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**Integrated Response of the OAS General Secretariat to COVID-19**

**in Support of Member States, based on its Four Pillars**

In response to the crisis caused by coronavirus (COVID-19), the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (GS/OAS) is working to ensure the continuity of its important work under the four pillars of the OAS and has been adapting the 2020 programming of its various secretariats to support steps taken by member states in response to the COVID-19 crisis. The integrated response of the GS/OAS to the COVID-19 crisis seeks to pool the Organization's resources and capacities to support the efforts of member states and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) to combat COVID-19 and address its devastating consequences, particularly for poor and vulnerable populations.

Building on the Organization's strengths and its comparative advantage as an intergovernmental forum par excellence, the OAS has been facilitating dialogue and exchange of information and experiences among countries, international agencies, integration mechanisms, and regional banks in order to assist member states in addressing the current crisis and counteracting its negative effects from a common front. The actions of the OAS vis-à-vis COVID-19, referenced below by OAS pillar, are aligned with the OAS Strategic Plan and with the responses of its secretariats and specialized agencies.

Before addressing OAS actions, by pillar, vis-à-vis the pandemic, this document also underscores the OAS General Secretariat’s launching of “Post COVID-19: OAS Portal for Consultation, Forums, and Repository” [*repositorio* or Data Warehouse] as a medium for collective consideration of ways to ensure more rights for more people during and after the pandemic. The Portal can be accessed [here](https://www.oas.org/ext/en/main/covid-19/Home). Its goal is to provide a participatory and democratic forum for the presentation of proposals for shaping the post-COVID-19 world in such a way that, going forward, more people have access to more rights after the pandemic. The OAS General Secretariat will enrich the debate with contributions from international experts. The idea is that the suggestions and proposals that elicit the most support and rest on solid foundations will begin to take shape and eventually translate into projects ripe for appropriate financing and implementation.

**Democracy Pillar**

The Secretariat for Hemispheric Affairs (SHA) and the Secretariat for Strengthening Democracy (SSD) envisage a series of actions with respect to COVID-19. The SHA will focus these efforts on strengthening coordination between the entities of the JSWG in is area, civil society participation, and the capacities of States with a focus on e-governance and e-government through the use of networks in different areas, as well as working on initiatives with new technologies. The SSD aims to support member states in the development of mechanisms and tools to strengthen transparency in the processes of approval and execution of emergency public funds in accordance with existing sound practices in this area and in their dissemination, among other things.

**Secretariat for Hemispheric Affairs (SHA)**

* The OAS Secretary General, in his capacity as Chair of the Joint Summit Working Group (JSWG) and in coordination with PAHO, convened on Friday, April 3, 2020, the high authorities of the international and regional organizations that make up the JSWG to a virtual meeting to address their efforts against the pandemic and to discuss a coordinated and joint response in support of the needs and current actions of the member states, as well as part of their recovery process. The JSWG members agreed to meet periodically to ensure continued coordination and update the shared information that provides an overview of the actions of the inter-American community in support of the countries of the region. See [press release](https://www.oas.org/en/media_center/press_release.asp?sCodigo=E-031/20). The Summits Secretariat—as Technical Secretariat of the Summits Process—and the JSWG are preparing to hold these meetings of the high authorities of the JSWG and to follow up on them. In addition to the OAS and PAHO, the JSWG includes the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), PAHO, the World Bank, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), the Latin American Development Bank (CAF), and the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).
* More recently, the Second Meeting of High Authorities of the JSWG, convened by the OAS Secretary General and PAHO on April 29, 2020, enabled the authorities to update their overview of the state of the region with respect to the health, socio-economic, and governance–related impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, based on recent analyses by the entities involved. Speakers at the meeting underscored the importance of concerted action by international cooperation agencies to address the multiple impacts that countries in the region will be faced with. WHO mentioned the priority lines of action it is working on, including direct support to health ministries and other national authorities responsible for surveillance, laboratory training, medical care, prevention, and infectious disease control services, clinical management, and risk communication. Regarding the global supply chains for COVID-19, WHO mentioned its participation in international consortia and the Global Supply Chain Task Force for accessing supplies and logistics by using the WHO Strategic Fund to facilitate the purchase and customs clearance of the health supplies bought by countries. Thirty-three member states have signed agreements for using the Strategic Fund and 12 countries are currently using it to access COVID-19-related supplies ([Press release](https://www.oas.org/en/media_center/press_release.asp?sCodigo=E-044/20)).

During meetings, the JSWG organizations reported that they are moving swiftly to expedite their support for the countries confronted by the COVID-19 crisis, which includes the risk of a regional recession. In response to the challenges posed by the health crisis, the JSWG organizations, as well as subregional entities, presented concrete initiatives in support of countries in the region. Concrete details regarding that support from JSWG organizations can be found in document GTCC/doc.75/20, “Second Meeting of High Authorities of the Joint Summit Working Group on the Impact of COVID-19 in the Americas.”

* In addition, the Summits Secretariat will promote discussion and reflection on the pandemic and monitoring of the resources used to confront it through the [National Anti-corruption Hubs](http://www.summit-americas.org/anticorruptionhubs.htm) established with civil society and social actors to follow up on the "Lima Commitment: Democratic Governance against Corruption.” The hubs will be self-managed and the Summits Secretariat has offered them virtual spaces, to facilitate dialogue with government participation and JSWG entities, in addition to channeling their contributions to the States.
* Within the framework of the Summits Talks or on-line conversations pursuant to the Lima Commitment, meetings are being conducted to address the issue of preventing and combating corruption in connection with responses to COVID-19. The Summit Talk on May 6 entitled “Democratization of information: Open data in preventing and fighting corruption” explored the possibility of sharing experience and knowledge from a government, JSWG entities (OAS, ECLAC, and CAF), and civil society perspective regarding the use of open data to prevent and combat corruption, including the need to incorporate open data in actions designed to deal with the pandemic. Information available [here](http://summit-americas.org/SummitTalks/Summittalk_001_eng.html).
* The Secretariat for Hemispheric Affairs also seeks to strengthen the capacities of member states with a focus on e-governance and e-government. In this regard, the Department for Effective Public Management (DGPE/DEPM) could support member states by making use of its networks in the areas of civil registration, land registration, e-government and government procurement, as well as new technologies (e.g., blockchain and artificial intelligence), in order to promote the exchange of experiences in addressing COVID-19.
* The DEPM, as Technical Secretariat of the Inter-American Network on Government Procurement (INGP), is promoting efforts so that the countries of the region can access the Joint Negotiation Mechanism for the purchase of medicines, medical devices, and other goods implemented by the Council of Ministers of Health of Central America (COMISCA), based on the joint efforts of the OAS, IDB, CDB, and COMISCA. It is hoped that this will provide countries access to better prices and conditions for purchasing the materials they need to combat COVID-19. See [press release](https://www.oas.org/en/media_center/press_release.asp?sCodigo=E-034/20). Likewise, a plan of action is being drawn up to support member states in strengthening the capacities of officials in national public procurement agencies so that they have key tools to increase transparency, probity, accountability and innovation in their emergency procurement activities.
* The DEPM could also support the development of a range of electronic tools that are useful at this time, promote the opening up of data on COVID-19, set standards for access to information during the crisis, and systematize the emergence of innovative information management solutions for the purpose of combating the virus. It is proposed to systematize public policy (non-pharmacological) responses by the States, as well as cases and evidence in the area of behavioral science that might be useful to encourage social distancing practices and behaviors. Exchanges between local governments could be facilitated on experience with (non-pharmacological) measures implemented to support States in the area of communication protocols for crisis management. Finally, the School of Governance can develop and provide short modules to deliver virtual training in open governance, open data, government procurement, or key issues at this time.
* As a result, seven webinars have been scheduled in conjunction with the José Simeón Cañas Central American University, to hold pandemic-related discussions on open government, e-government, public management, public procurement and contracting, public policies, identity, and civil registry.
* Reports on the response by civil registry institutions and public procurement systems to the pandemic will also be produced. A microsite has been created on these public procurement systems, setting out the measures that Latin American and Caribbean countries have put in place and challenges they face because of this health situation.

**Secretariat for Strengthening Democracy (SSD)**

* Through the Department of Sustainable Democracy and Special Missions (DSDSM), the SSD will be able to support OAS member states in the development of mechanisms and tools to strengthen transparency in the processes of approval and execution of emergency public funds in accordance with existing good practices in this area, as well as in their dissemination.
* The International Commission against Impunity in El Salvador (CICIES) will implement a mechanism to audit and monitor the use of funds in public administration to combat the national emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic with a view to generating recommendations on institutional strengthening regarding quality, effectiveness, and legitimacy of public spending to combat the national emergency.
* The OAS International Commission against Impunity in El Salvador (CICIES) has deployed an initial team of 30 professionals from a variety of disciplines to implement an on-the-spot audit and monitoring mechanism on the use of funds allocated to address the national emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. For the next six months, those professionals will assist and follow up on reviews of financial statements, accounting records, ancillary records of inventories and fixed assets, procurement transactions, records of tenders, direct and freely arranged purchases (*por libre gestión*), supervision of works, and other types of transactions provided for under Salvadoran law, as well as the origin of the funds being executed under the regular or special budget, the Civil Defense and Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Fund (FOPROMID), and donations. The team will also assist with verification of the process for issuing, placing, and payment of bonds. In Haiti, the GS/OAS has formed partnerships with MIT, Harvard, and Digicel to promote the “Covid Safe Paths” mobile app, which enables users to access reliable information about the virus and to identify infection chains based on reported cases.
* With respect to the impact on the electoral cycle in the region, the Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation (DECO) is working on a guide with actions and measures to be considered by the electoral authorities of member states for holding elections in the context of a state of emergency and a public health crisis. In addition, a document will be prepared on the future of elections in the region and forms of remote voting.
* Within the framework of the "Community Driven Development" project in Haiti, implemented by the OEC with the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF), an initiative is underway to promote the creation of temporary jobs in Port-au-Prince; its objectives are (a) to raise awareness of COVID-19 and the precautionary measures that citizens can take and (b) to clean up different parts of the city in order to reduce levels of public health vulnerability in the city and thus prevent the spread of COVID-19.
* In response to possible situations of social protest arising from health, economic, and social crises in member states, the Department for the Promotion of Peace is considering implementation of conflict prevention activities and programs that include studies, exchanges on best practices, and the development of constructive dialogue processes in this area.
* In connection with the crisis triggered by the pandemic, a virtual dialogue will be conducted among the institutions that are signatories to the declaration of principles governing international electoral observation and views will be exchanged among the various civil society organizations in the region that take part in electoral observation activities.
* Despite the crisis, DECO is continuing to monitor and work with electoral processes in Suriname, the Dominican Republic, Bolivia, and Guyana.
* Another initiative under way is the First Virtual Encounter of Presidents of Legislative Branches, which aims to activate an innovative and timely form of dialogue and inter-parliamentary cooperation which helps forge opportunities for talks and agreements that, in the short run, provide protection for health, human development, and the rule of law, while, in the medium and long term, providing safeguards to ensure sustained, inclusive, more digital, and equitable economic development in the post-pandemic era. Currently work is being done on establishing a virtual platform through which the OAS and its Secretary General will seek to generate opportunities for encounters among the highest authorities in the legislatures of the Americas and thereby strengthen the part that legislative branches, political organizations, and other State institutions can play in the major efforts being undertaken by the member states to deal with the hurdles and challenges they will face after the pandemic.
* In a joint effort with the SSD and as part of the ongoing work of the OAS to sustain democracy in the member states:
* May 8: Virtual forum with electoral authorities in the region on elections during a pandemic;
* May 15: A seminar conducted over the Internet (webinar) on the importance of parliamentary political action during the crisis triggered by COVID-19;
* May 22: Representatives in the OAS Special Missions to El Salvador, Honduras, Colombia, and Belize-Guatemala will be discussing challenges and prospects in a post-COVID world; and
* May 29: Presentation on the pandemic and promoting peace.
* Establishment of a working group of young parliamentarians of the Americas, known for their ability to bring about change and their innovative approaches, who are using their position to contribute to initiatives aimed at reducing inequalities and promoting sustainable growth and responsible development. Through on-line meetings with them, the idea is to generate broad dialogue and an ample exchange of views aimed at identifying a common road map for working on concrete solutions to the digital divide, unemployment, food security, and cybersecurity issues facing the Hemisphere during and after COVID-19. Specifically, this project seeks to identify the representative emerging and consolidated leaders of the Americas.

**Human Rights Pillar**

In response to the differentiated impacts of the pandemic on people in vulnerable situations, the OAS supports member states in the formulation of public policies and the identification and exchange of good practices and guidelines that enable member states to address the special circumstances of vulnerable groups. The response to the crisis from the perspective of protecting and defending human rights includes actions by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM), the Inter-American Children's Institute (IIN) and the Secretariat for Access to Rights and Equity (SARE) of the OAS.

**Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR)**

With respect to the IACHR, it will continue (a) to carry out its central functions with respect to the individual petitions and cases system, precautionary measures, and monitoring of the human rights situation in the region; and (b) to pay particular attention to the prevention of gender violence and the protection of women in their role with children amid school closures and unemployment.

* On April 10, the IACHR adopted [resolution No.01/20](http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/decisions/pdf/Resolution-1-20-en.pdf), “Pandemic and Human Rights in the Americas.” As the IACHR indicated in a recent [press release](http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2020/073.asp), the resolution was adopted under the conviction that the measures taken by the States to address and contain COVID-19 must be based around full respect for human rights. Through the resolution the IACHR comprehensively addresses the situation created by the pandemic, lays out the standards of the inter-American human rights system, and formulates an array of recommendations to the States of the region for tackling COVID-19 from a human-rights perspective. The resolution is one of the main results of the Rapid and Integrated Response Coordination Unit for the COVID-19 pandemic (SACROI COVID-19) installed on March 27, 2020.
* The IACHR installed SACROI COVID-19 to strengthen the institutional capacities of the Commission to protect and defend fundamental freedoms and human rights in this context, especially the right to health and other economic, social, cultural and environmental rights (ESCER). The role of the SACROI is to monitor evidence of impacts and the response actions of States in the region, as well as to identify urgent cases within the individual petitions and cases system and requests for precautionary measures, in order to render timely assistance. The SACROI COVID-19 is working with a crisis response team coordinated by the Executive Secretary and made up of the heads of the special rapporteurships and other personnel assigned by the Executive Secretary.
* With a view to offering OAS member states a set of recommendations that enable them to tailor their assistance to the needs of specific groups and segments of the population, while safeguarding rights, the IACHR has published the following press releases in connection with SACROI COVID-19:
* [IACHR warns of the Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Children and Adolescents.](http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2020/090.asp)
* [IACHR Urges States to Guarantee the Rights of Older People during the COVID-19 Pandemic](http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2020/088.asp).
* [The IACHR calls on States to guarantee the rights of LGBTI people in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic](http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2020/081.asp).
* [IACHR and its SR FOE express concern about restrictions on freedom of expression and access to information in States’ response to the COVID-19 pandemic](http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/expression/showarticle.asp?lID=1&artID=1173).
* [The IACHR urges States to protect the human rights of migrants, refugees, and displaced persons in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic](http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2020/077.asp).
* [The IACHR calls on States to ensure that exceptional measures adopted to address the COVID-19 pandemic are compatible with their international obligations](http://www.oas.org/es/cidh/prensa/comunicados/2020/076.asp).
* [The IACHR calls on member states to adopt a gender perspective in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to combat sexual and domestic violence in this context](http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2020/074.asp).
* [IACHR adopts Resolution on Pandemic and Human Rights in the Americas](http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2020/073.asp).
* [The IACHR and its SRESCER express serious concern about the human rights situation in connection with the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Nicaragua](http://www.oas.org/es/cidh/prensa/comunicados/2020/072.asp).
* [The IACHR Calls on States to Provide Comprehensive Protection for the Lives of People with Disabilities During the COVID-19 Pandemic](http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2020/071.asp).
* [COVID-19: Governments must promote and protect access to and free flow of information during pandemic – International experts](http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/expression/showarticle.asp?lID=1&artID=1170).
* [The IACHR urges States to guarantee the health and integrity of persons deprived of liberty and their families in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic](http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2020/066.asp).
* [IACHR and its SRESCER Deeply Concerned about the Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Venezuela, Call for Safeguards for the Rights of Venezuelans around the Americas](http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2020/064.asp).
* [IACHR Implements Rapid and Integrated Response Coordination Unit for COVID-19 Pandemic Crisis Management](http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2020/063.asp).
* [IACHR and OSRESCER Urge States to Guarantee Comprehensive Protection for Human Rights and Public Health during the COVID-19 Pandemic](http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2020/060.asp).
* Within the framework of its SACROI COVID-19, the IACHR is now beginning to promote the standards and recommendations established in Resolution 1/10 and in the press releases for addressing specific issues and segments of the population.
* To facilitate access to information, the IACHR has launched a multimedia site with standards, recommendations, and human rights monitoring of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is available [here](http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/SACROI_COVID19/). It also publishes periodic newsletters reporting on the situation of COVID-19 in the Americas and the main press records regarding its impact on human rights, best practices, etc.
* The IACHR has also been stepping up dialogue with civil society organizations in the region in the form of meetings and forums for ongoing discussions.
* At the same time, the Commission adapted its work processes and announced a number of special measures to continue its essential functions in relation to petitions and cases and precautionary measures during the period of the pandemic and to minimize the impact on the system's users ([PR No. 059/20](http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2020/059.asp)) as well as to monitor the human rights situation in the region. Furthermore, in order to lend its support to efforts currently under way, the IACHR announced a one-month extension of its deadlines in the petitions, cases, and settlements system, due to the COVID-19 health emergency ([PR No. 83/20](http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2020/059.asp)).

**Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM)**

* Identification of women's differentiated needs and impacts for the design of public policies, for which the CIM has led virtual meetings with ministers and high authorities on women's rights and gender equality, representatives of civil society, and the Committee of Experts of the Mechanism to Follow Up on Implementation of the Convention of Belém do Pará (MESECVI). Country-specific challenges and experiences were identified in relation to the pandemic; an increase in, and risk of, violence against women due to the lockdown; design of gender-sensitive mitigation measures; and good practices in equitable sharing of household responsibilities.
* Elaboration of a repository of good gender-related practices in response to COVID-19: Identification and promotion of the design of public policies with a gender perspective in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in the areas identified as priorities: violence against women, care, economic measures, access to health, and collection of information and statistics.
* Preparation with the MESECVI of strategic action guidelines on prevention of domestic violence to minimize the differentiated impact experienced by women victims of violence and to diminish the effects of COVID-19, in addition to establishing general principles for guaranteeing the human rights of women and girls within the framework of health measures.
* Implementation of a campaign on women's leadership within the framework of the Inter-American Task Force on Women's Leadership, as well as promoting the participation of women ministers, co-responsibility, and equitable distribution of tasks, by means of information material to draw attention to the differentiated needs of women.
* Launching of the document “COVID-19 in Women’s Lives: Reasons to Recognize the Differential Impacts.” That document, available [here](http://www.oas.org/es/cim/docs/ArgumentarioCOVID19-ES.pdf), responds to the needs that the CIM identified during meetings with the Ministers and high-level authorities on women and gender, experts from the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI) and women's organizations. It offers a broad overview of the differentiated impacts of the crisis on women, paying special attention to the most vulnerable groups. In addition, it proposes guidelines for the design of actions and public policies based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination against women and the need to implement affirmative action measures.

**Inter-American Children’s Institute (IIN)**

* In the area of promotion, protection, and respect for the rights of children and adolescents, the IIN-OAS promotes specific recommendations and good practices in member states and civil society organizations to incorporate the specific situations generated by the pandemic in this population.

**Secretariat for Access to Rights and Equity (SARE)**

* Organization of a series of webinars on (a) public policy formulation in the area of health with a human rights approach, inclusion, and intersectionality; and (b) a differentiated approach in responses to COVID-19 by vulnerable group: migrants, refugees, persons with disabilities, LGBTI people, people of African descent, and indigenous people. As a product of the webinar held on March 24 entitled "Access to the Right to Health during the Coronavirus Pandemic" in cooperation with Georgetown University’s O'Neill Institute, on April 7, SARE published the "Practical Guide to Inclusive Rights-Focused Responses to COVID-19 in the Americas." The guide (available [here](http://www.oas.org/es/sadye/publicaciones/GUIA_SPA.pdf) in Spanish) offers OAS member states a series of tools to consider responses that take into account the particular circumstances of vulnerable groups.
* Organization of high-level thematic dialogues: a virtual seminar on "Social Protection Policies to mitigate the economic and social effects of the COVID 19 pandemic" is planned for the ministries of social development, with an emphasis on policies and programs aimed at meeting the needs of the most vulnerable populations; older persons, people with disabilities, and people living in poverty and extreme poverty.
* Assistance to migrants and refugees at the community level for addressing their specific needs during the pandemic. Virtual consultations with civil society organizations and other social actors to identify their needs during the pandemic.
* Facilitation of a Special Meeting of the Inter-American Network of High Authorities on Policies for Afro-descendant Populations (RIAFRO) on April 24, 2020, with the participation of high authorities on Afro-descendant affairs from **10** countries in the region (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, and Peru), to map the main ways in which this population is hit by the pandemic and to propose concrete measures to be applied within States and in cooperation with multilateral organizations to protect their rights.
* Organization of the Virtual Round Table Discussion on May 14, 2020 on “The new ‘normalcy’ post COVID-19 and persons with disabilities: toward joint and comprehensive responses,” with a view to documenting the insights of key players in governments, multilateral organizations, and civil society as to how States can respond to the new context posed by COVID-19 for persons with disabilities, with a human rights approach geared to narrowing gaps and reverting trends that tend to normalize inequality.
* Organization of a Facebook Live session on “Youth and Inclusion in the COVID-19 Context” to listen to young people themselves, particularly those pertaining to other vulnerable groups, young people with disabilities, Afro-descendants, indigenous communities, LGBTIQ communities, those living in poverty, and others; hear how they are being impacted by the crisis triggered by the pandemic; and garner their proposals to governments, from a cross-cutting and inclusive perspective. One of the key questions raised is: if young people were in charge of government, how would they handle the situation? That online session will take place shortly.
* Facilitation and convening of two meetings of authorities in member states’ National Disability Councils to share analyses of current and post COVID-19 scenarios and the inclusion of persons with disabilities, focusing on States’ best public policy practices for including this segment of the population. The idea is to hold a meeting for Spanish-speaking countries and another for the Caribbean. Dates still pending.
* To help reach political consensus regarding poverty and extreme poverty-related matters, a virtual seminar is being planned on “Social Protection Policies to Mitigate the Economic and Social Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic” for ministries of social development, which will focus on policies and programs for attending to the needs of the most vulnerable segments of the population: older adults, persons with disabilities, and those living in poverty and extreme poverty.
* Technical cooperation will continue to be provided to ministries of social development to facilitate the sharing of information on the design and implementation of social protection policies to address the economic and social fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the Inter-American Social Protection Network (IASPN/RIPSO) and its “peer review” mechanism, SARE will launch a cooperation exchange between ministries of social development that uses the standardized methodology of the DGPE/OAS, through the MECIGEP, to support experts who are designing and implementing the policies and programs to mitigate the effects of the pandemic.
* Assistance to migrants and refugees at the community level for addressing their specific needs during the pandemic, in cooperation with government authorities and strategic partners, such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the  Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).
* Currently being drafted: “Inclusion and Equity in the COVID-19 Era: Series of Technical Notes”, to document best practices and solutions with an inclusive and human rights perspective being implemented by States in response to the challenges posed by the pandemic.
* Another plan is to design a survey of State Parties and other key actors focusing on the situation of vulnerable groups in connection with the pandemic, with a view to culling information, best practices, and previously unpublished data that could serve as a basis for public policies with a differential approach.
* On-line consultations will also be conducted with civil society organizations and other social actors with a view to ascertaining their needs during the pandemic.

**Multidimensional Security Pillar**

* Pursuant to the mandates assigned to its various units, the Secretariat for Multidimensional Security is providing member states with tools for responding directly to the health emergency and carrying out activities focusing on emerging security risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and the lessons to be learned from both the pandemic itself and national responses to it.
* Thus, the Virtual Community for Emergency and Security Systems was launched on April 23, 2020 to facilitate access to information, material of interest, and digital emergency response tools against COVID-19. It was created by the Department of Public Security, in its role as Technical Secretariat of the ministerial process on public security in the Americas (MISPA). It was accompanied by an on-line discussion forum (*conversatorio virtual*) for authorities and experts in emergency and security services. A series of discussion forums are being arranged on a number of public security topics, including discussion in May 2020 on “Preparation for Emergency and Security Systems in the Region for Addressing Natural Disasters in the COVID-19 Era” and “Domestic Violence during COVID-19.”
* On May 5, 2020, the Executive Secretariat of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) held an on-line training session entitled “COVID-19 and drug use treatment” to analyze the impacts of the COVD-19 pandemic on problematic drug use treatment programs and to make recommendations about how to continue caring for drug users. That activity was geared to CICAD member state commissioners, national drug commissions in the member states, treatment centers, health care services, civil society organizations, and the general public. In addition, this Secretariat is preparing a series of webinars on best practices for treating persons with substance use disorders and in vulnerable circumstances, in connection with the social isolation measures adopted in response to the pandemic, and in order to better ascertain the impact of COVID-19 on substance users. Training courses are also being crafted for countries wishing to set up telephone helplines for drug users and their families.
* With a view to focusing attention on emerging security risks and combating new challenges and criminal activities associated with an emergency of this kind, the Department against Transnational Organized Crime (DTOC) has organized two round table discussions, scheduled to take place in May 2020, to analyze organized criminal activities in the Americas in connection with the pandemic, how organized crime is adapting in ways that will allow it to continue operating during the pandemic, and emerging risks relating to systems for combating money laundering and the financing of terrorism.
* The Executive Secretariat of the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (CICTE) expanded its on-line training catalogues to include webinars on the current situation, including activities focusing on security issues related to teleworking, protection of critical infrastructure, and digital assets. Jointly with other dependencies of the General Secretariat and institutional partners, it is also conducting a series of on-line discussions, with cross-cutting approaches, such as the webinar on “Tourism security and COVID-19”, organized jointly with the OAS Executive Secretariat for Integral Development (SEDI) and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI); the webinar on “Cybersecurity, Privacy, and Digital Rights,” with the participation of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and partners such as Citizen Lab and the International Human Rights Law Program of the University of Toronto; and the webinar entitled “Pandemic: Front-line Borders” with the participation of experts from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).
* Develop, under the leadership of the DTOC, response-focused initiatives to combat new challenges and criminality linked to the context of a public health emergency, including counterfeiting and trafficking in illegal products (e.g. fake medicines, counterfeit masks, and substandard disinfectants), the risk of corrupt practices in the management of special emergency funds, financial crime, and COVID-19-related internet fraud.
* Development of a summary of guidelines and good practices for the care of people with substance use disorders in the context of social distancing measures adopted in the wake of the pandemic; training and advisory services for countries wishing to implement helplines for drug users and their families; and development of a guide to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on substance users, people with substance use disorders, and other vulnerable populations.
* Training modules on virtual platforms for counter-narcotics agencies in the region, as well as the creation of virtual forums to advance the negotiation and development of national strategies on drugs online with support from CICAD to member states.

**Integral Development Pillar**

The Executive Secretariat for Integral Development (SEDI) and the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL) are promoting actions in priority areas such as competitiveness, labor and employment, education, tourism, and information and communication technologies. Trust for the Americas and the Young Americas Business Trust are also engaged in integral development activities.

**Executive Secretariat for Integral Development (SEDI)**

* SEDI is continuing its three-pronged commitment to helping member states cope with the challenges posed by the pandemic: (I) by tailoring its current project portfolio to lending support to member states’ efforts to address COVID-19; (2) by exploring new projects that can quickly be incorporated; and (3) by reaching out to multisectoral partners to supplement its efforts.
* SEDI will provide member states with periodic updates regarding its work program, including its list of resources and events and initiatives under way. SEDI is making headway with the development of its one-stop-shop specifically focusing on those resources and initiatives. As it does so, it will be sharing information about events, programs, opportunities for cooperation, webinars, and articles.

1. Making the most of partnerships with the private sector

SEDI is working with Facebook on an initiative to help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) address the challenges posed by COVID-19 and prepare for the post-pandemic era. There will be round table discussions and on-line courses focusing on the sectors hardest hit by the pandemic. Those activities will be conducted on *Live Première*. The videos will be made available so that micro enterprises and SMEs and the member states can continue to have access to information and training.

*On-line roundtables*: The OAS and Facebook will coordinate the participation of ministers, vice ministers, other policymakers, experts, and institutional partners in activities in support of the MSME sector. The idea is to foster the sharing of experiences, policies, programs, and possible options to ensure that MSMEs continue operating and/or recover from the economic crisis, while helping them to identify the main challenges they face and addressing their concerns.

*On-line courses*: Via its Facebook for Business page, Facebook is preparing to launch Boost with Facebook training in its set of resilience games and tools. Boost with Facebook is bringing the MSME community together to offer it on-line networking opportunities and a variety of courses designed to help MSMEs make the most of the set of apps, tools, and services that Facebook provides to help them reach their business expansion goals.

2. Amazon Web Services (AWS): SEDI and AWS have combined efforts to provide the following opportunities to member states:

* *Three blogs* to provide guidance and make offers to governments, educational establishments, and non-profits regarding teleworking opportunities;
* *IT solutions for member states*: Amazon Chime Communications Services is a platform similar to Zoom and other on-line meeting rooms. For the first three months (April through June), member states can access Chime cost-free;
* *Educational resources*: Amazon can help member states shift their educational systems to the cloud in order to allow distance learning. Amazon has credits that States can use to implement this initiative. Take Amazon’s work with Colombia, for instance. There, the Aprende Colombia educational program migrated to the cloud to give eight million students access to distance education. Amazon stands ready to provide member states with a limited amount of support with digitizing curricula;
* *Educate.com*: This is an already existing educational platform in Amazon with study programs and recourses to facilitate the learning process. For member states, it is cost-free. Currently, persons with an “edu” domain can access the program. However, AWS will make special codes available to enable citizens of member states to register using regular e-mail addresses;
* *Virtual security systems*: Amazon has the capacity to provide software for a virtual security system enabling member states to allow access/authorization to citizens needing to go out during lockdowns;
* *Surveillance and data analysis*: Together with its global partner, Palantir, which specializes in Big Data analysis providing member states with surveillance information in real time (as it does, in the case of COVID surveillance, for the Centers for Disease Control in the United States and the United Kingdom’s National Health Institute), Amazon is willing to organize webinars with member states on how Palantir works, with a view to gaging interest and assessing needs. In this case, States would have to pay for the service and negotiate directly with Palantir;
* Amazon’s audio books: are available for everyone cost-free. Citizens/students can download whatever books they need. Available here.

3. Identification of capacities and innovative approaches to boosting competitiveness. Via SEDI’s Inter-American Competitiveness Network (RIAC), and with a view to fostering partnerships between countries, the OAS issued a call to identify and share products and innovative services based on ways to address some of the most pressing needs triggered by COVID-19 (low-cost ventilators, masks, disinfectants, mobile apps, open collaborative platforms). Access to the RIAC Ideas Accelerator is available here. The Americas Competitiveness Forum (ACF) will also focus on the policies and institutional capacities needed to address the short, medium, and long-term economic fallouts from COVID-19. The ACF affords an opportunity to redefine imperatives and the way competitiveness and economic development in the Americas are tacked over the next decade.

4. Technological resources available to all: SEDI is working with the authorities on the Inter-American Committee on Science and Technology (COMCyT) to provide innovative and technology-based responses to the current and future challenges posed by COVID-19. One specific proposal, under Prospecta Américas, is to create the Inter-American Network for Modeling and Simulating Emergency Situations. The idea is for the Network to use evidence based on scientific data to track the evolution of COVID-19 in each country and accurately predict best and worst scenarios. Such a tool would enable authorities to take informed decisions in current and future emergencies. In addition, COMCyT and the next Meeting of Ministers and High Authorities on the subject, to be held in Jamaica on November 10-11, 2020, will provide a platform to highlight scientific and technological solutions to the most pressing challenges facing member states, especially those relating to COVID-19. Governments, the private sector, academia, and NGOs will all have an opportunity to propose solutions.

5. Sharing of knowledge and best practices: Member states will have access and opportunities to learn about and share projects, experiences, and other resources that might serve to deploy, replicate, or adapt initiatives designed to mitigate the challenges posed by COVID-19, reactivate economies, and promote the productive sectors. The virtual meetings, webinars, and online workshops already sponsored by SEDI in April included: Post-COVID Prospects for the Electricity Sector in Central America and the Caribbean (April 8); Analysis of Air Pollution during the Global COVID-19 Crisis (April 23); Leadership in the COVID-19 Era; Decision-making in the midst of Uncertainty, organized by RIAC’s Group of Experts on Subnational Competitiveness (GTECS) (April 24); the cost-free series of on-line lectures on crisis management (April 27); the online seminar and discussion of “The Effects of COVID-19 on Indigenous Communities and Tourism” (April 29); Science, Technology, and Innovation to Mitigate the Impacts of COVID-19: best practices of members and partners of the Inter-American Committee on Science and Technology (COMCyT) (April 30); and Reflections on Mediating Distance Learning for Parents: an opportunity to practice science in early childhood, organized by the Inter-American Teacher Education Network (ITEN) (April 30).

6. Development resources and member states’ responses to COVID-19: SEDI has compiled the following set of resources to help member states identify best practices and models:

* *Economic development*: an inventory of measures announced by member states for mitigating the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). Inventory available [here](https://mailchi.mp/691bfc840603/june-msme-nesletter-12269969?e=fa5d36b6fb).
* *Work*: The Inter-American Network for Labor Administration (RIAL) put together a Portfolio of Labor Ministry Responses to COVID-19. Available [here](http://rialnet.org/?q=en/responses_COVID19), on the RIAL website.
* *Education*: The Technical Secretariat of the Inter-American Committee on Education (CIE) has compiled a list of Resources for Ministries of Education to address the COVID-19 crisis. Available [here](https://portal.portaleducoas.org/es/node/1223?lang=en).
* *Competitiveness*: The Inter-American Competitiveness Network (RIAC) is putting together a list of initiatives undertaken by countries to address COVID-19. Available [here](http://riacnet.org/home/en/).
* *Tourism*: SEDI has compiled a list of private and public sector initiatives to help States assess their own situation and plan accordingly. More information available [here](http://www.oas.org/fpdb/press/Tourism-specific-support-CONSOLIDATED-DOCUMENT-ENGLISH-Rev-1MR-(003).pdf).
* *Ports*: The Secretariat of the Inter-American Committee on Ports (S/CIP) has compiled a list of strategic actions, guidelines, and recommendations culled from its members, associates, and strategic partners in the ports sector to help keep merchandise flowing while protecting essential workers. The national port authorities’ recommendations and responses are available [here](http://portalcip.org/home/covid-19-announcement/?lang=en).

7. Overcoming hurdles and expanding access to education:

* In response to the COVID-19 pandemic the Rowe Fund is offering US$2,000 grants to scholars, together with an interest-free loan. The idea is to help international students from Latin America and the Caribbean complete their studies in the United States by helping to cover emergency-related costs, as well as enrolment and living expenses. Application forms are available [here](http://www.oas.org/en/rowefund/default.asp).

8. Strengthening of teacher or teaching skills:

* SEDI is negotiating special agreement for scholarship and training programs with partner universities, with grants for online programs and courses in the next academic year throughout the region. As of May, SEDI has begun offering 50 cost-free training courses supported by strategic partners and ministries of education in the region, as a way to boost teachers’ skills in the Americas.
* The [Educational Portal of the Americas](https://portal.portaleducoas.org/denied?lang=en) and the ProFuturo Fondation will be launching a series of videos publicizing points of view, experiences, and recommendations by ministries of education and educational establishments regarding virtual and digital education.
* Through its Inter-American Teacher Education Network (ITEN), SEDI will conduct a series of webinars for school teachers, teacher trainers, and other interested parties on tools, resources, and strategies for teaching science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) courses during quarantining. The special topics covered will include specific STEM content, as well as more general resources that can be used by teachers in other disciplines as well.

9. Cooperation for security: SEDI is also supporting efforts by the OAS Department of Public Security respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Educational Portal of the Americas is offering a virtual network to facilitate the sharing, systematization, and consultation of information on matters relating to security and criminal justice, emergency and security systems, crime observatories, and prisons.

10. Building sustainable development practices and approaches into responses to COVID-19:

* SEDI and the University of San Luis de Potosi (USALP) have established a working group with experts on health risks management and experts in the OAS water resources team to implement post-COVID projects in rural areas. The idea to prevent the disease spreading in highly productive agricultural communities.
* SEDI is also looking into opportunities for collaboration with the United Nations Environment Program and Georgia State University on developing a Plan of Action to help Caribbean member states institutionalize the use of Geographical Information Systems in epidemiological surveillance. The initiative was prompted by best practices in India with using GIS and other ICTs for disease surveillance.
* [Water projects](http://www.oas.org/en/sedi/dsd/IWRM/default.asp) (in the Río Bravo, La Plata, and Trifinio region) are directly related to mitigation of the CVID-19 crisis. The approach of dry seasons will mean that less water is available for washing hands, which makes execution of these projects all the more vital. SEDI is negotiating with donors to build capacities in the countries involved.

Articles and analyses: SEDI’s experts in sustainable development have written an article describing how SEDI will take the Inter-American Sustainable Development Program as a basis for helping OAS member states to address a number of sustainable development challenges associated with the pandemic. Details available [here.](http://www.oas.org/fpdb/press/The-PIDS-and-the-Pandemic-Final-(002).pdf)

**Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL)**

* CITEL has compiled a database listing actions taken by OAS member states and the productive sector using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in response to COVID-19. That initiative included establishing a series of recommendations for the most important areas. In addition, CITEL has been holding roundtable discussions that have provided more in-depth insight into the perspectives of all the actors involved, the scope of actions undertaken, and best ways to go about them. The actions have been compiled and classified on the basis of the following recommendation:
* Encourage expansion of Internet and other telecommunication services coverage, especially in areas without access.  This includes the expeditious granting of permits for temporary spectrum use and for the deployment of infrastructure to extend network coverage. Likewise, to allow the rapid entry of telecommunications equipment potentially through the revision of standardization and import processes in accordance with CITEL's mandate.
* Prioritizing connectivity for strategic institutions such as hospitals, health care centers, and food collection facilities, as well as key infrastructure, including ports, airports, roads, power plants, and borders.
* Promotion of measures to encourage rational use of the Internet. These actions include strategies to disseminate rational Internet use habits and constant monitoring of the evolution of network traffic to determine additional actions aimed at ensuring proper service provision. These actions are more effective if the various industry players are involved.
* Prioritization of support, operation, maintenance and deployment of additional telecommunication network capacity, including the movement of technical network personnel and working in coordination with utilities and other authorities to address potential service outages.
* Continue maintenance and monitoring of both physical and virtual telecommunications infrastructure. Prevent telecommunication services infrastructure being compromised in these times when they are essential.

**Trust for the Americas**

* During the last three weeks, the Trust for the Americas activated a protocol for identifying the status of the 211 technology and innovation centers with which it works in more than 20 countries. Although more than 80 percent of them are closed due to regulations and laws specific to each country, 20 percent continue to provide training remotely and online. That is why the Trust has ensured that most of its resources can be accessed remotely via its "virtual classroom" and "toolkit" of online resources and social networks through which it provides real-time training. This content is exclusively for the Trust's programs and for its local partners and beneficiaries. The Trust is providing an average of one online training course every three days with an average attendance of 200 people. In three weeks it carried out three violence prevention courses, two ideathons in Jamaica, an entrepreneurship program in Mexico, a CTC training in the Dominican Republic, courses on the use of the Trust's information systems, a virtuality week in Costa Rica, and an open training on the use of Microsoft's TEAMs system for online work and collaboration.
* With regard to prevention of violence against women and girls, and as part of the Trust's flagship program in Mexico, "VIVE", the training course for prevention of violence against women and girls and the violence prevention manual that supports this training have been made available to the public. In order to make it easily accessible to any kind of audience, this program is being carried out on Facebook Live every week. In just three weeks more than 600 people have accessed violence prevention training.
* In order to support strategic communication campaigns and provide accurate and reliable information on the pandemic, the Trust is helping the teams working on Open Government to disseminate relevant information on coronavirus prevention. Two programs have been successfully implemented in Costa Rica and Belize.
* The Trust has adapted all social networks for the dissemination of computer graphics, graphic materials, and messages directly provided by PAHO. The reach and impact of its messages disseminated via social networks has increased almost 40 percent compared to March 2019. In March alone, it directly reached more than 95,000 people, in part due to close collaboration with the Women's Day campaign with messages from the CIM.

**Young Americas Business Trust (YABT)**

Pursuant to its goal of promoting the social and economic development of young people in OAS member states and in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the YABT has reformulated its pillars of Youth Participation, Training, Entrepreneurship, and Innovation.

* With respect to participation, and in cooperation with the Summits of the Americas Secretariat, YABT heads the Youth Forum of the Americas process, the official channel for youth participation in the Summits Process, the OAS General Assembly and Ministerial Meetings. To ensure continuity and effective youth participation, YABT developed and systematized the consultation process based on discussion of priorities set by governments and young people. Those national dialogues are conducted online and their outcomes, conclusions, and recommendations are channeled to the member states, the Summits Secretariat, and other OAS secretariats.
* As regards Training, and in coordination with the Department of Human Development, YABT is reinforcing its virtual training content and formats with a view to lending support to young people who have not yet systematically adjusted their programs, businesses, or projects in line with the technological and social distance requirements imposed by COVID-19. In addition, the idea is to help develop solutions that will help mitigate the social and economic fallout from the pandemic. With regard to the Entrepreneurship and Innovation pillar, each year YABT organizes the Talent and Innovation Competition of the Americas (TIC Americas), through which young innovators and entrepreneurs in the region craft solutions that are then implemented, financed, and scaled up using the support platform ecosystem generated by the OAS General Assembly. Due to COVID-19, the final stages of the competition will be conducted online, with a larger number of young people and stakeholders participating. The portfolio of projects that have been validated or are being implemented is geared to the challenge of economic recovery from the pandemic.
* Finally, through InnovaAction Challenge: Innovation in Actions to Address COVID-19, YABT is coming up with efforts based on the experience generated by TIC Americas that will be further developed in cooperation with the Summits Secretariat in order to meet the needs and challenges posed by COVID-19. The priorities were set by the young people and submitted through a consultation process leading to the Summit of the Americas. InnovaAction Challenge will lead to the further identification and development of social, economic, and technology-based solutions at the implementation stage.

**Office of the Assistant Secretary General**

* The Office of the Assistant Secretary General coordinates a group of regional organizations and international financial institutions established to expand cooperation and identify synergies in different areas of work. They include the Central American Integration System (SICA), the Secretariat for Economic Integration (SIECA), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), CAF, ECLAC, CABEI, IDB, PAHO, and the World Bank.
* Also, through the Office of the Assistant Secretary General, the OAS national offices provide regular updates on the pandemic in member states, incorporating official government reports on the number of cases and deaths, both suspected and confirmed, as well as official decrees on emergency assistance. During this time, a virtual environment has also been provided for member states' discussions on the pandemic within the framework of the Permanent Council and subsidiary organs.

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