



CANADA'S VOICE
IN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE:

A CIVIL SOCIETY HANDBOOK

ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES

-OAS-

COORDINATED BY
FRIENDS OF THE EARTH CANADA

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GORDON FOUNDATION

Overview and Acknowledgments

Welcome to *Canada's Voice in Global Governance: A Civil Society Handbook*. The handbook is a resource for civil society organizations (CSOs) interested in understanding and influencing Canada's role in some of the world's most important global institutions. Each section of the handbook answers key questions and provides important contact information on a particular international institution, including: the Group of Eight (G8); World Bank Group; the World Trade Organization (WTO); the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); the Organization of American States (OAS); the International Labour Organization (ILO); the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); and the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR). There is also a section that provides an overview of the key pillars of the Canadian Government's foreign policy-making process. See the www.foecanada.org/intl/handbook.htm for a complete list of the documents that make up the handbook.

Please note that this version of the handbook is a "Working Draft". We hope that it can be of immediate use to CSOs across Canada and beyond, but we are also seeking comments and suggestions in order to improve it and ensure that it is useful to the widest possible range of organizations (please send comments to gsaul@foecanada.org).

Also note that the HTML version of this document includes hyperlinks to additional information. These links are indicated in the PDF version by underlined text, but they can only be opened through the html version. The handbook will be updated regularly, so to benefit from the hyperlinks and ensure that you have the most up-to-date version, please check the website: www.foecanada.org/intl/handbook.htm.

The many sections of the handbook represent the collective effort and input of a wide range of human rights, labour, environment and development organizations from across Canada and beyond. The process of bringing this information together was coordinated by Friends of the Earth Canada and advised by a steering committee that included representatives from the Halifax Initiative Coalition, the Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC), and Kairos: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives. We would like to thank the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation for their generous support. While Friends of the Earth deeply appreciates the support of all of the organizations and individuals involved in the development of this project, we take sole responsibility for any inaccuracies or mischaracterizations that may have survived the editing process.

We are still in the process of compiling individual acknowledgements and will include them in the re-edited First Edition that will follow soon.

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Canada's Voice in Global Governance: A Civil Society Handbook

The Organization of American States (OAS)

Introduction

Founded in Colombia in 1948, the Organization of American States (OAS) aims to promote social, economic, and political cooperation among the nations of North, Central, and South America. The OAS embodies a political movement known as Pan-Americanism, which dates back at least as far as the Latin American independence movements of the early 1800s.

The OAS was heavily influenced by the Cold War politics that characterized the latter half of the 20th century. The lofty principles of the OAS Charter, which included cooperation based on a common commitment to democracy, human rights, and respect for sovereignty, did little to obscure the fact that the OAS was part of the US effort to keep Communism out of the Western Hemisphere.¹ This may be one of the reasons why Canada did not join the Organization until 1990.

Canada's interest in the Americas grew at the end of the Cold War, when economic liberalization in the region created new trade opportunities. Canada was also attracted to democratic reforms that were underway.² Canada joined the OAS with an ambitious agenda that focused on strengthening democracy and respect for human rights. The Canadian government has also pushed for greater civil society participation in the OAS. However, like the rest of the Organization, Canada seems to prefer the input of "technically competent and politically unthreatening groups."³

The OAS is an organization in transition. While it faces challenges, the OAS has greater potential for citizen participation and accountability than other forms of hemispheric political dialogue such as the Summits

Box 1: Background on the OAS

Carolyn M. Shaw, *Cooperation, Conflict, and Consensus in the Organization of American States*, Palgrave Macmillan (2004).

Andrew F. Cooper and Thomas Legler, *Intervention Without Intervening? The OAS Defense and Promotion of Democracy in the Americas*, Palgrave Macmillan (2005).

Christopher R. Thomas and Juliana T. Magloire, *Regionalism Versus Multilateralism: The Organization of American States in a Global Changing Environment*, Kluwer Academic (2000).

[of the Americas](#), though this potential has yet to be realized. It is also one of the few venues in which Latin American and Caribbean countries can successfully balance US power, should they choose to act in concert.

This section of the handbook begins by describing what the OAS is, what it does, how it is structured, how it works, and how it is financed. This is followed by an explanation of who speaks for Canada at the OAS and who the key governmental players are in determining what Canada says at the institutions. Finally, this section of the handbook ends with tips for civil society activists who are interested in better understanding and influencing the OAS. The information that follows will be periodically updated and we welcome your comments and suggestions.

What is the OAS?

The OAS is the world's oldest regional political organization. Its stated purposes include the promotion of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in the Hemisphere; the advancement of peace and political stability, mainly through dispute resolution; and the elimination of extreme poverty through development cooperation.⁴ All 35 states in the region are members, although Cuba's right to vote and participate has been suspended since 1962. Members are now [required to be democracies](#), and the Organization can suspend the participation of a member whose democratically-elected government has been overthrown.⁵ The OAS has two founding documents: the [Charter](#) and the [American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man](#).

What Does the OAS Do?

Box 2: Summits of the Americas

The OAS has become increasingly involved with another hemispheric political institution, the Summits of the Americas. The Summits "bring together the Heads of State and Government of the Western Hemisphere to discuss common concerns, seek solutions, and develop a shared vision for their future development of the region, be it economic, social, or political in nature" (<http://www.summit-americas.org/eng-2002/summit-process.htm#I.%20Introduction>). The OAS is the administrative headquarters for the Summits.

At the Summits of the Americas, participating countries' heads of state enjoy a high profile. However, the Foreign Ministers are responsible for setting Summit agendas and for leading much of the process. Foreign Ministers show similar leadership at the OAS. This commonality explains why the OAS receives significant political direction from the Summit process.

One of the most important Summit initiatives is the negotiation of a hemispheric free trade agreement. Work on the [Free Trade Area of the Americas \(FTAA\)](#) began in 1998 but has since ground to a virtual halt in the face of significant public resistance and reservations by some Latin American countries.

The OAS pursues its ends of justice, peace, and development through three distinct but related means: political processes, programs, and judicial processes.

Political processes, the first category of OAS activity, are designed to generate agreement on common approaches, standards, and targets.

OAS Resolutions are the primary instrument for developing political agreement. They set out majority opinion on a variety of issues and give direction to the rest of the Organization. For example, in June 2003 the OAS passed a Resolution called “Access to Information: Strengthening Democracy.” This resolution reaffirmed that “everyone has the freedom to seek, receive, access, and impart information, and that access to public information is a requisite for the very exercise of democracy,” and instructed the Permanent Council to “promote seminars and forums designed to foster, disseminate, and exchange experiences and knowledge about access to public information so as to contribute, through efforts by the member states, to fully implementing such access...”⁶

The OAS also develops Conventions, Declarations, and Treaties, which establish norms and can bind signatories to new commitments. The OAS monitors peace and security in the region and can initiate dispute resolution mechanisms when necessary. Members also undertake joint defence planning.

The second area of OAS activity is carried out through its numerous programs, which are aimed at increasing cooperation and furthering common objectives. Some examples will illustrate the range of issues addressed by these programs. The [Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission](#) (CICAD) administers programs to foster cooperation and strengthen members’ capacity to prevent and treat drug abuse, and combat production and trafficking. The [Unit for the Promotion of Democracy](#) operates election observer missions, and programs to promote democracy in post-conflict and democratic transition situations. Another example is the [Pan American Health Organization](#) (PAHO), which works to improve health and living standards in the Americas.

The third category of OAS action is its judicial processes. The OAS investigates and adjudicates alleged human rights violations through the work of a special deliberative body, the [Inter-American Commission on Human Rights](#), and a judicial body, the [Inter-American Court of Human Rights](#). The Commission receives, analyzes, and investigates petitions from individuals that allege human rights violations by OAS states. It carries out on-site investigations, publishes reports on the status of human rights protections in member states and thematic human rights issues relevant to the region, and makes recommendations to member states on how to strengthen their human rights regimes. The Commission refers individual cases to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights for adjudication.

How is the OAS Structured?

The supreme decision-making body of the OAS is the [General Assembly](#), where each of the 34 active members of the Organization is represented by its Foreign Minister (or equivalent).⁷ While the Assembly passes important resolutions and makes some decisions during its annual session, almost all operational decisions are delegated to the Organization's other major governing body, the Permanent Council.

The [Permanent Council](#), which normally meets at least every second week, is made up of the member states' Ambassadors. The Council has authority to assign priorities, create bodies, and strike committees. It also acts as the Preparatory Committee of the General Assembly, preparing the Assembly agenda and the OAS budget. The Council plays a gate-keeping role with respect to the flow of information to the General Assembly. It considers OAS bodies' reports and decides which observations or recommendations to pass on to the Assembly. Chairmanship of the Council rotates every three months.

Along with the Permanent Council, the OAS houses several other important bodies. The four most important of these are the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI), which promotes hemispheric development and the eradication of extreme poverty through development cooperation among OAS members; the [Inter-American Commission on Human Rights](#); its sister organization, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights; and the [Pan-American Health Organization](#) (PAHO). The detailed organizational structure of the OAS can be found in Appendix B, below.

The OAS General Secretariat supports the work of its political bodies. In addition, it is mandated to promote "economic, social, juridical, educational, scientific, and cultural relations among the Member States," with a particular emphasis on "cooperation for the elimination of extreme poverty."⁸ The Secretariat is headed by a Secretary General, the Organization's chief executive. The OAS Headquarters and most of its Secretariat are located in Washington, D.C.

How Does the OAS Work?

In terms of its political activities, the most important OAS product is its [Resolutions](#). In most cases, these Resolutions are preceded by very similar, if not identical, [Permanent Council Resolutions](#). However, important differences can emerge in General Assembly Resolutions, meaning that both these bodies are important targets for lobby efforts.⁹

When political disputes arise in the Hemisphere, the OAS uses a mechanism called the Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (MCMFA).¹⁰ These special meetings are held “in order to consider problems of an urgent nature and of common interest to the American states, and to serve as the Organ of Consultation for the [Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance](#).”¹¹ All MCMFA decisions must be endorsed by a two-thirds majority. The Ministers can authorize a range of responses, including the recall of diplomatic missions, cessation of diplomatic relations (as in the case of Cuba), an interruption in economic relations, and the use of force.

Much of the work of the OAS concerns human rights. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) carries out its mandate through three lines of work: the consideration of individual complaints; the production of country reports; and the work of [Special Rapporteurs](#), who report on thematic human rights issues. The IACHR serves a function similar to the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR), outlined in another section of this handbook, except that unlike its UN counterpart, the Inter-American Commission is made up of [seven independent individuals](#) who are elected by the OAS General Assembly.

The IACHR considers allegations that a state has either violated human rights, failed to act to prevent a violation or has failed to provide proper redress following a violation. Any individual or group, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), can submit a petition regarding violations of the

Box 3: Other Guides to the OAS

Global Rights, *Using the Inter-American System for Human Rights*
[www.globalrights.org/site/DocServer/ENGLISH - REVISED 7-19.pdf?docID=423](http://www.globalrights.org/site/DocServer/ENGLISH_-_REVISED_7-19.pdf?docID=423)

Human Rights Education Associates
Study Guide: The Inter-American Human Rights System
<http://www.hrea.org/learn/guides/OAS.html>

Enrique Lagos, OAS Assistant Secretary for Legal Affairs, *Organization of American States (OAS)*, Kluwer Law International, 2001.
www.oas.org/legal/english/osla/kluwer_law.doc

William M. Berenson, *The Structure of the Organization of American States: A Summary*
www.oas.org/legal/english/WMB%20Structure%20of%20OAS.%20Eng.doc

Box 4: Canada and the OAS/Inter-American System

Foreign Affairs Canada:
 Latin America and Caribbean Bureau
www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/latinamerica/menu-en.asp

Canadian International Development Agency:
 Americas Branch
<http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/america-e.htm>

Peter McKenna, *Canada and the OAS: From Dilettante to Full Partner*, Carleton University Press (1995).

James Rochlin, *Discovering the Americas: The Evolution of Canadian Foreign Policy towards Latin America*, University of British Columbia Press (1994).

Parliament

Balance, Transparency and Engagement After the Quebec Summit, Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade (SCFAIT), June 2001.

Enforcement of International Obligations: Environment, Labour, Human Rights, Cultural Diversity - Issues and Approaches, Government Study in Response to Recommendation #1 from SCFAIT Report: "Balance, Transparency and Engagement after the Quebec Summit", May 2003.

FTAA and the Americas, Government Response to the SCFAIT Report, "Strengthening Canada's Economic Links with the Americas", October 2002.

Available at:
www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/tna-nac/Consult3-en.asp#WTO

human rights that are protected under the [American Convention on Human Rights](#) and the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man.¹² Complainants need not be the victims of the alleged abuses. In order to submit a petition, a complainant must show that all available domestic remedies have been exhausted in the country where the violation allegedly took place.

The Commission follows a well established process for processing complaints.¹³ Both the complainant and the accused State are asked to submit relevant information, and to respond to each others' submissions. Usually, the Commission holds a hearing where both parties present arguments, after which it issues an initial unpublished report, giving the State a period of time to comply with any recommendations that the Commission may make. When this time has expired, one of two things happens: the Commission releases a second report, which may contain recommendations that are eventually published, or it may submit the case to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

The Commission also issues [country reports](#) on human rights violations. This role is controversial, and the Commission has developed specific criteria for deciding when to prepare a country report.¹⁴ Generally, the Commission focuses on countries with widespread complaints of abuse. The Commission may also issue reports that are more limited in scope, focusing on a particular human rights issue within a country. The 2000 report entitled "[The Situation of Human Rights of Asylum Seekers within the Canadian Refugee Determination System](#)" is one example.¹⁵

Where Does the OAS Get its Money?

The OAS regular budget for 2005 is just under US\$86 million. Each of the OAS members contributes to the fund based on a quota system established by the General Assembly. The largest contributor is the United States, which provides 59.47 percent of the OAS budget.¹⁶ Canada contributes 12.36 percent of the budget, which amounted to approximately US\$9 million for 2005.

In addition, a special multilateral fund, FEMCIDI (Fondo Especial Multilateral del CIDI),¹⁷ raised through the voluntary contributions of OAS member states, supports the work of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI). The Fund's annual budget is approximately US\$8–9 million, of which Canada contributes US\$2 million through the Canadian International Development Agency.

Some of the OAS Specialized Organizations also have considerable budgets. For example, the [Pan-American Health Organization's](#) budget (US\$92,153,000) surpassed that of the OAS in 2005. Canada annually contributes close to US\$11 million to the PAHO.

Who Speaks for Canada at the OAS?

Canada's highest representative at the OAS is its Minister of Foreign Affairs, who normally attends the annual General Assembly session. The Minister also represents Canada at any Meetings of Consultation of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs. Canada is also normally represented by its Minister of International Cooperation at the annual session of CIDI, and by its Permanent Representative on CIDI's Permanent Executive Committee (CEPCIDI).

Box 5: Contacting the Government:

To contact a person or office in the **Government of Canada**, check the Government Electronic Directory Services (GEDS), a searchable online database of government contact information. See: <http://direct.srv.gc.ca/cgi-bin/direct500/BE>

The **Parliament of Canada** website maintains contact information for Members of Parliament and records of parliamentary proceedings. See: <http://www.parl.gc.ca/>

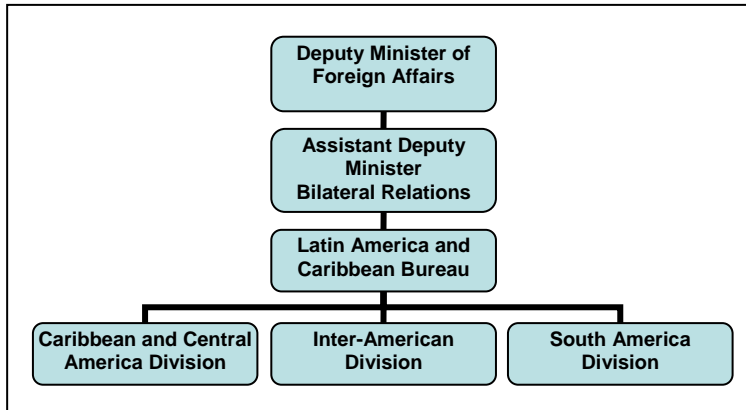
Apart from ministerial meetings, Canada's highest representative at the OAS is its Permanent Representative, who is an Ambassador and heads Canada's Permanent Mission to the OAS in Washington, D.C. Officials from the Permanent Mission represent Canada on the OAS committees.

In addition, Canada is often represented in OAS functional committees, working groups, or boards of Specialized Organizations by officials from various Federal departments. For example, officials from the Aboriginal and Circumpolar Affairs Division of Foreign Affairs Canada, the International Relations Directorate of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and Justice Canada have been involved in the work of the [Working Group to Prepare the Draft American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) in the OAS Committee on Juridical and Political Affairs (CAJP). Officials from Health Canada participate on the Directing Councils of the Pan-American Health Organization and the [Inter-American Children's Institute](#), and the Deputy Head of Status of Women Canada is a delegate to the [Inter-American Commission of Women](#). In addition, officials from the Latin America and Caribbean bureau of Foreign Affairs Canada and the Inter-American Program of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) are involved in a number of OAS bodies.

Who Decides What Canada Says at the OAS?

Ultimate responsibility for Canadian representation at the OAS lies with the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Policy coordination is handled by the Latin America and Caribbean Bureau of Foreign Affairs

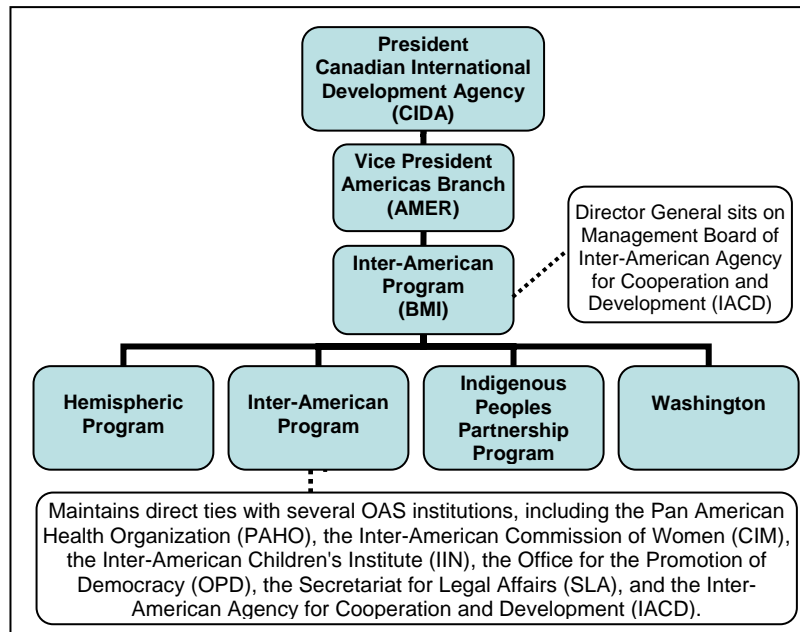
Box 6: Foreign Affairs Canada, Latin American and Caribbean Bureau



Canada, specifically the [Inter-American Division](#), in conjunction with Canada’s Permanent Mission to the OAS. The Director of the Inter-American Division tends to handle relations with domestic civil society. Most day-to-day issues related to the OAS are handled by Canada’s Ambassador and the Permanent Mission to the OAS.

The [Canadian International Development Agency \(CIDA\)](#) also plays a significant role at the OAS. CIDA’s Minister is responsible for Canada’s policies vis-à-vis the Inter-American Council for Integral Development, and officials at CIDA are in direct contact with many of the functional bodies and departments of the OAS that deal with development issues.

Box 7: Canadian International Development Agency, Inter-American Program



Tips for Civil Society

Civil Society Organization (CSO) participation at the OAS is relatively new, and mechanisms for meaningful input have not yet emerged in many sectors. While the OAS’s reputation for being relatively closed to civil society began to change in the early 90s, meaningful participation is

still the exception rather than the rule, and many governments in the Hemisphere are wary of CSOs.

Some organizations are focused on creating more space for civil society participation in the OAS and the [Summits of the Americas](#). In Canada, the Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL) and the Assembly of First Nations are actively involved in work related to the OAS. FOCAL coordinates a bi-monthly forum called “Summit of the Americas in Focus,” where interested NGOs meet with government representatives and occasionally OAS officials in Ottawa to discuss issues surrounding civil society participation in the Summits process.

For civil society organizations, the value of engaging at the OAS varies, depending on the issue in question. Human Rights groups have successfully used the Inter-American Human Rights Commission and Court to advance hemispheric human rights protections for decades. Among other things, these groups have pushed the OAS to develop new human rights instruments. For example, civil society played a key role in the development of the [Inter-American Convention on Forced Disappearance of Persons](#).¹⁸ The Canadian organization [Rights and Democracy](#) has been very active on human rights issues at the OAS, working in partnership with La Coalición Internacional de Organizaciones para los Derechos Humanos en las Américas.¹⁹

There has been some willingness at the OAS to consult civil society on environmental and indigenous rights issues. Unfortunately, trade issues are a different matter. Most governments in the Hemisphere are

Box 8: Organizations working on OAS/hemispheric issues

Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL)
www.focal.ca

Rights and Democracy
www.dd-rd.ca

Assembly of First Nations
www.afn.ca

Common Frontiers
(Canadian Member of the Hemispheric Social Alliance)
www.web.net/comfront

Réseau Québécois sur l'Intégration Continentale (RQIC)
(Canadian Member of the Hemispheric Social Alliance)
<http://www.rqic.alternatives.ca>

Hemispheric Social Alliance
www.asc-hsa.org

Partners of the Americas
<http://www.partners.net>

Inter-American Democracy Network
www.redinter.org

Corporación PARTICIPA
(Spanish only)
<http://www.participa.cl>

Regional Coordinator for Economic and Social Research for Central America and the Caribbean (CRIES)
(Spanish only)
www.cries.org

For information on Civil Society Activities and the OAS see:
www.civil-society.oas.org

extremely reluctant to accept any linkage between the trade agenda and concerns over environment, social justice, and human rights, while many CSOs argue that these issues are inseparable.²⁰

For civil society organizations that choose to engage with the Summits' process, there are some key points of entry: the [Summit Implementation Review Group](#) (SIRG), which has increased the frequency of its meetings and the amount of information it makes available to civil society, and special forums and sub-regional meetings that are held with OAS officials in the months prior to the Summit.

For the FTAA negotiations, the only formal mechanisms for civil society input are the notoriously ineffective Committee of Government Representatives on the Participation of Civil Society (CGR), and the largely symbolic meetings with the Trade Ministers on the sidelines of the ministerial level talks.

It is important to be aware that the participation permitted by the formal mechanisms associated with hemispheric political processes is often symbolic. While forums and consultations can be an important way to survey the lay of the land, effective advocacy around the OAS and the Summits takes place through relationship-building with people in the Permanent Missions, the OAS Secretariat, and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs. An overview of the mechanisms outlined above can be found in Appendix A. Remember that obtaining consultative status permits participation in all of the public meetings of the OAS political bodies.

Box 9: OAS Registration:

For more information on civil society registration with the OAS and participation in the activities of the organization, see the Civil Society page on the OAS website: <http://www.civil-society.oas.org/>

A final option for civil society is to participate in the protests and parallel summits that accompany hemispheric events. Such efforts have borne fruit, most notably in 2001, when the Trade Ministers agreed to publish drafts of the FTAA negotiating text in response to protests. The Ministers also agreed to transmit civil society views to the negotiating groups. Efforts have been led by the [Hemispheric Social Alliance](#) (HSA), a group of 26 regional, sectoral and national networks that have organized "People's Summits" on the sidelines of the Summits of the Americas and the FTAA negotiations. Canada is represented at the HSA by two coalitions: [Common Frontiers](#) and the [Réseau Québécois sur l'Intégration Continentale](#) (RQIC)

Conclusion

Friends of the Earth Canada hopes that this handbook will serve as a useful point of reference for organizations interested in better understanding and influencing the OAS. This is a work-in-progress that will be periodically updated in order to better serve the needs of civil society organizations in Canada and abroad. We want to encourage readers to provide feedback and advice on how to improve this working draft. Please send any questions and comments to gsaul@foecanada.org.

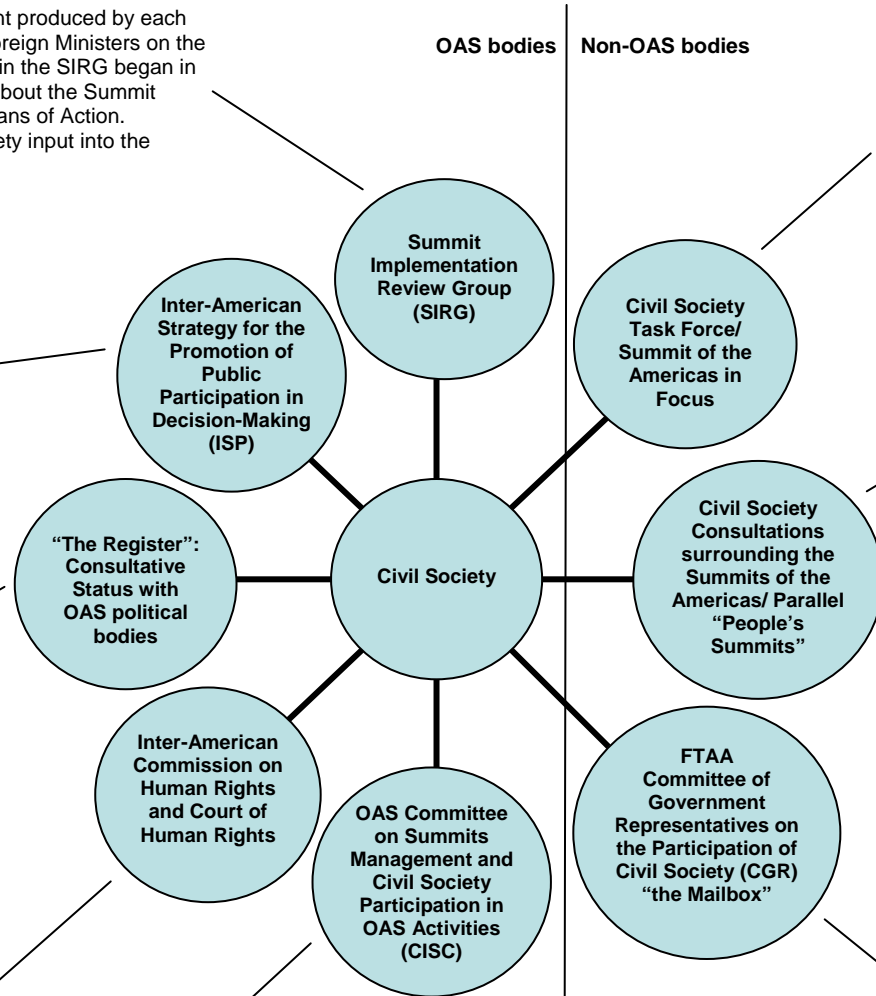
Appendix A: Civil Society Access Points to the OAS, FTAA and Summits of the Americas

The SIRG drafts the Plans of Action, the main document produced by each Summit of the Americas, and reports annually to the Foreign Ministers on the progress achieved in fulfilling them. CSO participation in the SIRG began in April 2003 and provides CSOs with better information about the Summit process, including the design and implementation of Plans of Action. Increasingly, the SIRG is the main conduit for civil society input into the Summits.

The ISP is an OAS program that promotes public participation in decision-making around issues of environment and sustainable development. It does so by sponsoring public consultation processes at demonstration sites, assessing national legal and institutional provisions for citizen participation and making recommendations for their improvement, providing technical training and assistance and helping to establish national forums for consultation between government and civil society.

Organizations on the Register can participate in public meetings of the Permanent Council, the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI), and the General Assembly, as well as OAS conferences. Participation in meetings of other OAS bodies is at the discretion of the relevant chair. CSOs can make oral and written submissions, but cannot vote or take part in deliberations. CSOs that are not registered can usually participate in the General Assembly by applying for special guest status. There is always a meeting between civil society and the Foreign Ministers at the General Assembly (one to two hours), but these are not always well attended by the Ministers.

Participation of civil society entities at the Commission and Court of Human Rights is not related to consultative status with the OAS (the Register), but is governed by the American Convention on Human Rights and the regulations of these bodies. Individuals and CSOs cannot take cases directly to the Court; they must be referred by the Commission or a member state. However, they can, and often do, file an application before the Commission on behalf of individuals whose rights have been violated.



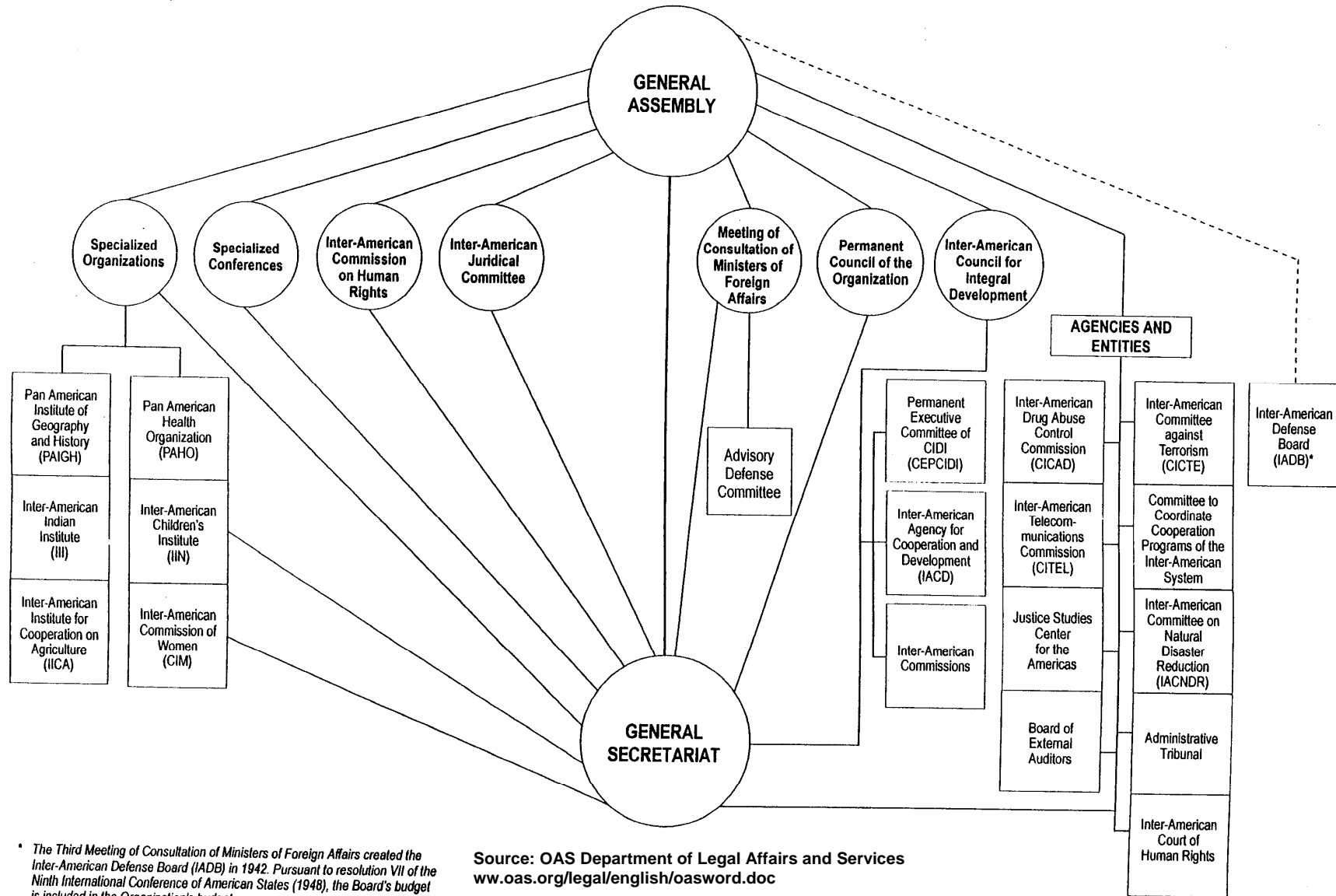
Created in 1999, this committee reviews CSO applications for consultative status with the OAS (the Register) and makes recommendations to the Permanent Council on their acceptance. The Committee also solicits feedback from civil society related to its participation in both the OAS and the Summit processes, and develops strategies to increase and facilitate that participation. The Committee meets once a month, and usually holds a special meeting with CSOs each year to assess progress on its mandate and hear the recommendations of unaccredited CSOs on the implementation of the Summit mandates.

The Task Force is an informal body that hosts monthly meetings in Washington where representatives of civil society, the OAS Secretariat, government officials and others discuss issues related to active citizen participation in the Americas, especially civil society participation in the Summits process. The Task Force is coordinated by the US Esquel Group Foundation and Partners of the Americas. Based on this model, meetings between government, civil society and business sector representatives are now being held every two months in Ottawa under the title of "Summit of the Americas in Focus". This initiative is coordinated by the Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL).

Civil society organizations submit recommendations regarding the Plan of Action that is released at each Summit of the Americas. For the 1998 and 2001 Summits, extensive consultations were conducted within civil society on a Hemisphere-wide basis, and the results were presented through a central channel. Since 2003, this process is increasingly undertaken through a series of special "forums" and sub-regional meetings with OAS representatives, as well as more frequent meetings of the SIRG – a format the OAS seems to prefer. Online "virtual deliberations" were added for the 2005 Buenos Aires Summit. In addition, the Foreign Ministers always meet with civil society representatives for an hour or two the day before the Summit. Some CSOs reject these consultations as having little participatory value, particularly since trade issues are generally off the table. They have organized alternative "People's Summits" at each Summit since the 1998 Summit in Santiago.

First proposed by Canadian Trade Minister Sergio Marchi, the CGR solicits comments from civil society on matters related to the FTAA. Unlike other FTAA committees, it does not make recommendations to the negotiators, nor does it have any mechanisms for feedback or accountability. It merely conveys "the range of views" expressed by CSOs to the negotiators. As such, it has been nick-named the "mailbox", because it is seen as a mere repository for CSO concerns that has no chance of influencing the negotiation process.

Appendix B: Organization Chart of the Organization of American States



* The Third Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs created the Inter-American Defense Board (IADB) in 1942. Pursuant to resolution VII of the Ninth International Conference of American States (1948), the Board's budget is included in the Organization's budget.

Source: OAS Department of Legal Affairs and Services
www.oas.org/legal/english/oasword.doc

¹ See for example Statement by Ambassador Odeen Ishmael of Guyana in the Permanent Council of the OAS during discussions on the Inter-American Democratic Charter, Washington DC, June 20, 2001.

² See *Canada and the OAS: History*, <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/latinamerica/oas-history-en.asp>.

³ Yasmine Shamsie, *Mutual Misgivings: Civil Society Inclusion in the Americas*, *The North-South Institute*, Ottawa, Canada, October 2003; Laurie Cole, *Civil Society Participation in the Inter-American System: The Case of the Organization of American States*, Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL), June 2003, 11. This is often expressed at the OAS as a desire for “constructive” input from civil society.

⁴ Adapted from Human Rights Education Associates (HREA), *Study Guide: The Inter-American Human Rights System*, prepared by Elizabeth Strenio, 2003.

⁵ See the Protocol of Amendments to the Charter of the Organization of American States, “Protocol of Washington,” at <http://www.oas.org/juridico/english/Treaties/a-56.htm>.

⁶ OAS Resolution AG/RES. 1932 (XXXIII-O/03).

⁷ The Assembly elects a president to chair its proceedings, but the role is purely procedural, and does not carry responsibilities past the close of the session.

⁸ *OAS Charter*, Article 111.

⁹ See Global Rights, *Using the Inter-American System for Human Rights: a Practical Guide for NGOs*. March, 2004. http://www.globalrights.org/site/DocServer/ENGLISH_-_REVISED_7-19.pdf?docID=423

¹⁰ For a more detailed explanation, see Enrique Lagos (Assistant Secretary for Legal Affairs), *Organization of American States (OAS)*, Intergovernmental Organizations – Suppl. 9 (July 2001), Kluwer Law International, 26-31.

¹¹ <http://www.oas.org/consejo/MEETINGS%20OF%20CONSULTATION/overview.asp>.

¹² The Commission applies the Convention to cases that are brought against its signatories and applies the Declaration to cases lodged against OAS members that are not parties to the Convention.

¹³ For more information on this process, see www.cidh.org/what.htm.

¹⁴ See Global Rights, *Using the Inter-American System for Human Rights*, p. 27.

¹⁵ Report available at www.cidh.org/countryrep/Canada2000en/table-of-contents.htm.

¹⁶ This has been set by the General Assembly as the maximum quota for an individual member.

¹⁷ The acronym comes from the Spanish name, Fondo Especial Multilateral del CIDI.

¹⁸ See Global Rights, *Using the Inter-American System for Human Rights*, p.10-11.

¹⁹ In English, the International Coalition of Organizations for Human Rights in the Americas. The network operates primarily in Spanish.

²⁰ At one point, Canada, the United States, Argentina, Chile, and some Caribbean states attempted to establish a study group regarding the FTAA, labour, and the environment, but the idea was vehemently opposed by Mexico, Peru, and several Central American countries. See Shamsie, p.22.