



Atlantic Council

ADRIENNE ARSHT
LATIN AMERICA CENTER



Advancing Summit of the Americas Commitments



Prepared by Willow Fortunoff and Diego Area | AtlanticCouncil.org



CITIES SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS

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WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF THE CITIES SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS?

An initiative led by the Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center of the Atlantic Council and sponsored by the US Department of State focused on facilitating greater, constructive exchange among multisectoral thought leaders and government leaders as they work to implement Summit commitments. This readout was informed by a private roundtable hosted by the Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center and prepared by Willow Fortunoff and Diego Area.

Bottom line up front

The first-ever Cities Summit of the Americas created a new platform for mayors across the hemisphere to build partnerships with civil society organizations—particularly those focused on the region and/or local governance—private sector companies, and one another. While attendees and observers from national and local government agreed the new forum should continue in some fashion, the task is now to identify new and existing mechanisms to institutionalize the mayoral convening.

Connecting the Cities Summit to the Summit of the Americas process, empowering stakeholders to contribute to the Cities Summit, and connecting subnational perspectives to hemispheric diplomacy mechanisms could help transition the summit from inaugural to continual.

Analysis of the inaugural Cities Summit:

Convening power

The Cities Summit convened over 2,500 people, including 250 mayors from small to large cities across the Americas. The State Department partnered with forty civil society organizations, private sector companies, and multilateral organizations to co-organize conference sessions and workshops.

Thematic focus

The Cities Summit focused on eleven thematic tracks, following up on the commitments leaders made at the Ninth Summit of the Americas: digital; energy; mobility and transportation; migration; housing and safety; climate and environment; competitiveness, finance and investment; democracy and inclusion; healthy communities; and vibrant cities.

Key outcomes

The newly announced Cities Forward program will support twelve cities in Latin America and the Caribbean to produce local sustainability action plans and develop financing opportunities as a model in fostering public-private partnerships. Several participating organizations leveraged the Cities Summit to announce other contributing deliverables



Recommendations for institutionalizing the Cities Summit and expanding subnational diplomacy in the Western Hemisphere:

During an off the record private roundtable with diverse thought leaders and in city diplomacy, participants outlined recommendations for institutionalizing the Summit to continue expanding subnational diplomacy in the Western Hemisphere.

1. Align the Cities Summit with the Summit of the Americas process:

- Work with the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG), the managing body of the Summit of the Americas process comprised of national government officials, to incorporate city leaders as part of the formal Summit of the Americas agenda.
- Establish a “host troika” to organize the Cities Summit including the previous, current, and future host cities of the Summit of the Americas to provide continuity and preserve institutional memory.
- Align the Cities Summit track themes with respective SIRG thematic working groups—such as digital transformation, energy, and democratic governance—and invite SIRG working group co-chairs to include city level partnerships and stakeholders in their deliberations and follow up.

2. Empower stakeholders to contribute to the Cities Summit:

- Create an advisory board made up of NGOs, city networks, multilateral organizations, and private sector companies to guide the process of Cities Summit coordination and planning alongside a secretariat. Many existing city networks have vast experience convening mayors and creating mayoral standing committees, and an advisory board would allow organizations to contribute best practices while maintaining individual identity.
- Connect with multilateral development banks and international finance institutions to support the implementation of Cities Summit outcomes and create funding pipelines for city development projects and trainings.
- Work with universities across the Western Hemisphere to design an educational curriculum on subnational diplomacy, recruit from those programs to incorporate students in the youth component of the Cities Summit process and prepare the next generation of experts in subnational diplomacy.



3. Connect subnational perspectives to hemispheric diplomacy:



- Continue creating spaces for city stakeholders in multilateral spaces, such as at the United Nations, Organization of American States, World Bank, and World Health Organization, as well as international convenings such as the United Nations General Assembly and Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- Create a council of US state governments with foreign trade offices in Central and South American and Caribbean countries and leverage to deepen export promotion and investment attraction at the subnational level.
- Convene foreign ministers to discuss strategies and opportunities for including subnational actors in hemispheric fora, such as establishing federal offices of city and state diplomacy.
- Align Cities Summit commitments with Sustainable Development Goals so that cities can track their progress through Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs).
- Orient future Cities Summits around the goal of training the municipal leaders of tomorrow and building capacity in cities of all sizes to support democratic governance from the bottom up.