



# Delegation Report



## Parliamentary Gathering on the occasion of the Ninth Summit of the Americas

*“Building a Sustainable, Resilient, and Equitable Future”*

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, USA - JUNE 6-7, 2022

# Delegation Report

*Parliamentary Gathering on the occasion of the Ninth Summit of the Americas*

***“Building a Sustainable, Resilient, and Equitable Future”***

*Los Angeles, California, USA - June 6-7, 2022*

## Contents

---

Introduction.....	2
Summit of the Americas.....	2
Parliamentary Gathering on the Occasion of the Ninth Summit of the Americas.....	2
ParlAmericas .....	3
Trinidad and Tobago’s Membership and Participation.....	3
Delegation.....	4
Parliamentary Gathering on the Occasion of the IX Summit of the Americas .....	5
Theme: Building a Sustainable, Resilient and Equitable Future.....	5
Day 1 Sessions: .....	5
Opening Session .....	5
Strengthening Democratic Resilience to Combat Corruption.....	8
Application of Democratic Principles to improve Green Energy Commitments .....	9
Trends in Digital Transformation to promote Transparency and Counter Disinformation.....	11
Building Consensus to Support Inclusive Democratic Engagement.....	12
Day 2 Sessions: .....	13
Democratic Resilience During Health Crises .....	13
Empowering and Enhancing Women’s Inclusion in Parliament .....	15
Attendance.....	15

## Introduction

---

### Summit of the Americas

1. The Summit of the Americas are institutionalized gatherings of the heads of state and government of the Western Hemisphere where leaders discuss common policy issues, affirm shared values and commit to concerted actions at the national and regional level to address continuing and new challenges faced in the Americas<sup>1</sup>.

2. It promotes cooperation towards region-wide, inclusive economic growth and prosperity based on shared respect for democracy, fundamental freedoms, the dignity of labour, and free enterprise. Civil society organizations, representatives of indigenous communities, civic leaders, business executives and young entrepreneurs also meet at each Summit to promote dialogue and plans of action to address the challenges and opportunities facing the people of the Americas. To that end, the following three (3) official stakeholder forums also form part of the Ninth Summit:

- (i) The Ninth Civil Society Forum;
- (ii) The Sixth Young Americas Forum; and
- (iii) The Fourth CEO Summit of the Americas.

3. The theme for the Ninth Summit was ***“Building a sustainable, resilient and equitable future.”*** Based on a consultation process involving the United States of America (the host country and Chair of the Summit Process) and the governments and representatives of civil society and the private sector of the region, the following five priority topics were identified to be addressed:

- (i) democratic governance,
- (ii) our green future;
- (iii) accelerating the clean energy transition;
- (iv) health and resilience; and
- (v) digital transformation.

### Parliamentary Gathering on the Occasion of the Ninth Summit of the Americas

4. There being no formal forum for parliamentarians, a parliamentary gathering on the occasion of the Ninth Summit was organised by the House Democracy Partnership of the United States House of

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.summit-americas.org/default\\_en.htm](http://www.summit-americas.org/default_en.htm) accessed on: June 21, 2022

Representatives (HDP) in partnership with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI), and in collaboration with ParlAmericas.

## ParlAmericas

5. ParlAmericas is an institution comprised of thirty-five (35) national legislatures from North, Central and South America and the Caribbean.

6. It is run by a Board of Directors composed of twenty-one (21) seats with core objectives to strengthen the role of legislatures in democratic development and to promote harmonization of legislation. This is achieved through the promotion of parliamentary diplomacy in the Inter-American System and by facilitating the exchange of parliamentary good practices through cooperative political dialogue on topical issues<sup>2</sup>.

7. The institution delivers its mandate through three permanent networks:

- i. the *Open Parliament Network* which advances the principles of transparency, accountability, citizen participation, ethics and probity;
- ii. the *Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality* which advocates for women's political empowerment and the application of a gender lens in legislative work, and
- iii. the *Parliamentary Network on Climate Change* which promotes policies and legislative measures to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change.

8. Since 2001, in advance of the III Summit of the Americas held in Québec City, Canada, ParlAmericas has led the participation of Parliaments in the Summits of the Americas process by cohosting with the legislature of the host country, a parliamentary engagement on the margins of the meeting of Heads of States.

## Trinidad and Tobago's Membership and Participation

9. The Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is one of the thirteen (13) legislatures that represent the Caribbean region and two of its members currently hold the following Executive positions:

- ***Vice-President, ParlAmericas*** - held by the Honourable Bridgid Annisette-George, MP, Speaker of the House; and

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.parlAmericas.org/en/about/board-of-directors.aspx> : accessed on June 21, 2022

- ***Vice-President of the ParlAmericas Climate Change Network for the Caribbean*** - held by Senator Anthony Vieira.

10. By letter dated May 19, 2022, from Senator Blanca Ovelar, President of ParlAmericas, an invitation was extended to the Speaker to join the ParlAmericas parliamentary delegation to the ***Parliamentary Gathering on the occasion of the IX Summit of the Americas*** to be held in Los Angeles, California during the period June 6 to 7, 2022.

### **Delegation**

11. The invitation was accepted, and the following persons comprised the local delegation:
- i. Honourable Bridgid Annisette-George, MP, Speaker of the House;
  - ii. Senator Anthony Vieira; and
  - iii. Mrs Angelique Massiah, Parliamentary Legal Officer.



Hon. Bridgid Annisette-George, MP, Speaker of the House and Vice-President of ParlAmericas  
and Senator Anthony Vieira at the Opening Session, June 6, 2022

## Parliamentary Gathering on the Occasion of the IX Summit of the Americas

---

### Theme: Building a Sustainable, Resilient and Equitable Future

12. The Parliamentary Gathering on the occasion of the Ninth Summit of the Americas centred on the theme *‘Building a Sustainable, Resilient, and Equitable Future’* and was organised into sessions which provided a platform for delegates to share their experiences on topics that impact the hemisphere.

### Day 1 Sessions:

#### Opening Session

13. The session was moderated by Ms. Kristen Sample, Director of Democratic Governance, NDI and welcome remarks were delivered by Ambassador Derek Mitchell, President of NDI; Dr. Daniel Twining, President, IRI; and Mr. Justin Wein, Chief of Staff for HDP Chairman David Price.

#### *Ambassador Derek Mitchell, President NDI*

14. According to Ambassador Mitchell, legislators play an important role in democracies, particularly in relation to oversight of the executive. He stated that, “without oversight, there would inevitably be abuse of power and corruption”. For these reasons he opined that conversations among legislators from different legislatures are important as they serve not only to consider solutions to common challenges but also issues such as health care, green energy, countering digital disinformation and ensuring a safe and consistent inclusion of women, youth and marginalised communities in the democratic process.

#### *Dr. Daniel Twining, President, IRI*

15. Dr. Daniel Twining reemphasised the importance of legislative oversight and the need for legislators to view democracy, human rights, security and development as interconnected issues that are not fundamentally possible without each other. He also spoke of the need for new legislators to be aware of this interconnection and noted that none would be possible without competitive elections, free and open political contestation and effective and sound institutions.

#### *Mr. Justin Wein, Chief of Staff, HDP Chairman David Price*

16. Justin Wein iterated that parliaments are the bulwark against authoritarianism and the best protection when it comes to the defence of democracy. He also stated that while free and fair elections are important to democracy, it is what happens between those elections that is at the core of governing.

He therefore advised that it is important for states to build representative institutions that are responsive to their people.

*Honourable Bridgid Annisette George, Speaker of the House and Vice-President of ParlAmericas*

17. The Honourable Bridgid Annisette-George, Speaker of the House addressed the gathering in her capacity of Vice-President of ParlAmericas.

18. She informed the gathering that the Summits of the Americas serve as a historical marker of our times and that it would be impossible to overlook during this Summit, the gravity of the challenges such as:

- the intensification of climate change impacts;
- the myriad of losses associated with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic;
- complex financial instabilities;
- threats to electoral democracy fuelled by disinformation and other new technologies;
- deepening inequalities that disproportionately impact women, racialized and LGBT communities, migrants, and those living with disabilities, among others;
- the loss of confidence in public institutions; and
- unacceptable levels of poverty and inequality.

19. She further stated that these situations require coordinated and urgent action at the highest levels and therefore, the Ninth Summit of the Americas arrived at a most opportune time as it provides governments with the forum to discuss pressing policy issues, affirm their shared values and commit to concerted actions. All of which are possible through openness and humility, and with collaborative and collective mindsets.

20. The Vice-President also provided historical information on ParlAmericas. She stated that the organisation can trace its history to the Third Summit of the Americas and that following a resolution of the OAS General Assembly, it was created by the national parliaments of the Americas and the Caribbean in 2001 to promote parliamentary participation in the inter-American system and to foster inter-parliamentary dialogue on issues of importance to the hemisphere.

21. Since then, parliamentarians from across the Americas and the Caribbean have gathered to problem-solve and engage in dialogue on the legislative actions and strategies that have led to accelerated progress in member states. This, according to her, has led to the realisation that parliaments and parliamentarians need to be more actively engaged in multilateral spaces. Their presence can enrich the discussion of key policy issues, strengthen the implementation of the agreements and commitments adopted, and provide oversight for greater democratic legitimacy of the multilateral processes that involve countries of this hemisphere.

22. The gathering was informed that through the coordinated efforts of the members of the ParlAmericas Board of Directors, ParlAmericas has reaffirmed its commitment to fulfilling its founding mandate as the hemispheric vehicle for legislative engagement in the inter-American system.

23. She also reported that the organisation's collective advocacy for a strengthened role for parliaments in the Summits has been met with success, and that language to confirm the agreement of the member states 'that parliaments must be included as an integral part of the Summits of the Americas process, through ParlAmericas', has been approved by the Summit Implementation Review Group and integrated into the Inter-American Plan of Action on Democratic Governance to be adopted by the participating delegations at this IX Summit of the Americas.

24. Delegates were reminded that this year's theme, *'Building a Sustainable, Resilient, and Equitable Future'* tells of the need to ensure that no one is left behind in political decision-making, and that our actions today must not be compromising to the health of our planet or the prosperity of the generations to follow.

25. She confirmed that ParlAmericas was well-prepared to contribute to the dialogues as its specialised parliamentary working groups are structured around the interrelated topics of open parliament, climate change, and gender equality.

26. Delegates were encouraged to centre the concerns of women and persons who lack equal access to power as it is the duty of parliamentarians to represent these groups and guarantee their rights.



27. She ended by calling on delegates to affirm their dedication to building a sustainable, resilient and equitable future for all the people of the Hemisphere.



Hon. Bridgid Annisette-George, MP, Speaker of the House and Vice-President of ParlAmericas

### **Strengthening Democratic Resilience to Combat Corruption**

28. This session was moderated by Mr. Tony Garrastazu, Regional Director for Latin America and Caribbean Programs, IRI and the panel which led the discussions on this critical issue comprised legislators from the United States of America, Dominica and Honduras.

29. The panellists highlighted the challenges and solutions available by way of legislative oversight, transparency, open government and anti-corruption policies and highlighted that such solutions safeguard against fraud and waste, empower citizen engagement, enable legislative oversight, and in turn strengthens democratic capacities to prevent executive overreach and opens portals for citizen engagement, scrutiny and access.

30. According to one panellist, legislators must understand the enormity of the challenge they face and be firm on expectations and commitments to attain policy goals as it is policies that make the

groundwork for democracies. He iterated that oversight, transparency and accountability are critical to reduce the opportunities for corruption and the strengthening of democracies.

### **Application of Democratic Principles to improve Green Energy Commitments**

31. Ms. Kristen Sample, Director of Democratic Governance, NDI was the moderator for this panel discussion.

32. A key theme of the Ninth Summit was the building of a more sustainable world for future generations. To that end, this session focused on the successes and challenges that legislators face in protecting the environment and combating climate change and the ways in which approaching these commitments through a democratic lens can improve sustainable outcomes.

33. Participants from Mexico, Canada, Trinidad and Tobago and Belize comprised the panel which discussed trends in green energy, emerging climate issues and green energy as it relates to preparing for crises as a result of climate change. They also explored the application of democratic principles, including how parliaments can apply anti-corruption, transparency and inclusion principles to improve environmental resilience.

34. Senator Veronica Camino Farjat of the Republic of Mexico stated that in 2021, there was reform to change the order in which the government bought energy. In addition to this, Mexico is currently building a solar park in the desert and has invested in approximately sixteen (16) modernisation projects in hydroelectric plants.

35. The country is also in the process of constructing their own refinery and they view this a representation of their sovereignty. In addition to this, Mexico will establish rules to adapt to climate change.

36. Senator Rosa Galvez of Canada advised the gathering that the climate crisis can be solved if countries worked together. She stated that countries can look at nations that have already embarked on climate change initiatives (such as having a net zero target, genomic techniques and responsible consumption) when considering their own climate change agendas.

37. According to Senator Galvez, Canada needs to provide less oil and gas subsidies and focus more on investing in renewable energy as the cost of renewable energy is getting lower. She also informed that a Climate Finance Bill was tabled to align all financial activities with climate commitments.

38. Senator Carolyn Trench-Sandiford, President of the Senate of Belize spoke of her country's need to reduce greenhouse gases to meet the requirements of the Paris Agreement. She further stated that parliaments should be duty-bound to address climate issues through three (3) distinctive lenses: anti-corruption, gender and democracy.

39. Senator Anthony Vieira of the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago advised that the movement towards a green future is forcing countries to diversify and this often has an impact on workers in the energy industry. As a consequence, he advised that governments must seek to develop policies which will soften the impact on energy workers, ease the transition for existing workers and create new job opportunities for the upcoming workforce.

42. Senator Vieira also advised that Trinidad and Tobago is committed to the implementation of its nationally determined contributions which is based on the Caribbean's reduction strategy. The latter he explained, was developed for power generation, transportation and the industrial sector. He further explained that the process used to develop the strategy took three years and required wide stakeholder consultations consisting of over 175 representatives from government ministries and agencies, academia, private and industrial sectors, NGO's and civil society organizations. The aim of these efforts is to reduce overall emissions from the three sectors by 15% over the next eight years.

43. Senator Vieira also informed of the following other initiatives to reduce Trinidad and Tobago's carbon footprint:

- reduce public transport emissions by 30% through the use of electric buses;
- establish a solar renewable energy project with an expected capacity of 112 megawatts;
- improve the country's solid waste disposal system;
- implement new water pollution and waste management programs and regulations; and
- implement an integrated coastal zone management plan and spatial marine plan, to reduce the loss of natural habitats through better land use policies.



Senator Anthony Vieira during the Panel Discussion on the Application of Democratic Principles to improve Green Energy Commitments

## **Trends in Digital Transformation to promote Transparency and Counter Disinformation**

44. This session was moderated by Ms. Dennise Mirander, Chief of Independent Reporting Mechanism, IRM. It included panellist from the United States of America, Argentina, Columbia and Chile who participated in the discussions on:

- the digitisation of legislatures to promote transparency, accountability and citizen participation;
- strategies for engaging citizens using technology and how such strategies can provide new avenues of engagement and communication between members of parliament and their constituents;

- digital transformations following the pandemic; and
- how parliaments adapted and promoted transparency through online platforms.

45. Representative Linda Sanchez, Member of the United States House of Representatives stated that the US was able to embrace technology during the pandemic as it was necessary to not only obtain critical information but to also disseminate information. However, Representative German Blanco, Member of the Chamber of Representatives of Colombia explained that Colombia experienced some challenges in engaging citizen through technology as 25% of marginal homes do not have access to internet and only 52% of country has connectivity.

### **Building Consensus to Support Inclusive Democratic Engagement**

46. As democratic resilience is incumbent on the inclusive engagement of key and diverse voices among the citizenry, this session considered the ways in which legislators can increase the participation of youth, social movements including those involving women and indigenous communities, and the private sector in the legislative process.

47. Mr. Derek Luyten, Executive Director, House Democracy Partnership, moderated the session which comprised panellist from Ecuador, Barbados, Guatemala, Bolivia and Suriname.

48. According to the Honourable Wilma Andrade, Member of the National Assembly of Ecuador, inclusion requires cultural changes and it should be mandatory that all of society participate to ensure there are legislative changes to promote inclusion.

49. The Honourable Arthur Holder, Speaker of the House of Barbados spoke of his country's success in including civil society. The gathering was informed that the current government won all 30 seats in two elections and was therefore, in a position to pass any law they wished. However, they chose to create structures that promoted civil society engagement in the legislative process.

50. In an effort to include youth in the legislative process, a Bill was tabled in February 2022 to amend the Constitution to allow the qualifying age for appointment to the Senate to be 18 years. However, the Bill was subsequently withdrawn.

51. The Honourable Sonia Gutierrez, Deputy of the Congress of the Republic of Guatemala informed delegates that the people of Guatemala have suffered thirty-six (36) years of conflict and genocide and that the country's government has been suspending freedom of speech. She stated that women were not being represented well and that racism and poverty are two of the core issues being faced by her people. Every threat and obstacle faced by these groups, according to Deputy Gutierrez, is as a result of the government's inflexibility and reluctance to modify the constitution.

## **Day 2 Sessions:**

### **Democratic Resilience During Health Crises**

52. Mr. Justin Wein, Chief of Staff for Congressman David Price, moderated. The session focused on innovations utilised during the COVID-19 pandemic to support health infrastructure and improve democratic resilience in the future management of health crises in the Americas.

53. The panel comprised legislators from Chile, St. Lucia, Ecuador, and Haiti.

54. The Honourable Claudius Francis, Speaker of the House of Assembly of Saint Lucia spoke of the conflict of laws which were passed during the pandemic and the inequitable application of such laws among the classes of society. According to Speaker Francis these issues led to some abuses in countries such as St. Lucia and Jamaica and to legal challenges in Trinidad and Tobago.

55. He also spoke of the likelihood of corruption during the pandemic, particularly with the purchase of vaccines. Delegates were informed that there is a lawsuit by the current government to recover some \$7M that was paid to a building contractor by the previous government for vaccines that were donated to the island by the United States and Britain.

56. The legislator from Ecuador spoke of the country's initial battle with the coronavirus and the ensuing economic impact. It was stated that in 2021, the country's new President created an ambitious plan to vaccinate 50% of the population in 100 days and due to the educational promotions, the country was able to achieve 92% of the target in the one-hundred-day period. As a consequence, the economy was able to be reactivated due to the high percentage of persons that were vaccinated.

57. Other success factors were the swift implementation of regulations to control the spread of the virus and the provision of reliefs to those affected.

58. In closing, delegates were informed that there was a need for the executive to set clear goals and the pandemic showed how well the executive and legislative branches of the state could work together for the greater good of the country.

59. Senator Patrice Dumont of Haiti stated that the country's dilemma lies in not knowing which aspect of democracy should be kept. According to the Senator, values such as liberty, fraternity and solidarity were not enough during the pandemic.

60. He stated further, that although the right to health is one of the recognised rights under the constitution, only 4% of the national budget was allocated to health care and much of that sum came from international aid. In addition to this, the general hospital which was destroyed by the 2010 earthquake is still under construction despite the millions that were donated by the United States and France for its reconstruction.

61. The Honourable Vlado Mirosevic, Member of the Chamber of Deputies of Chile informed the gathering that Chile has the most commerce treaties in the whole world and the advantage of this is that they have better relationships with other countries. Despite this, there existed within the country, a divide among the rich and the poor. This divide had the two classes living in isolation of each other and this was evident in how healthcare was accessed: the wealthy accessed the private healthcare system and the poor, the overburdened public system.

62. The pandemic, however, reminded them that they were not so isolated. For the first time there was a common problem, and it did not matter which class a person belonged to as the same vaccine solution was required.

63. The government ensured that everyone had the same opportunity to be vaccinated and as a result both rich and poor had to get into the same line. During the country's State of Emergency, the government also ensured that all hospitals, including private hospitals were opened for referrals of all persons.

## **Empowering and Enhancing Women's Inclusion in Parliament**

64. Ms. Alisha Todd, the Director General of ParlAmericas moderated this session which comprised panellist from the United States of America, Peru, El Salvador, Jamaica and Panama.

65. This panel allowed delegates the opportunity to discuss the importance of women's political participation in parliaments worldwide, challenges and successes in gender mainstreaming in their parliaments, best practices for mainstreaming gender in parliamentary debate, and how to effectively collaborate across party lines to advance shared goals and create decision-making spaces for women in parliament.

## **Attendance**

66. Fifty-seven delegates from the twenty-three countries listed below attended the Parliamentary Gathering:

- (i) Argentina
- (ii) Barbados
- (iii) Belize
- (iv) Bolivia
- (v) Chile
- (vi) Columbia
- (vii) Dominica
- (viii) Ecuador
- (ix) El Salvador
- (x) Guatemala
- (xi) Guyana
- (xii) Haiti
- (xiii) Honduras
- (xiv) Jamaica
- (xv) México
- (xvi) Panama
- (xvii) Peru



- (xviii) St. Lucia
- (xix) Suriname
- (xx) Trinidad and Tobago
- (xxi) United States of America
- (xxii) Peru
- (xxiii) Uruguay





Delegates from the Caribbean Region  
at the Parliamentary Gathering on the occasion of the Ninth Summit of the Americas, June 6-7, 2022



**Submitted by:**

**Hon. Bridgid Annisette-George, MP**  
**Speaker of the House**

**Sen. Anthony Vieira**  
**Independent Senator**

**Mrs. Angelique Massiah**  
**Parliamentary Legal Officer**