



Atlantic Council

ADRIENNE ARSHT
LATIN AMERICA CENTER



The Future of Democracy in the Americas

ORGANIZATION
OF
AMERICAN
STATES



ADVANCING SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS COMMITMENTS

An initiative led by the Atlantic Council's Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center and sponsored by the U.S. Department of State focuses on facilitating greater, constructive exchanges among multisectoral and government thought leaders to implement commitments adopted at the Ninth Summit of the Americas. This readout was informed by a private roundtable hosted by the Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center and prepared by Breana Stanski and Diego Area.

Bottom line up front

The Democracy and Governance commitment at the Ninth Summit of the Americas marked an imperative platform for strengthening the region's democratic values and institutions. As the experts deliberated how to incorporate those values into practice, stressed the importance of good governance for the advancement of human rights, anticorruption practices, sustainable development, and citizen inclusion. Partnering with regional stakeholders will be imperative for crucial issues like civic engagement, transparency, adherence to international order, and the rule of law, encouraging Latin American and Caribbean countries to continue to prioritize their work in democratic renewal.

Analysis of the Summit Commitment to Democracy in the Americas:

- The Summit was attended by heads of state and government of the Americas, in addition to private sector and civil society representatives. Participating countries made commitments toward strengthening democratic institutions and processes by fighting corruption and promoting the rule of law.
- They also committed to strengthening civil society and independent media, and to promoting democratic values among youth. Many of these principles discussed throughout the Summit were implemented in the Action Plan on Democratic Governance, which sets out a shared vision for democracy in the region with actionable steps towards greater investment in education and economic development and the promotion of gender equality.
- The Summit's emphasis on safeguarding human rights and freedoms underscored the crucial role they play in fostering a just, inclusive, and participatory society. The Summit demonstrated that when individuals can enjoy their fundamental rights, they are empowered to participate meaningfully in democratic processes, hold their governments accountable, and contribute to the overall well-being of their communities.



Recommendations for Advancing and Institutionalizing Democratic Practices in the Americas:

During an off the record private roundtable, thought leaders from across the Americas discussed how to combat democratic backsliding within the region, the effects of inequality and poverty on democratic stability, and the erosion of public trust through corruption. Discussants proposed key recommendations to strengthen democracy and outlined recommendations for institutionalizing the Summit to continue expanding democratic values and practices in the Western Hemisphere.

1. Strengthen Institutional Mechanisms for Democratic Oversight and Accountability:

- Establish a mechanism to monitor the state of democracy in the region. A systematic reporting system would provide a regular assessment of the health of democracy in the Americas and identify areas where progress is needed.
- Create a voluntary peer review process. This would allow countries to voluntarily subject themselves to review by peer countries, providing a mechanism for feedback and accountability in a pluralistic matter.
- Appoint an independent special reporter of democracy. This would create a dedicated position within the Organization of American States (OAS) to monitor and report on the state of democracy in the Americas.
- Reinvigorate the Inter-American system's programming on education, an example being the current Inter-American Education Agenda. This would provide support for education programs that promote democratic values and civic engagement.

2. Empower Civil Society and Foster Inclusive Participation

- Engage academics, civil society groups, and the private sector in efforts to advance democracy. These groups can play a valuable role in providing expertise, advocating for change, and holding governments accountable.
- Develop a shared definition of what constitutes a breach of the democratic order. This would provide a clearer framework for responding to anti-democratic actions.
- Invest in training for youth and marginalized people to become effective civil society actors. This would empower these groups to advocate for their rights and participate in the democratic process.
- Create a mechanism for informal dialogue among legislators from across the Americas. This would provide a platform for legislators to share ideas and build relationships, which could help to advance democracy in the region.



3. Enhance Preventive Measures for Backsliding and Expand Support for Democratic Initiatives



- Make the Democratic Charter more preventive in nature. This would allow the OAS to take proactive steps to address threats to democracy before they escalate.
- Increase funding for the OAS and related initiatives to support democracy in the Americas. This would provide the resources needed to carry out these recommendations to promote democracy.
- Promote regional collaboration on democratic initiatives to share best practices, provide mutual support, and strengthen collective responses to challenges. This could include establishing regional working groups, fostering knowledge exchange, and coordinating joint initiatives.