

Global Foundation for Democracy and Development (GFDD)

Statement at the Seventh Summit of the Americas | Consultation with U.S. Civil Society and Social Actors

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Global Foundation for Democracy and Development (GFDD) is a private, non-partisan, not-for-profit institution created by His Excellency Dr. Leonel Fernández, former President of the Dominican Republic. GFDD is dedicated to formulating innovative and strategic proposals on global issues of national interest with the purpose of contributing to the creation of effective

public policies related to the governance and social and economic development of the Dominican Republic and the Western Hemisphere.

On behalf of the Global Foundation for Democracy and Development (GFDD), we would like to extend our sincere and full support to Heads of State and Government of the region in the upcoming Seventh Summit of the Americas, as well as our best wishes for successful consultations and outcomes in Panamá next April, and beyond.

Distinguished representatives of the Organization of American States (OAS) and dear colleagues of civil society in Latin America, in today's globalized world social inequalities and political discontent have spurred citizens to gather. As much as our region has experienced significant economic and social progress, there are still great challenges for achieving prosperity with equity and sustainable development for all.

Education, Health, Energy, Environment, Migration, Security, Citizen Participation, and Democratic Governance are indeed relevant areas that require action to reach our regional goals.

There is no doubt that improving the quality of education by training teachers and enhancing their technical skills, implementing public policies for the youth to better match the labor market demand, and investing in an educational research and innovation laboratory will strengthen our human capital. Universal access to health and health coverage, and improved ability to respond to outbreaks and other public health risks are essential to our people's development.

Without hesitation, we believe that facilitating mechanisms that support renewable energy in our countries, better indicators to formulate and design public energy policies and supporting the Sustainable Energy for All initiative (and the Sustainable Development Goals) of the United Nations will take us in the right direction toward a more sustainable region. We also suggest promoting more public-private partnerships and efficient incentives to increase the use of renewable sources of energy, including our cities and throughout all urban development planning.

Getting to a global climate change agreement in Paris this December will have a significant, positive effect on our most vulnerable populations. Definitively, we need to pay more attention to adequate and effective policies and measures related to climate change mitigation and adaptation, but not only related to the energy sector infrastructure. We need to go beyond and promote better and wider general knowledge and awareness on this matter. Heads of State and Government of the Americas shall aim to increase the support to civil society's innovative initiatives targeting climate change and sustainable development awareness in our countries. For example, GFDD has reached more than 20,000 Dominicans in the last four years with our Dominican Republic Environmental Film Festival (DREFF). By screening films on pressing environmental global issues and having panel discussions and workshops with everyday Dominicans, we are planting seeds of sustainable progress in the country. Other initiatives such as our ReCreate program are focused on promoting entrepreneurship in women by teaching them how to transform garbage into art products with recycling techniques. We are sure there are hundreds of examples of great initiatives that bring climate change and sustainability awareness to everyday people in our region. Heads of State and Government of the Americas will identify them and support them more.

GFDD supports regional efforts to generate more and better opportunities inside each of our countries so that local populations become firmly rooted in their nations and don't have the need to migrate for a better life. We support more networks and social dialogue processes to tackle smuggling and trafficking of persons, illegal drugs, violence, and crime. Better data gathering for more accurate and efficient public policies is also a must. But we need more concrete measures to increase public awareness and to promote entrepreneurial and innovative approaches to these problems we face. Let us support the expansion of social innovation for creative solutions to these challenges.

Information and Communication Technologies as well as innovation must be transversal elements in all sustainable development policies in the region, not only those directed to increase citizen participation.

Finally, we want to recall that on November 13, 2014 under the title "The OAS, Democracy and Human Rights," President Leonel Fernández, GFDD's President, was the keynote speaker at the 57th Lecture of the Americas at the OAS. During his speech he stressed that, "We should remember the contributions that the OAS has accomplished in the prevention and resolution of conflicts among Member States; in the maintenance of peace and security; in the creation of a permanent forum for political dialogue; in the fight against illicit drug trafficking and organized crime; in the protection of human rights; in the collective defense of democracy; and promoting the rule of law." Dr. Fernández also took the opportunity to emphasize some critical ideas about the future of the OAS within the framework of democracy and human rights, its current challenges, as well as its need to be reformed and adapted to new global realities, especially those in Latin America and the Caribbean.

We believe that this is a great moment in history to recognize that the Inter-American System of Human Rights has had important successes but also that today's reality suggests the persistence of major challenges that need to be approached with innovative tactics.

Heads of State and Government of the Americas have the great opportunity to make this an inflection point in our history. Prosperity with equity is achievable if we all contribute to more concrete answers and sustainable solutions, if we understand that we all have a role, and if we as civil society and social actors in particular, take a step ahead and become more active members in the decision-making processes of our present and future.