



Report of the Canadian Section of ParlAmericas

**16th Plenary Assembly and 49th Meeting of the Board of
Directors of ParlAmericas**

Asunción, Paraguay

From october 30 to november 1, 2019

REPORT

COMPOSITION OF THE DELEGATION

From October 30 to November 1, 2019, a delegation of the Canadian Section of ParlAmericas participated in the 16th Plenary Assembly and the 49th meeting of the Board of Directors in Asunción, Paraguay. The theme of the Assembly this year was “Accelerating Progress on Agenda 2030: Good Practices for Parliamentary Action.” The delegation, led by the Honourable Rosa Galvez, Senator and Vice-Chair of the Canadian Section, also included the Honourable Percy E. Downe, Senator. Ms. Julie Pelletier accompanied the delegation in her capacity as Association Secretary.

49th MEETING OF THE PARLAMERICAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The 49th meeting of the Board of Directors of ParlAmericas took place on Wednesday, October 30, 2019. Paraguayan senator Patrick Kemper, Representative of the Host Parliament, and Ana Belén Marín, Member of the Ecuadorean National Assembly and President of the Parliamentary Network on Climate Change, welcomed the members of the Board of Directors. The Board members then approved the appointment of Elizabeth Cabezas, Member of the Ecuadorean National Assembly and Vice-President of the Board of Directors, to replace the outgoing Canadian president, the Honourable Robert Nault.

Alisha Todd, Director General of the International Secretariat of ParlAmericas, then spoke about various administrative topics. She proposed a new administrative structure for the Secretariat, provided an update on the 2019–2020 work plan, presented the annual financial report and shared information about the renewal of the request for funding from the Canadian government, which is scheduled for 2021. She also announced that the Secretariat was now carbon neutral, in accordance with the UN’s Climate Neutral Now initiative, and invited Board members to follow suit, since ParlAmericas is a participant in the initiative.

Afterward, Paraguayan senator Blanca Ovelar, Host of the Plenary Assembly and President of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network, reported on the activities and sessions planned for the Plenary Assembly. The representatives of the various ParlAmericas networks then outlined their previous and upcoming activities.

Parliamentary Network on Climate Change

Ana Belén Marín, Member of the Ecuadorean National Assembly and President of the Parliamentary Network on Climate Change, reported on the Network’s previous and upcoming activities. The Honourable Jennifer Simons, Speaker of the National Assembly of Suriname, then reported on the Network’s Fourth Gathering, which was held on August 8–9, 2019, in Paramaribo, Suriname. Its theme was “Advancing Climate Action through Legislation and Parliamentary Oversight.” The parliamentarians who attended this meeting agreed on a [declaration](#) to contribute to the implementation of the Paris Agreement in line with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). During the

meeting, Canadian senator Rosa Galvez was elected Vice-President of the Network (North America) for a two year term. The Network's next meeting will be held in May 2020.

Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality

Cristina Cornejo, Member of the Salvadoran Legislative Assembly and Vice-President (Central America) of the Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality, reported on the Network's 11th Gathering, which was held in Mexico from June 18–20, 2019, under the theme "Achieving Balance in the World of Work." During the meeting, participants explored legislative strategies and measures to help women achieve greater recognition for the role they play in the economy and reduce barriers to their full participation in the workforce. The Network's next meeting is scheduled for summer 2020.

Open Parliament Network

Paraguayan senator Blanca Ovelar spoke about the Network's recent activities and the Open Parliament Day and Parliamentary Track of the Open Government Partnership Global Summit, which was held on May 29 and 30, 2019, in Ottawa, Canada. Over the course of the Summit, participants gathered and discussed measures to promote open government reform. Fake news and media coverage of legislative issues were the focus of most of the Summit's presentations. The Network's next meeting will take place on April 1–3, 2020, in Brasilia, Brazil.

Other items on the agenda

Lastly, Alisha Todd gave an update on the proposed amendments to the ParlAmericas Regulations and provided details about the elections that will be held at the end of the Plenary Assembly.

WORKSHOP: MONITORING PROGRESS TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS THROUGH PUBLIC SPENDING

On October 30, 2019, parliamentarians were offered an afternoon workshop on how to monitor progress on SDG indicators through government spending. The training was divided into three parts: two presentations and one work session.

Helaina Gaspard, Director of Governance and Institutions for the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy at the University of Ottawa, gave an introductory presentation. She focused on one of the main roles played by parliamentarians: their participation in the financial cycle and analysis of its main components. She explored how parliamentarians can analyze budget proposals, allocations and expenditures to verify whether public expenditures contribute to SDGs and progress on the 2030 Agenda. She also presented a draft booklet on fiscal transparency, entitled Strengthening Accountability through Fiscal Openness: A Toolkit for Parliamentarians in the Americas and the Caribbean.

The Honourable Arthur E. Holder, Speaker of the House of Assembly of Barbados, then introduced the second presentation and both panellists: Paraguayan senator Stephan Rasmussen and Maria Eugenia David Du Mutel de Pierrepont, Director of Studies,

Analysis and Evaluation, Budget Office of the Congress of Argentina. The presentations outlined the tools developed by parliamentary and government organizations across the hemisphere to help parliamentarians analyze budget proposals and understand the impact of those proposals on their country's progress on achieving SDGs.

In closing, Ms. Gaspard invited parliamentarians to participate in an exercise where they were asked to analyze a fictional government's budget proposal for SDG 5.2: to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. Parliamentarians first considered the proposal and what progress would be made after funds were allocated and then provided comments. Canadian senator Rosa Galvez said that it is important for parliamentarians to have access to accurate and specific statistics in order to perform their analysis.

INFORMATION SESSION WITH A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CONSULATE OF CANADA TO PARAGUAY

Wednesday evening, the Canadian delegation met with Patrice Laquerre, Counsellor, Political and Public Affairs, for the Embassy of Canada to Argentina and Representative of the Canadian Honorary Consul in Paraguay. During the meeting, Mr. Laquerre focused on bilateral relations between Canada and Paraguay, adding that both countries share similarities and that there are opportunities for economic partnerships in the mining, infrastructure development, as well as clean energy and technology sectors. During the meeting, delegates learned more about Paraguay's geopolitical history, the contribution of a large community of Mennonites that left Canada and settled in the Chaco region and the aftermath of the fires that ravaged Chaco in 2019. Mr. Laquerre then spoke about the political and economic issues facing Paraguay, its relations with neighbouring countries and the current political situation of South American countries.

OPENING REMARKS

The meeting on Thursday, October 31, 2019, began with a series of opening remarks. Paraguayan senators Patrick Kemper and Blanca Ovelar, as well as Ana Belén Marín, Member of the Ecuadorean National Assembly, stressed that parliamentarians have an important responsibility to act and work together to develop policies that will advance the 2030 Agenda.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

After the opening remarks were delivered, Achim Steiner, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), gave the keynote address. He spoke about what led UN member countries to adopt the 2030 Agenda in 2015 and outlined the guiding principles of this global framework, which includes 17 Goals, 169 targets and more than 200 indicators.

Mr. Steiner explained that the SDGs are an innovative response to the 21st-century challenges facing countries and will require them to work together and leave no one behind. This global framework is an integrated, multi-dimensional approach that recognizes that everything is interrelated: measures implemented in one sector will influence results in others, and development is predicated not only on economic balance,

but also on social and environmental harmony. Mr. Steiner emphasized that each country has a role to play in accelerating progress on ending poverty, hunger, AIDS and discrimination toward women and girls.

In closing, Mr. Steiner introduced Parliament's Role in Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals: An Adapted Version for the Americas and the Caribbean, a report written in partnership with UNDP and ParlAmericas. He told legislators that they can influence the actions taken by their countries by actively analyzing their respective parliamentary financial cycles in order to ensure effective controls over government spending for SDGs.

OPENING OF THE PLENARY SESSION

Paraguayan senator Patrick Kemper opened the Plenary Session and confirmed that Elizabeth Cabezas, Member of the Ecuadorean National Assembly, was appointed as President of ParlAmericas. The Honourable Arthur E. Holder, Speaker of the House of Assembly of Barbados and Member of the Board of Directors, then presented an annual report to participants. He thanked the outgoing ParlAmericas president, Canada's Robert Nault, for his hard work and recognized Canada's leadership role within the organization. He also thanked Canada's government and Parliament for the funding they provide to ParlAmericas.

The representatives of the three ParlAmericas networks then reported on their respective work, achievements and partnerships.

In closing, Alisha Todd, Director General of ParlAmericas, presented the organization's financial report, mentioning the significant financial contributions by the Government of Canada and other member countries.

FIRST SESSION: EXAMINING REGIONAL PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY PERSPECTIVE

The first session of the Plenary Assembly, "Examining regional progress in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals from the parliamentary perspective," was moderated by Cristina Cornejo, Member of the Legislative Assembly of El Salvador. She stressed the importance of informing parliamentarians about the progress made in implementing the SDGs and exploring opportunities for action.

The first presentation, "Examining regional progress in implementing SDGs from the parliamentary perspective," was given by Emanuele Sapienza, Strategic Advisor, UNDP Regional Centre in Panama. He presented an overview of Agenda 2030, a global call for action based on three main pillars: universality, integration and "no one left behind." He went over the progress made in Latin America and the Caribbean in reducing poverty. He stressed, however, that there continue to be several challenges, such as the size of vulnerable populations, violence levels, and the level of satisfaction with the political class and democracy as a form of government.

Mr. Sapienza wrapped up his presentation by discussing the essential role that parliaments play in implementing the SDGs. He shared the results of a survey conducted

by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in 2018 to which 41.7% of parliaments belonging to the Latin American and Caribbean (GRULAC) Group responded. The purpose of the survey was to analyze trends in how SDGs were being institutionalized in the work of parliaments.

A round of questions followed the presentation. Canadian Senator Rosa Galvez took the floor to point out that Canadian parliamentarians as well as climate activists and Indigenous peoples have recently been victims of violence as a result of their positions. She stressed the importance of protecting those who defend the ideals contained in the SDGs.

Then Maria Ines Solis, Member of the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica, joined by Mr. Sapienza, presented an outline of a report, "Parliament's Role in Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals." This report is a version of a 2015 UNDP report adapted for Latin America and the Caribbean that provides an update on the implementation of SDGs in the region and best practices.

The session continued in the form of round tables where parliamentarians were asked to discuss fictitious cases related to SDGs 6, 9 and 10. Participants were to consider how to conduct parliamentary committee studies to ensure that progress is being made on the identified SDGs. Parliamentarians were then asked to present the outcome of their discussions.

SECOND SESSION: FROM WORDS TO ACTION – CASE STUDIES ON HOW PARLIAMENTS HAVE ADAPTED AND ARE MAKING PROGRESS TO ACHIEVE THE 2030 AGENDA

The theme for the second session of the Plenary Assembly was "From words to action – Case studies on how parliaments have adapted and are making progress to achieve the 2030 Agenda." Moderated by Juliet Cuthbert Flynn, Member of the Parliament of Jamaica, the session gave participants the opportunity to share their experiences implementing and monitoring SDGs in their respective countries. Participants were encouraged to move from words to action.

Panellist Neilsen Pérez, Member of the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica, began by presenting the progress and challenges related to the 2030 agenda for the Legislative Assembly of her country. In particular, she mentioned that Costa Rica was the first country in the world to sign the National Pact for the SDGs in 2016 to promote and comply with the SDGs and to monitor and report on their implementation. She then highlighted the three-step road map developed by the Legislative Assembly, which involves providing training, tracing the SDGs in legislation, and monitoring progress. She also stressed the importance of developing effective monitoring tools.

She was followed by Mexican Senator Antares Vasquez, who also took the floor to highlight her country's successes with Agenda 2030 and reaffirm her country's commitment to achieving the goals set by this agenda. She gave several examples, including the creation of a working group made up of senators from all parties to monitor progress on Agenda 2030, the ongoing training to educate senators and their staff about the importance of legislation that takes into account all impacts and the SDGs, and the fact that there is an equal number of women and men elected to the Mexican Parliament.

Lastly, Paraguayan Senator Blanca Ovelar gave a presentation on monitoring SDGs through an open parliament. She presented the two-year action plan for parliamentary openness that was introduced in the Paraguayan Parliament in 2018, detailing the commitments, objectives, administrative structure and results achieved. She spoke about a digital platform being developed to help Paraguayan legislators and citizens easily identify bills that contribute to the SDGs.

THIRD SESSION: GENDER EQUALITY: AN ESSENTIAL CONDITION FOR ACHIEVING THE 17 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The third session, “Gender equality: an essential condition for achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals,” took place on Friday, November 1, 2019, and was moderated by Canadian Senator Rosa Galvez. During her opening presentation, Senator Galvez provided an overview of SDG 5, which aims to end all forms of discrimination against women and girls. She also stressed that the effective achievement of gender equality is an essential condition and accelerator for the achievement of the other SDGs, particularly SDG 13 related to combatting climate change. The Senator then shared the initiatives taken by Canada at the national and international levels to achieve this goal, including Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy. She then gave examples of what Canadian parliamentarians have done to contribute to the advancement of gender equality, such as the passage of the Canadian Gender Budgeting Act in 2018. She concluded her presentation by stressing the importance of having sound statistics and measurement methods to track progress on achieving the SDGs, which is being accomplished in Canada by working with Statistics Canada and other Canadian government departments.

The first panellist, Ayesha Constable, Advisor to FRIDA, the Young Feminist Fund and the Caribbean Representative of the Sustainable Development Solutions Youth Network, focused on Target 5A, which promotes equity through landownership. She presented statistics and discussed the factors preventing women from becoming landowners in Latin America and the Caribbean. Ms. Constable also discussed a 2015 study finding that achieving gender equality and improving the status of women could help curb climate change. She also promoted the role of parliamentarians in achieving the SDGs, such as by enacting laws that promote gender equality, promoting gender-sensitive budgeting and advocating for marginalized and vulnerable communities. Ms. Constable concluded her presentation by stressing the importance of having reliable sex-disaggregated data.

The second panellist, Dosia Calderón, Senior Officer for Latin America and the Caribbean, Girls Not Brides, focused on Target 5.3, which seeks to eliminate harmful practices such as early or forced marriage. She spoke about the causes and consequences of these practices and stated that their prevalence in Latin America and the Caribbean has not decreased for 25 years. She then told the audience that if nothing is done to end child, early and forced marriages, it will be impossible to achieve not just SDG 5, but also the SDGs related to poverty, food security, health, education, economic growth and peace and justice. Ms. Calderón concluded her presentation by presenting a toolkit and discussing the role that parliamentarians can play in eradicating child marriage.

Lastly, Melania Canales Poma, President of the National Organization of Andean and Amazonian Indigenous Women of Peru (ONAMIAP in Spanish), concluded the panel with a presentation on Target 5.5 to ensure women's participation and access to all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. She presented a portrait of Indigenous women in Peru, highlighting these women's low level of education and representation in municipal and national political life. Ms. Canales Poma then discussed the agenda and progress that her organization UNAMIA has made in improving the participation and leadership of Indigenous women. She concluded by presenting the Indigenous Navigator, which provides Indigenous peoples around the world with a set of tools to monitor the degree to which their individual and collective rights are recognized and implemented.

FOURTH SESSION: ENCOURAGING PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIVE WORK FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

The final session, "Encouraging partnerships and collaborative work for a sustainable future," was moderated by Senator Ranard Henfield from The Bahamas, who opened the session by highlighting the important work Canadians parliamentarians: the Honorable Robert Nault, past president of ParlAmericas, and Randy Boissonnault, outgoing member of the Board of Directors of ParlAmericas. Before handing over to the panellists, he discussed the importance of collective action to raise awareness in all countries about the practical steps needed to support the implementation of Agenda 2030.

The first panellist, Jessica Domínguez of the Sustainable Development Division of Allcot, talked about the involvement of the private sector in implementing the SDGs and the strategies, processes and tools available to help them contribute to this global goal. Specifically, she referred to the SDG Compass, which provides private companies with guidance on how to align their strategies and manage and measure their contribution to SDG attainment.

The second panellist, Fabián Forestieri, Director of Institutional Relations of the Office of the Comptroller General of the Republic of Paraguay, spoke about the role that supreme audit institutions such as his own play in the implementation of Agenda 2030. Specifically, he shared the key findings of his office's audits of the Parliament and the different levels of government in Paraguay with respect to their SDG activities.

The third presentation, by Emanuele Sapienza, Policy Advisor at the UNDP Regional Centre in Panama, focused on the need for the UN to work in cooperation with various public actors in order to achieve SDGs. He presented three examples of partnerships involving the UN: the Green Growth Knowledge Platform, the Global Alliance on SDG 16, and the UN Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. For each of these initiatives, he shared the impact they are having in the Americas.

Participants were then asked to explore some of the issues and challenges identified by their peers throughout the conference. They were also able to present the solutions and various opportunities for collaboration they identified.

CLOSING OF THE PLENARY ASSEMBLY AND CLOSING REMARKS

The Plenary Assembly concluded with closing remarks by the meeting's host, Senator Blanca Ovelar, followed by the reading of the [declaration](#), which was adopted by the delegations of each parliament represented.

As a final note, the Director General informed parliamentarians that the Costa Rican Legislative Assembly would host the 17th Plenary Assembly in fall 2020 and that the next meeting of the Open Parliament Network was scheduled for April 1-3 in Brasilia, Brazil. She also announced the results of the elections.

Respectfully submitted,

Marc G. Serré, M.P.

Chair

Canadian Section of ParlAmericas

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Section of ParlAmericas
ACTIVITY	16th Plenary Assembly and 49th Meeting of the ParlAmericas Board of Directors
DESTINATION	Asunción, Paraguay
DATES	From October 30 to November 1 st , 2019
DELEGATION	
SENATE	Hon. Rosa Galvez Hon. Percy E. Downe
HOUSE OF COMMONS	
STAFF	Julie Pelletier
TRANSPORTATION	\$16,847.03
ACCOMMODATION	\$1,490.23
HOSPITALITY	\$188.23
PER DIEMS	\$679.32
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$0.00
MISCELLANEOUS	\$45.99

TOTAL

\$19,250.80