

DECLARATION

Active Democracy Network, Latinoamerican and Caribbean Network for Democracy, Partners for Democratic Change, and others organizations:

THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OAS) NEEDS TO STRENGTHEN ITS INSTITUTIONALITY. FOR THIS REASON IT NOW HAS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY:

**TO IMPLEMENT THE
“RENEWED STRATEGY FOR SCO PARTICIPATION IN OAS ACTIVITIES”**

- 1. “THE ABILITY OF THE OAS TO PROVIDE SOLUTIONS FOR PROBLEMS IN THE REGION IS BEING CONSTANTLY QUESTIONED: THIS IS THE OPINION OF BOTH GOVERNMENTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY”**

The OAS must display clear signs that it is willing to be at the service of the people of the Americas, and this requires it to open its doors to a variety of civil society groups, going beyond what it has done so far.

The right to veto SCO participation discredits the OAS. It would boast legitimacy if it were able to listen to and debate with the variety of organizations that participate or that are interested in participating in OAS activities within a climate of tolerance.

Intergovernmental institutions must be in harmony with the organized citizenry, in order to incorporate other perspectives into their analyses, to achieve a higher degree of comprehension of the complexity of different issues, and to be able to consider various possible courses of action.

United in this democratic conviction, citizens of the Americas who are committed to affairs of public interest have formally organized into civil society organizations. From this position, we seek to debate and contribute to the decision-making process regarding public issues.

“THE AFFAIRS OF PUBLIC INTEREST DEALT WITH BY THE OAS PERTAIN AND ARE OF INTEREST TO US ALL”

- 2. THE OAS AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH CIVIL SOCIETY: IT IS TIME TO SOLIDIFY A THIRD IMPETUS**

First Impetus

- The OAS began to define its relationship with civil society in 1971.
- In 1997 the Permanent Council decided to grant a Legal Status to the SCO's that participate in the OAS.
- In 1999 the Guidelines for the Participation of SCO's in the OAS were approved.

Second Impetus:

- In 2001 the General Assembly instructed the Permanent Council to draw up strategies designed to increase the participation of SCO's.
- In 2003 (GA/RES. 1915) dialogue with SCO's was formalized in the GA, and a Fund to finance participation was established.
- In 2008 (GA/RES. 2395) the referred resolution led to the development of a strategy to foment participation. The Department of International Affairs performed a study and proposed a strategy, reviewing all the respective documentation in addition to interviewing key actors.¹

Now it is time for the third impetus: To Implement the Renewed Strategy for SCO Participation in OAS Activities, which includes the elimination of the right to veto such participation.

WE THE CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS PROPOSE:

We the civil society organizations that belong to the networks that support this Declaration, request that the "Renewed Strategy for SCO Participation in OAS Activities" be implemented, and that in the General Assembly of 2011 the Department of International Affairs provide a report on its first year of implementation, highlighting the achievements and difficulties, in order for authorities to be able to take the necessary corrective actions. Implementing this Strategy implies providing for a third impetus regarding the relationship between the OAS and the SCO's.

The level of participation contemplated in the Strategy is advisory. This means that the SCO's would not have any decision-making or negotiating powers.

- The objectives of the Strategy is to put that which is established in the Democratic Charter regarding public participation through substantive, timely and informed dialogues between government representatives and SCO's that deal with a variety of thematic areas into practice within the routine activities of the OAS. This allows for strengthening the decisions made by the political body, its various organisms or entities, as well as for the cooperation that such organizations can provide regarding several issues of public interest, in the context of the Inter-American System.
- Restrictions on SCO participation in the OAS must be avoided, facilitating processes for the Registration of such organizations and avoiding vetoes of organizations that have demonstrated serious work regarding the promotion of democracy, human rights, the rights of vulnerable groups, sustainable development, and other issues.
- A mechanism for the provision of real benefits for the organizations that fulfill the process of Registration with the OAS must be established, ending the counter-productive practice of having to request the right to participate as a "special guest" for each Assembly, Summit or

¹ The Representatives of the Member States that were interviewed pointed out substantive reasons for achieving a higher degree of incorporation of SCO's, such as: The fact that they are an essential actor within the political arena, that decisions made within the OAS affect them, that they have key knowledge and experience relevant to making decisions, and that they provide legitimacy to governmental decisions.

special meeting. Registration with the OAS should be the only condition necessary for participation in the Assemblies and Summits, and registration must be an automatic process, and not one that requires the approval of the Permanent Council and the host country for each of the Assemblies and Summits.

- We recommend the formation of a permanent mechanism for civil society participation that strengthens consultation through the establishment of permanent civil society forums or advisory councils.
- We request that additional requirements for SCO's to be able to participate within the organization not be included, as in the end these favor the exclusion of a variety of organizations for reasons that are not very transparent, stemming from the specific entities that request the veto.
- We request that the new obstacles to civil society participation, by demanding fulfillment with "internal legislation", be eliminated from the Proposed Resolution CP/CISC-502/10 rev. 3. Such a clause can be manipulated in order to restrict the access of several organizations that work on critical issues in the region to the OAS. We again recommend the automatic inclusion in the Assemblies and Summits of organizations that are registered with the OAS.
- We recommend granting a higher level of participation to civil society regarding the monitoring of the Inter-American Democratic Charter.
- As such, this opening of the OAS must be accompanied by the strengthening of SCO's on regional, sub-regional and national levels. Regarding the latter, such strengthening should occur particularly in the form of improving relationships between such organizations and the OAS offices or national representatives.

Civil society networks and organizations want to contribute to the strengthening of the OAS, and believe that together we would be able to construct real solidarity on a regional level, and continue to make progress in all member countries.

- African Canadian Legal Clinic, Canada
- Afroamérica XXI, Colombia
- Alianza Cívica A.C., México
- Alianza Regional por la Libertad de Expresión e Información
- ANC, Perú
- Aprodeh, Perú
- Asamblea Permanente por los DDHH (APDH), Argentina
- Asociación Civil Consorcio Desarrollo y Justicia, Venezuela
- Asociación Cultural de promoción y desarrollo "Todas las Sangres"

- Asociación Indígena del Perú AMA región de Junín
- Asociación Negra de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos, (ASONEDH)
- Asociación Negra Margarita
- Asociación Santa Rita para la educación y promoción (Funsarep), Colombia
- CARE, El Salvador
- Centro Derecho y Sociedad (CIDES), Ecuador
- Centro de la mujer peruana “Flora Tristán”, Perú
- Centro Europeo Iberandino CEIBAALCALA
- Comité de America Latina y el Caribe para la defensa de los derechos de las mujeres (CLADEM)
- Confederación Nacional de Discapitados del Perú (CONFENADIP)
- Congreso Judío Latinoamericano
- Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos, Perú
- DESCO, Perú
- Espacio Civil, Venezuela
- FAVIM Acción Ciudadana, Argentina
- FIDH, Internacional
- Federación para el desarrollo de las personas con discapacidad de la región La Libertad, Perú
- Federación de Microempresarios de Personas con Discapacidad, Ventanilla, Perú
- Freedom House
- FUCUDE, Colombia
- Fundación Cambio Democrático, Argentina
- Fundación Humanistas por la Paz, Ecuador
- Fundación para la Paz y la Democracia (FUNPADEM), Costa Rica
- Fundación para la Unión Democrática del Pacífico, Costa Rica
- Fundación Presencia, Colombia

- IIACOS, Perú
- Instituto DD HH Colegio abogados de La Matanza; Argentina
- Instituto Para el Desarrollo y La Democracia (IPADE), Nicaragua
- Instituto Venezolano de Estudios Sociales y Políticos (INVESP), Venezuela
- Liga de Mujeres Desplazadas, Colombia
- Observatorio Género Democracia y Derechos Humanos, Colombia
- Oficina Jurídica para la Mujer, Bolivia
- Organización Mundial de Personas con Discapacidad
- Organización de Transexuales por la Dignidad de la Diversidad (OTD), Chile
- Participa, Chile
- PLENADI, Uruguay
- Pro Acceso, Chile
- Participación Ciudadana, Republica Dominicana
- Red Latinoamericana de organizaciones de Personas con Discapacidad y sus Familias
- Red de ONG por la Transparencia ONGxT – Colombia
- Red Participación y Justicia, Bolivia
- Red SINERGIA, Venezuela
- Región Latinoamericana de la Organización Mundial de Personas con Discapacidad, (RLOMPD)
- RIADIS
- Semillas para la Democracia – Paraguay
- Ser, Perú
- Sócrates, Venezuela
- Transparencia por Colombia
- Transparencia Internacional
- Unión Internacional del Notariado