

Civil Society Collaborating to Build the Hemispheric Agenda: Participation in the Summits of the Americas through Deliberative Forums

What is “civil society collaborating to build the hemispheric agenda”?

In order to support substantive civil society participation in the Summits of the Americas, Partners of the Americas, the Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL), the Inter-American Democracy Network (IADN), and Corporación PARTICIPA, in collaboration with civil society organizations (CSOs) from across the Hemisphere, have developed theme-based online deliberative forums on Indigenous Peoples, transparency/anti-corruption, sustainable development/environment, peace building, citizen participation, education, democracy and political parties, and labor. This initiative builds on years of work by multiple organizations and complements the *Civil Society Follow-Up to the Quebec Plan of Action* project – a national level strategy that focuses on monitoring specific indicators for implementation of five critical Quebec City mandates.

Why is this initiative important?

CSOs should participate actively in the Summit process in order to: 1) provide input to government leaders as they make agreements that help shape the hemisphere’s development; and 2) leverage decisions made at the Summits to forward national-level policy development.

The goal of the online deliberations is for CSOs to work together to generate concrete strategies for the implementation of existing Summit mandates. These forums will complement government and Organization of American States (OAS)-driven civil society spaces, and the results of the deliberations will be shared with decision makers at SIRG and ministerial meetings, as well as at the OAS General Assembly, for the development of the 2005 Argentina Summit of the Americas Plan of Action.

Who can participate?

Participation in the online forums is open to CSOs from throughout the Hemisphere. The deliberations will be conducted in Spanish with weekly summaries in English and Spanish. Those who do not write Spanish are encouraged to participate in English.

How will the online forums work?

CSO experts in the eight themes will moderate the deliberations. These CSOs include Transparency International (TI), Regional Coordination of Economic and Social Research (CRIES), Fundación Poder Ciudadano/IADN and Agora Democrática, Tulane University’s Institute for Environmental Law and Policy and Fundación Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (FARN), Fundación para la Paz y Democracia (FUNPADEM), the Center for Civic Education and Fundación Presencia, Corporación PARTICIPA, and the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and Organización de Naciones y Pueblos Indígenas en Argentina (ONPIA).

Using a deliberative process, the moderators will encourage participants to consider the benefits and tradeoffs of different policy options. The five-week online forums will allow participants time to reflect on issues, engage with others on their ideas, and seek more information. Background papers on the Summits and on each theme will provide a common starting point for participants.

When will the online forums take place?

April 4-May 6, 2005

How can I get involved?

For more information, visit <http://foroscumbres.redinter.org> or contact Partners of the Americas at foroscumbres@partners.net. Information is also available on the OAS Civil Society Web page at <http://www.civil-society.oas.org>.