subject for analysis. Moreover, in cooperation with the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM), work has progressed on a study regarding the relationship between gender and corruption in the Americas, to follow up on mandates 7 and 55 of the Lima Commitment. Both studies will be available during the first half of 2021.

II. Strengthening coordination among the JSWG organizations

Work was carried out to continue to strengthen the coordination among the organizations belonging to the Joint Summits Working Group (JSWG) in support of national efforts to implement the Summits mandates, and in light of the current situation as a result of COVID-19. These activities were also in compliance with the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the High-Level Authorities of the JSWG in September 2018.

Part of the work included convening four meetings of the JSWG High Authorities on the impact of COVID-19 in the Americas between April and September 2020, as well as cooperation and coordination with JSWG entities to conduct virtual seminars and technical assistance in relation to various programming lines of the JSWG Plan of Action (2019-2021), including some referred to in the previous section.

a. Meetings of the High Authorities of the JSWG on the Impact of COVID-19

Between April and September 2020, four virtual meetings of the JSWG High Authorities on the impact of COVID-19 in the Americas were convened by OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro, President of the JSWG, and the Director of the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), Dr. Carissa Etienne. The meetings were held to exchange diagnoses and lines of intervention by the JSWG organizations to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 in the countries in the region and to highlight the need for a coordinated, multilateral response to the challenges faced in the post-pandemic phase. The information provided by the JSWG organizations provided a global panorama of the impacts on health, socioeconomic factors, and governance in the region. The JSWG also issued a joint declaration.ⁱⁱ

- First meeting on April 3, 2020: The High Authorities of the JSWG organizations met to coordinate efforts to provide support in the areas of preparation, mitigation, and recovery, in response to the crisis generated by COVID-19.
- Second meeting on April 29, 2020: This gave the High-Level Authorities of the JSWG and regional organizations an opportunity to update the regional situation from the standpoint of health, socioeconomic factors, and governance, with the support of the analyses prepared by the institutions.
- Third meeting on June 12, 2020: Updated the diagnosis on the impact of COVID-19 on health and addressed the impact of the health crisis on food systems.
- Fourth meeting, on September 14, 2020: Issued the *“Joint Declaration: Addressing the risks of corruption, integrity, and democratic governance,”* discussed at previous meetings. [Joint Declaration](#).

b. Coordination with the JSWG organizations to advance the implementation of the JSWG Plan of Action

The 2020-2021 Plan of Action of the JSWG was created with the JSWG entities in 2019 in support of the states for the implementation of the Lima Commitment. The plan is centered on four guidelines based on the information shared by the 17 member states that registered their progress on the mandates on the online platform of the Mechanism for Follow-Up and Implementation of the Lima Commitment, as well as on possible cooperation by the JSWG entities. The guidelines of the action plan are: (i) Development and strengthening of effective and transparent mechanisms for the civil service; (ii) Strengthening of the mechanisms for the protection of whistleblowers, witnesses, and victims of corruption; (iii) Adherence to anti-corruption and corporate governance; and (iv) Detection, investigation, and prosecution of acts of corruption. In the framework of these guidelines, the Summits Secretariat has been coordinating with various JSWG entities in developing technical activities in light of the current situation.

c. Repository on the response of the JSWG organizations to COVID-19

The Summits Secretariat has been feeding a database with information on the efforts and cooperation by JSWG organizations, including the OAS, to deal with COVID-19. This database is available [here](#).

III. Promotion of the participation of civil society and social actors

a. National anti-corruption hubs

In April 2020, following a selection process, the Summits Secretariat established 34 national anti-corruption hubs or networks in which the OAS Section of Relations with Civil Society and JSWG organizations participated. As a result, the participation of around 200 representatives of civil society and social actors in the region were confirmed as members of the hubs. In addition, after a third meeting in June, an opportunity was provided for a larger number of actors to be part of the hubs, expanding the number of members to 350ⁱⁱⁱ.

Through the hubs, available [here](#), an effort is made to ensure the integrated coordination of national self-managed spaces, to the following ends: i) emphasizing the work of civil society and social actors in preventing and fighting corruption; ii) facilitating an exchange of best practices and strengthening capacity for active participation in, and monitoring and defense of the Lima Commitment; iii) promoting a dialogue with government authorities and representatives of the JSWG; and iv) facilitating access to specialized information on various issues related to the Summits Process. To facilitate the work of the national hubs, the Summits Secretariat has created virtual forums for each national system, through the Summits Virtual Community. These forums are the official communication channel of each hub.

In addition, in May 2020, civil society organizations and social actors who are members of the hubs presented 72 initiatives, that have been active in preventing and fighting corruption, with a view to strengthening the participation of the sector in the framework of the Mechanism for Follow-Up and Implementation of the Lima Commitment. At present, the members of the hubs are presenting a second round of initiatives, as well as videos on these initiatives, to ensure greater visibility and dissemination

of their work. These videos will be used as a basis for creating a virtual exhibition of national initiatives, postponed until 2021.

b. Initiatives to deal with the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic

In view of the crisis caused by COVID-19, in which corruption easily proliferates, the Summits Secretariat has been facilitating opportunities to strengthen the capacity of civil society and social actors to use digital technologies to develop new initiatives for preventing and combating corruption, and to perform their work of monitoring and social auditing for purposes of accountability.

As part of this effort, the Summits Secretariat, in cooperation with *Laboratoria*, a recognized start-up in regional education, launched the program entitled "[Adopting a Digital Mindset to combat COVID19 Corruption,](#)" with the participation of more than 300 representatives of civil society and social actors in the Americas. This program has two stages of participation. The first stage entails acquisition of the basic concepts related to the challenges and opportunities of the digital age for developing initiatives, and concludes with the presentation of five initiatives. These initiatives are passed on to a second stage, that entails an accelerated pace to further strengthen knowledge, resources, and alliances, to ensure its effective implementation. This second stage will conclude in early 2021.

In addition, together with the Young Americas Business Trust (YABT) and the Inter-American Foundation, the initiative entitled "[InnovAction Challenge](#)" was established, to empower young social and economic entrepreneurs to respond to the new needs of the grassroots communities in Latin America and the Caribbean as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This initiative will support more than 500 young people in the Americas to transform their ideas into viable social enterprises through training, access to business networks in the region, grants of financial support, and technical assistance.

c. National dialogues between governments and civil society and social actors

The Summits Secretariat, in cooperation with the Chair, the United States Government, is organizing [National Dialogues](#) to provide an opportunity for civil society and social actors in the Americas to have a dialogue with governments and share their perspectives and ideas on challenges and post-COVID-19 opportunities, as well as on any other relevant national issue. The results of these dialogues will be made available to the host country for their consideration in preparation for the Ninth Summit.

To inform these spaces, three concept documents on the challenges and opportunities, [available here](#), have been made available to civil society and social actors, and were submitted to states by the SIRG last October. These documents endeavor to promote dialogue and debate among the different actors of the Summits Process, with a view to identifying specific priorities and a common program for the Ninth Summit.

In preparation for the national dialogues, the Summits Secretariat organized *PrepTalks*, or spaces in which civil society and social actors from each country would have an opportunity to discuss and agree on inputs to be subsequently presented to their national Summits Coordinators or other government representatives during the respective national dialogue. The national dialogues and their preparatory sessions are scheduled to take place in January and February 2021. To date, 32 prep-talks and 16 national dialogues have taken place.

Video: The following link presents a video summarizing the primary work done by the 2020 Summits Secretariat: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WWwcKXb1EdE>

IV. Other

Finally, we would like to thank for the voluntary contributions received during this period by the United States, Nicaragua, Panama, and Peru, as well as the Latin American Development Bank (CAF), which have enabled the Summits Secretariat to continue carrying on its work in support of the Chair, the states, and the Summits Process in general. We hope that we will be able to continue counting on the support of all of you during the preparation, follow-up, and implementation of the Ninth Summit of the Americas, and onward.

ⁱ Document of Challenges and Needs for Technical Assistance of the States Participating in the VIII Summit of the Americas in Implementing the Lima Commitment.

http://www.summit-americas.org/SIRG/2019/27062019/Informe%20de%20Retos_EN.doc

ⁱⁱ More information on the four meetings of the JSWG High Authorities on the Impact of Covid-19 in the Americas can be found at: http://www.summit-americas.org/jswg_meet.html

ⁱⁱⁱ The official list of members, as well as further information on them, can be found at the following website: <http://www.summit-americas.org/anticorruptionhubs.htm>.