

2023 YEAR IN REVIEW DECO



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2023 YEAR IN REVIEW OF THE OAS DEPARTMENT OF ELECTORAL COOPERATION AND OBSERVATION (DECO), SECRETARIAT FOR STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY (SSD)

General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (GS/OAS)



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INTRODUCTION

This document summarizes the work carried out in 2023 by the Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation (DECO) of the Secretariat for Strengthening Democracy (SSD). It is a review of the Electoral Observation Missions deployed in the region, the various cooperation projects implemented, and the activities developed by DECO during the year to contribute to the strengthening of electoral processes, institutions, and democracy in the Americas.

In 2023, the OAS deployed 8 Electoral Observation Missions in 5 countries of the hemisphere: Antigua and Barbuda (General Elections), Colombia (Territorial Elections), Ecuador (Sectional Elections, Citizen Participation and Societal Oversight Council, Referendum and Local Plebiscite; Early Presidential Elections; Presidential Runoff and repeat of the Legislative Elections abroad), Guatemala (General Elections and Presidential Runoff) and Paraguay (General Elections).

The OAS conducted a complete and exhaustive analysis of all the electoral processes observed. Thanks to the financial contributions of 11 donors (Brazil, Canada, France, Italy, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Panama, Peru, Republic of Korea, Spain, Switzerland, and The United States of America), the OAS had a total of 455 specialists and international observers (237 women and 218 men) in its deployments.

In the area of Electoral Technical Cooperation, DECO implemented numerous projects and initiatives, including: 1) Project to strengthen the electoral technology and organization processes of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal of Guatemala, 2) Diagnosis on the gender mainstreaming in the Superior Electoral Tribunal of the Dominican Republic, 3) Cooperation to the Supreme Electoral Tribunal of El Salvador on voting abroad, 4) Diagnosis of the JCE's electoral counting system for the 2024 electoral processes of Dominican Republic, 5) Participation in consultations and technical review of the proposal on electoral reform in Dominica, 6) Workshops on disinformation and elections, 7) Trainings on women's right to a political life free of violence. DECO also conducted a workshop on EOMs recommendations on women's political participation in the Dominican Republic and a specialized workshop for Jamaican students on democracy, elections and electoral observation.

Finally, in 2023, DECO organized the XVI Inter-American Meeting of Electoral Authorities in Ottawa, Canada. The meeting was organized by the OAS General Secretariat, through DECO as technical secretariat, and Elections Canada. The meeting brought together 48 authorities and representatives of 36 electoral bodies from 27 OAS members states.

This document reflects the permanent commitment of the Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation to the consolidation and strengthening of democracy in the Americas, which will continue in 2024 with the observation of electoral processes in Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Mexico and Panama, among other countries, along with the implementation of various cooperation projects and with the generation of cutting-edge tools and content that will support Member States to continue improving their electoral processes and institutions.



01

Observing Electoral Processes



The OAS Electoral Observation Missions are one of the most powerful mechanisms in the Inter-American System for the promotion and improvement of democracy, and for guaranteeing the right of the citizens of the hemisphere to elect freely. **With the work of the observers in the countries of the region, the Organization reaffirms its commitment to democracy, its strengthening and continued protection.”**

Luis Almagro
Secretary General

2023 Electoral Observation Missions



ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

General Elections
January 18, 2023



ECUADOR

Sectional Elections, Citizen Participation and Societal Oversight Council (CPCS) Elections, and Referendum and Local Plebiscite
February 5, 2023



PARAGUAY

General Elections
April 30, 2023



GUATEMALA

General Elections
June 25, 2023



ECUADOR

Early Presidential and Legislative Elections, and Popular Consultations
August 20, 2023



GUATEMALA

Presidential Runoff
August 20, 2023



ECUADOR

Presidential Runoff and repeat of the Legislative Elections abroad
October 15, 2023



COLOMBIA

Territorial Elections
October 29, 2023

LUN IRMA GA



CENTRO DE VOTACIÓN



PROHIBIDO
Gracias por su comprensión



Observaciones
INTERNACIONALES





ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

General Elections

January 18, 2023



Donors



Number of members of the EOM



Nationalities



Deployed in:

St. John's City West, St. John's City East, St. John's City South, St. John's Rural West, St. John's Rural South, St. John's Rural East, St. John's Rural North, St. Mary's North, St. Mary's South, All Saints East & St. Luke, All Saints West, St. George, St. Peter, St. Philip North, St. Philip South, St. Paul, and Barbuda.

Topics observed:

Electoral technology, political financing, political participation of women, electoral organization and registration, and electoral justice.

The Mission (OAS/EOM) deployed for the General Elections in Antigua and Barbuda was led by the former Prime Minister of Jamaica, Bruce Golding.

On January 18th, members of the OAS Mission visited 181 polling stations throughout the country, including Barbuda, where it was the only international observation mission present. The team reported that the process was conducted in a professional and disciplined manner and in accordance with the provisions of the Representation of the People Act.

The Mission highlighted the actions taken by the Electoral Commission to implement the OAS/EOM recommendations presented in 2014, such as the establishment of a continuous voter registration process; and the development and implementation of an updated and user-friendly website with ample information about the Commission's structure and functions, current and previous electoral processes, registration, voting requirements, media links, and other services and publications.

The OAS has deployed 3 Electoral Observation Missions in Antigua and Barbuda since 2009.

Some of the recommendations of the EOM:

- Merging the Electoral Commission and the Constituency Boundaries Commission into a single body, as recommended in the Constituencies Boundaries Commission Report (2022).
- Reviewing contingency plans and procedures to effectively address technological challenges in future elections.
- Improving the voter information function of the ABEC website, by including a search mechanism that would allow voters to locate their names on the Register of Electors and identify their designated polling station.
- Establishing a more robust legislative and administrative system to regulate financial contributions to and expenditure by political parties within or outside of an election, that would include limits on the amount of contributions that can be made by individuals.
- Providing the ABEC with additional resources, both human and financial, to more effectively monitor and enforce the implementation of campaign finance law and regulations.
- As recommended in 2014, political parties must work on the inclusion of affirmative action measures to guarantee the full exercise of political rights of women and the promotion of gender equality in elections.

OAS ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION
2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS
ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA



Reports presented by the Mission:



[Preliminary Report
General Elections](#)





ECUADOR

Sectional Elections, Citizen Participation and Societal Oversight
Council Elections, Referendum and Local Plebiscite

February 5, 2023



Donors



Number of members of the EOM



Nationalities



Deployed in:

Azuay, Guayas, Loja, Manabí, Morona Santiago, and Pichincha.

Topics observed:

Electoral organization and technology, campaign financing, electoral justice, direct democracy, and political participation of women, indigenous peoples, and Afro-descendant populations.

The Electoral Observation Mission (OAS/EOM) for the Sectional Elections was led by Uruguayan sociologist Juan Pablo Corlazzoli. The Mission was made up of 20 observers and specialists from 9 countries.

The Mission considered it positive that for the first time local electoral authorities organized debates between male and female candidates for prefectures and mayorships in all provinces in the country, in keeping with the 2020 reform of the Democracy Code.

On election day, OAS observers visited voting centers in six provinces in the country and were present from the setting up and opening of polling stations, to the vote counting and transmission of the results. During its observation, the Mission noted delays in the opening of the polling stations visited.

As of February 2023, the OAS has deployed 24 Observation Missions in Ecuador since 1968.

Some of the recommendations of the EOM:

- Considering the possibility of hiring election staff earlier, in order to increase the days and hours of training provided, thus ensuring their complete understanding of the process and familiarity with the procedures on election day.
- Conducting all necessary stress and connectivity tests to ensure that the digital voting system does not suffer interruptions on election day, and thoroughly analyze any incidents that occur with a view to taking corrective measures for the future.
- Designing and implementing electoral judicial processes that ensure the political rights of candidates, that are expeditious, and that strive for certainty, in order to avoid any possible doubt among citizens and create the conditions for the exercise of a fully informed vote.
- Conducting rigorous studies on the origin and impact of violence on the democratic process and its differential effects on national and local government authorities, political organizations, candidates, and the public in general.
- Conducting a comprehensive review of the electoral spending oversight and monitoring system and ensuring that the National Electoral Council and the Electoral Disputes Court are accorded robust and timely powers to exercise their monitoring, oversight, and punitive authority in political and electoral matters recognized in the Constitution and laws. To maximize its effectiveness, monitoring should be carried out before, during and after the electoral process.
- Deepening and expanding vote-promotion and training strategies for female candidates.

OAS ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION
SECTIONAL ELECTIONS
ECUADOR-2023



Reports presented by the Mission:



Preliminary Report
Local Elections



PARAGUAY

General Elections

April 30, 2023



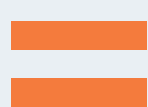
Donors



Number of members of the EOM



31



60



29

Total

Nationalities



Deployed in:

Asunción, Central, Alto Paraná, Alto Paraguay, Amambay, Boquerón, Caaguazú, Caazapá, Canindeyú, Concepción, Cordillera, Guairá, Itapúa, Misiones, Ñeembucú, Paraguarí, Presidente Hayes, San Pedro, and Washington D.C. (United States of America).

Topics observed:

Electoral organization, electoral technology, information security, electoral justice, campaigns and freedom of expression, electoral violence, political-electoral financing, political participation of women, indigenous peoples and Afro-descendant populations.

The Electoral Observation Mission (OAS/EOM) for the General Elections was headed by former Ambassador of the United States of America to the OAS, Luis Lauredo.

The OAS/EOM observed the day of the election from the opening to the closing of the polls, in addition to the counting of votes at 839 polling stations in 201 voting centers in Paraguay's 17 departments as well as in the capital city. It also monitored the vote in Washington D.C., in the United States of America.

The Mission also congratulated the people of Paraguay for the national and departmental elections held on Sunday, April 30. The Mission also saluted the elected authorities, the civic commitment of Paraguayans who turned out to vote and recognized the work of the polling station officers and electoral authority officials.

The OAS has deployed 16 Electoral Observation Missions in Paraguay since 1991.

Some of the recommendations of the EOM:

- Initiate a national conversation on how to increase women's political participation, for which the OAS has a High-Level Group and offers its collaboration in presenting topics for the discussion agenda.
- Advance towards parity in the electoral laws with alternation applicable to all elected posts in the final lists of candidates, so as to ensure a balanced representation between men and women.
- Allocate a fixed percentage of contributions received by political groups to strengthening capacity- and leadership-building for women through education and training.
- Make it legally enforceable for political groups to submit a gender policy to the electoral body that allows them to promote greater participation and leadership by women members.
- Make it a legal obligation for political groups and candidates to publish campaign income and expenditure accounts in real time in the National Political Financing System (SINAFIP) or on computer tools provided by the Superior Tribunal of Electoral Justice.
- That the Superior Tribunal of Electoral Justice design verification and auditing mechanisms to ensure compliance with the campaign expenditure ceilings for national and departmental elections and with limits on individual donations.



Reports presented by the Mission:



Preliminary Report
General Elections



GUATEMALA

General Elections and of Central American Parliament Deputies

June 25 and August 20, 2023

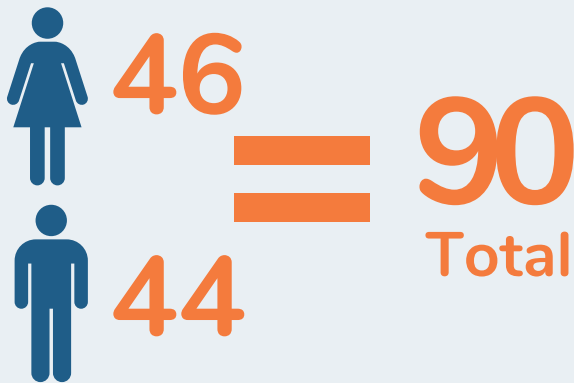


Donors



General elections and of Central American Parliament deputies

Number of members of the EOM



Nationalities



Deployed in:

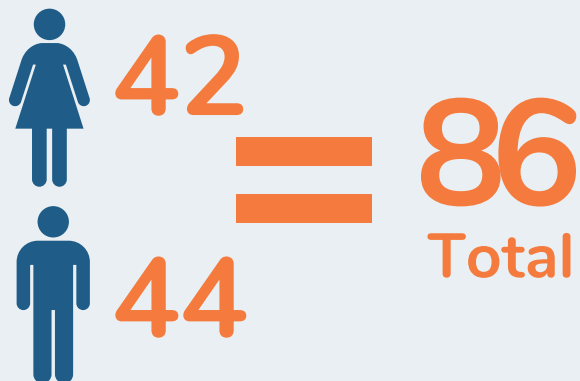
Guatemala City, Guatemala, Alta Verapaz, Baja Verapaz, Chimaltenango, Chiquimula, El Progreso, Escuintla, Huehuetenango, Izabal, Jalapa, Petén, Quetzaltenango, Quiché, Retalhuleu, Sacatepéquez, San Marcos, Santa Rosa, Sololá, Suchitepéquez, Totonicapán and Zacapa.

Topics observed:

Electoral organization, electoral technology, political financing, electoral violence, and the political participation of women and indigenous peoples.

Presidential Runoff

Number of members of the EOM



Nationalities



Deployed in:

Guatemala City, Guatemala, Alta Verapaz, Baja Verapaz, Chimaltenango, Chiquimula, El Progreso, Escuintla, Huehuetenango, Izabal, Jalapa, Petén, Quetzaltenango, Quiché, Retalhuleu, Sacatepéquez, San Marcos, Santa Rosa, Sololá, Suchitepéquez, Totonicapán and Zacapa.

Topics observed:

Electoral organization, electoral technology, electoral violence, political financing, political participation of women and indigenous peoples.





The Electoral Observation Missions (OAS/EOM) for the General Elections and the Presidential Runoff was headed by the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay, Eladio Loizaga.

Prior to its deployment, the OAS Mission made preliminary visits to the country to meet with various authorities of the country, political parties, and other actors to discuss the development of the electoral process. In addition, an OAS technical team compiled information on the development of the process, both at the national and departmental levels, and observed the simulations of the Information Program for the Transmission of Preliminary Results.

During the General Elections and Presidential Runoff, the OAS/EOM highlighted the civic commitment of the Guatemalan citizens who voted, congratulated the elected candidates, and recognized the work of the electoral authorities, representatives of political parties, and other actors who collaborated in the conduction of the elections.

On the other hand, during the electoral process, in multiple press releases and official statements, the OAS expressed its concern and followed up on issues such as the uncertainty and tension surrounding the electoral process and the actions of different actors in the country to alter the will of the people expressed unequivocally at the ballot box.

During the two voting days, the OAS/EOM observed from the opening to the closing of the polls, in addition to the counting of votes in 2,350 polling stations in the 22 departments, in Guatemala City, and in Arlington, Virginia and Washington D.C., in the United States of America.

The OAS has deployed 22 Electoral Observation Missions in Guatemala since 1970.

Some of the recommendations of the EOM:

- Include training for political parties and delivery of material for agents in the training plan of the Institute for Civic-Political and Electoral Education and Training.
- Continue with efforts to add security and traceability mechanisms for electoral materials at all stages of the electoral process.
- Strengthen the Specialized Unit on Overseas Voting (UEVE) and coordinate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to elicit the support of Guatemalan consulates around the world in the design and implementation of overseas voting in more countries with a Guatemalan population.
- Design and implement proceedings that ensure the political rights of candidates are expeditious, guarantee timely responses and attempt to abide by the principal of finality (definitividad), in order to avoid any possible uncertainty among citizens and generate the conditions for exercising a fully informed vote.
- Carefully establishing in the regulations, the specific powers and competencies of each of the bodies that may issue --prior to the election, and no later than that-- pronouncements with electoral justice implications, as well as the procedures, deadlines, and instruments contemplated.
- Evaluating regulatory reforms that discourage excessive litigation, as well as applications exclusively designed to cause delay or that are contrary to law. These may include, but are not limited to, the imposition of fines in the case of clear abusive use of electoral and constitutional actions.
- Design and implement, through amendments to the Electoral and Political Parties Law, a political-electoral financing system with greater participation of public financing, which restricts the use of private resources and the risk of irregular sources of financing.
- Promote parity as a tool to strengthen women's participation on an equal footing, including indigenous women.

Reports presented by the Mission:



Report to the Permanent Council. General Elections (Only available in Spanish).



Report to the Permanent Council. Presidential Runoff (Only available in Spanish).



Preliminary Report General Elections



Preliminary Report Presidential Runoff



Pronouncements by the Mission:



[OAS Secretariat for Strengthening Democracy Expresses Concern about Process of Registering Candidacies in Guatemala](#)



[OAS Electoral Observation Mission in Guatemala Begins Visit to the Country on Monday](#)



[Chief of the OAS Electoral Observation Mission in Guatemala Concludes Preliminary Visit](#)



[OAS Deploys Electoral Observation Mission in Guatemala](#)



[OAS Mission calls for respect for the will of the Guatemalan people as expressed in the elections](#)



[OAS Electoral Observation Mission Expresses its Concern for the Extreme Judicialization of the Electoral Process in Guatemala](#)



[OAS Observation Mission deploys once more to Guatemala](#)



[OAS Electoral Mission Observes the Conclusion of the Vote Count Verification Hearings in Guatemala](#)



[Statement from the OAS Electoral Observation Mission in Guatemala](#)



[Chief of the OAS Electoral Observation Mission arrives in Guatemala for the Second Round of the Presidential Elections](#)



[OAS Electoral Observation Mission Rejects Raid on the Headquarters of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal and the Semilla Party](#)



[OAS Electoral Observation Mission Expresses Concern About the Continuation of the Process of Judicialization of the Presidential Elections in Guatemala](#)



[OAS Electoral Observation Mission in Guatemala Remains Alert to New Judicial Actions of the Public Ministry and Calls for Guarantees for Adequate Working Conditions for the TSE](#)



[OAS Electoral Observation Mission in Guatemala Expresses Concern over Possible Suspension of Movimiento Semilla Party](#)



[OAS Mission Expresses Deep Concern about Actions of the Public Prosecutor's Office against the Integrity of Electoral Material in Guatemala](#)



[Statement from the OAS Electoral Mission in Guatemala on the New Raid on the TSE and the Request to Withdraw Immunity from Judges of the Court](#)



[OAS Electoral Mission in Guatemala Rejects New Attempt by Public Prosecutor's Office to Violate Popular Will](#)



ECUADOR

Early Presidential and Legislative Elections, Popular Consultations on Yasuní and Chocó Andino and Presidential Runoff

August 20 and October 15, 2023

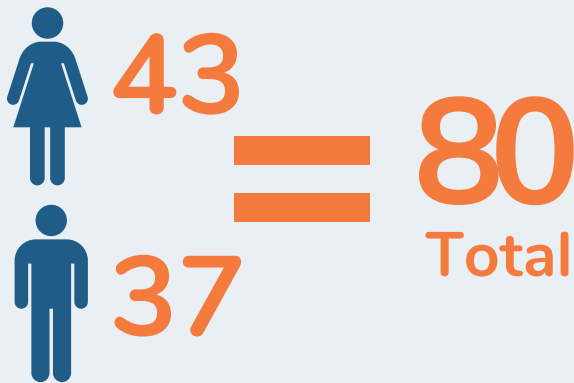


Donors



Early Presidential and Legislative Elections and Popular Consultations on Yasuní and Chocó Andino

Number of members of the EOM



Nationalities



Deployed in:

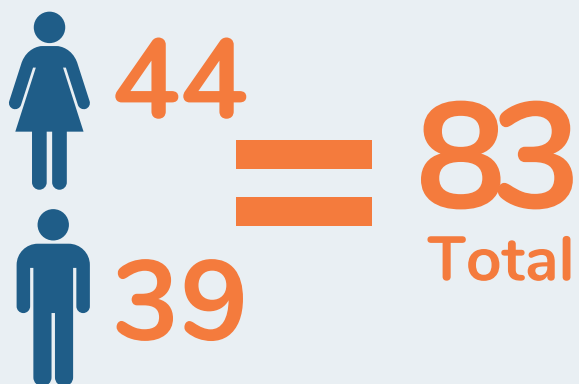
Pichincha, Santo Domingo de Tsáchilas, Azuay, Tungurahua, Napo, Pastaza, El Oro, Guayas, Sucumbíos, Chimborazo, Cañar, Loja, Manabí, Bolívar, Santa Elena, Esmeraldas, Cotopaxi, Orellana, Imbabura, and Los Ríos.

Topics observed:

Electoral organization and voting abroad, electoral technology, political-electoral financing, electoral justice, electoral violence, political participation of women, indigenous peoples and Afro-descendant populations.

Presidential Runoff and repeat of the Legislative Elections abroad

Number of members of the EOM



Nationalities



Deployed in:

Pichincha, Santo Domingo de Tsáchilas, Azuay, Tungurahua, Napo, Pastaza, El Oro, Guayas, Sucumbíos, Chimborazo, Cañar, Loja, Manabí, Bolívar, Santa Elena, Esmeraldas, Cotopaxi, Orellana, Imbabura, and Los Ríos.

Topics observed:

Electoral organization and voting abroad, electoral technology, electoral justice and violence.





The Electoral Observation Missions (OAS/EOM) for the Early Presidential and Legislative Elections and the Presidential Runoff were headed by the former Vice President and former Foreign Affairs Minister of Panama, Isabel de Saint Malo.

The Mission deployed for the early elections underscored the civic commitment and resilience of Ecuador's citizens, while acknowledging the efforts of polling stations members, electoral institution officials, the Armed Forces, and the National Police. The OAS/EOM also pointed out the unprecedented context of criminal and political violence in which those elections were held. It also emphasized that one of the most troublesome developments in those elections was the involvement of organized crime in the electoral context. It also vigorously condemned all acts of political violence that occurred.

In total on both days, OAS/EOM observers visited a total of 3,096 polling stations distributed in 685 voting centers. The Mission observed the elections from the set up and opening of the polling stations until the closing of the voting, the vote count, the transmission of results, and the retrieval of the electoral material. The OAS/EOM highlights the notable participation of women as delegates to the polling stations from political organizations, carrying out an essential role of election monitoring. The Mission observed that the voting process carried out in an agile manner, despite reports of minor isolated incidents.

The OAS has deployed 26 Electoral Observation Missions in Ecuador since 1968.



Some of the recommendations of the EOM:

- Strengthening the training for members of the Polling Stations on the protocols for ensuring the secrecy of the vote for cases where votes are cast at Special Attention Polling Stations or at home.
- On telematic voting, that the National Electoral Council give serious, in-depth consideration as to whether this voting method really guarantees the right of overseas Ecuadorians to vote, while at the same time providing the necessary levels of security, integrity, and transparency.
- Initiating as soon as possible rigorous studies on the origin and impact of political and electoral violence on the democratic process and its differentiated effects for national and local government authorities, political organizations, candidates, and citizens in general, including the collection of data and differentiated statistics, as was recommended in the local election of February 2023.
- Create a Professional Electoral Service to which all citizens may apply through periodic public competitions, in order to strengthen the technical capacity of the National Electoral Council, guarantee the objectivity and impartiality of electoral functions at all levels, and offer equal job opportunities in that field. In turn, this Service should offer continuous training and education programs, as well as a promotion and incentive system based on objective merit and performance indicators.
- Issuing the necessary normative provisions to clearly regulate the stages in which the extraordinary electoral processes are carried out and established, taking into consideration the deadlines for the electoral bodies, individuals, and political groups.
- Streamlining the mechanisms that allow political organizations to intervene in the candidate qualification process, taking the following parameters into account: prioritization of the right to political participation, respect for already consolidated legal positions, and definition of those mechanisms in accordance with the standards of the inter-American system.





Reports presented by the Mission:

Pronouncements by the Mission:



[Preliminary Report
Early Presidential and
Legislative Elections](#)



[Preliminary Report
Presidential Runoff](#)



[Statement of the OAS Electoral
Observation Mission on the
Assassination of Ecuadorian
Presidential Candidate Fernando
Villavicencio](#)



[OAS Electoral Observation
Mission in Ecuador Condemns
the Killing of Council Member
Bolívar Vera and other Acts of
Political Violence in the Country.](#)





COLOMBIA

Territorial Elections

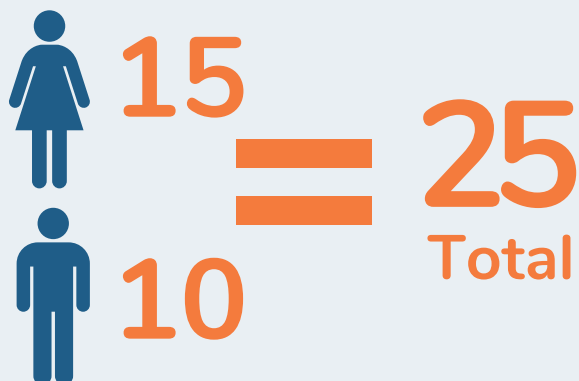
October 29, 2023



Donors



Number of members of the EOM



Nationalities



Deployed in:

Atlántico, Antioquia, Cauca, Córdoba, Cundinamarca, Magdalena, Nariño, North Santander, Santander, and Valle del Cauca.

Topics observed:

Electoral organization, electoral technology, electoral justice, electoral violence, political financing, and political participation of women, indigenous peoples and Afro-descendant populations.

The Electoral Observation Mission (OAS/EOM) for the Territorial Elections in Colombia was headed by Argentinean attorney Soledad García Muñoz.

After the election, the OAS Electoral Mission congratulated the people of Colombia and highlighted the work of the authorities and officials of the various electoral institutions that made it possible to organize elections in a challenging climatic, geographic, and public order context. It also commended the civic commitment of those who came to vote to elect their authorities and representatives.

The Mission stressed that in most of the country the elections took place normally, despite some incidents, during, and after Election Day. The Mission condemned the violent incidents that took place in Gamarra (Cesar), which resulted in the death of a female official of the Registrar's Office, and regretted the suspension of the elections in Ricaurte (Nariño) and Santiago (Putumayo), where there were public order problems, as well as the isolated disturbances that occurred at the end of the election. At the same time, the OAS/EOM recognized the prompt and effective coordination of the electoral authorities and security forces in responding to the challenges that arose in connection with this election.

After election day, the EOM observed with concern the increase tension in the final phase of the vote counting in some localities of the country, and condemned violent actions in the country that affected the post-electoral vote counting process.

Some of the recommendations of the EOM:

- Establishing deadlines for the registration and final approval of candidacies, so that the process is carried out at a stage prior to the start of the campaigns, sufficiently in advance to allow for the timely resolution of any challenges that may arise
- Clearly defining and systematizing electoral appeals in order to reduce complexity, adjust their conditions and terms of admissibility and resolution, and guarantee that they have the capacity to restore to individuals, in an expeditious manner, the exercise of their rights of democratic participation, in accordance with international standards.
- Creating a Gender Unit within the Registrar's Office to promote mechanisms for greater participation of women in politics, and actions within the electoral institution.
- As reiterated by previous Missions, and following the provisions of the Constitution, carrying out the pertinent reforms that will make it possible to move towards parity, including horizontal parity, and thus generate more equitable conditions for the participation of women at all levels.
- Establishing, within public campaign financing, a percentage of resources to be used exclusively for the promotion of women's candidacies.

OAS ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSION
**TERRITORIAL ELECTIONS
COLOMBIA - 2023**



Reports presented by the Mission:



Preliminary Report
Territorial Elections





DESDE:
SRITEZ RAMIREZ LIS ALBERTO
HASTA:
CANIZA CUENCA IGACIO MARTIN

VOCAL

PRESIDENTE

REPÚBLICA DEL PARAGUAY
Caja Electoral
Voluntad Popular

02

Technical Cooperation and Follow-up on the OAS/EOMs Recommendations



The technical assistance provided by DECO specialists contributes to the strengthening of electoral systems and processes in the region. **These missions, dedicated to the principles of democracy and committed to transparency and impartiality, professionally analyze electoral processes and systems, identifying best practices and providing recommendations that can help and support improving democracy at the national level and throughout the hemisphere".**

Luis Almagro
Secretary General



STRENGTHENING OF THE ELECTORAL TECHNOLOGY AND ORGANIZATION PROCESSES OF THE SUPREME ELECTORAL TRIBUNAL OF GUATEMALA

Guatemala

January-April 2023



At the request of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) of Guatemala, a technical team from DECO provided cooperation to the electoral authority to strengthen its capabilities in technology and electoral organization, with emphasis on strengthening the security and processes related to the computerized system for the transmission of preliminary results (TREP).

After three visits to the country in January, February and March, DECO experts prepared a final report that included 52 findings and recommendations presented to the Tribunal and made a visit in April to follow up and provide final assistance.



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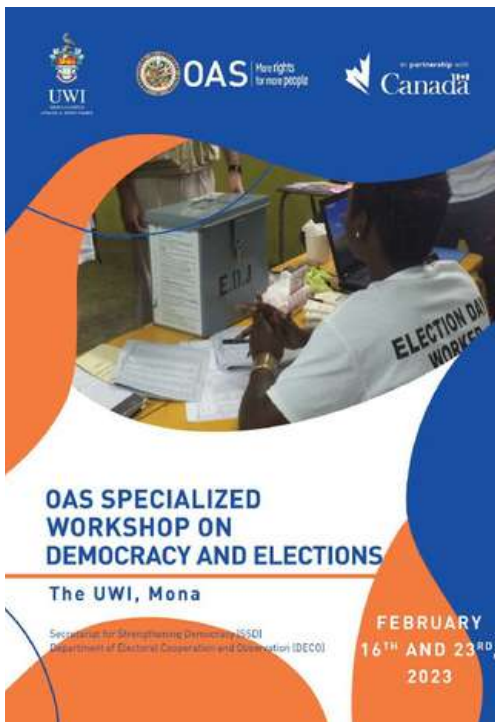




SPECIALIZED WORKSHOP ON DEMOCRACY AND ELECTIONS FOR STUDENTS FROM JAMAICA

Virtual

February 16 and 23, 2023



DECO provided a virtual workshop for students from the University of the West Indies, Jamaica, on democracy and elections, to understand the evolution of democracy in the Inter-American System and to promote OAS methodologies and techniques for observing electoral processes.

The two-session virtual workshop sought to encourage citizen participation in electoral processes and provided a better understanding of the conceptual, technical, and operational aspects of electoral observation for potential future national observers. Achieving greater citizen participation in electoral processes is a key element, and electoral observation offers a valuable and realistic opportunity. By promoting more control and transparency mechanisms, as well as providing reliable information and evidence-based recommendations, electoral observation increases confidence in elections and contributes to improving electoral processes.



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WORKSHOP: STRENGTHENING OF CAPABILITIES TO THE TSE OF GUATEMALA ON DISINFORMATION AND ELECTIONS

Virtual

March 9-10, 2023



The Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) of Guatemala also requested technical support from DECO to address the impact of electoral disinformation and strengthen its capacities to combat it.

To fulfill the request, DECO/OAS held a virtual workshop on “Strengthening the capacities of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal of Guatemala in the fight against disinformation”, in order to address the phenomenon, learn from experiences in the electoral field on the subject, highlight characteristic elements and provide tools to confront it.



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TRAINING FOR THE ELECTORAL GENERAL PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE OF PANAMA: “WOMEN'S RIGHT TO A LIFE IN POLITICS FREE OF VIOLENCE”

Virtual

March 28-29, 2023



The virtual training organized for the Electoral General Prosecutor's Office (FGE) of Panama, addressed violence against women in electoral processes. The exercise served as an opportunity to provide the FGE a series of concepts and tools to strengthen the institution's capacity to prevent this violence and administer justice effectively.

The training, which took place on March 28 and 29, addressed women's political participation, the challenges faced, and the measures adopted to promote equity in political and electoral participation. The international, inter-American and national legal instruments adopted to prevent, sanction and eradicate political violence against women in politics were also discussed. The different dimension of political violence against women were identified, including the different types, possible perpetrators, possible victims, scenarios where this violence is exercised and the purpose of the attacks. In addition, a dialogue was promoted on regional experiences in the legal application and effective administration of justice in cases of violence against women in politics.



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DIAGNOSIS ON GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE SUPERIOR ELECTORAL TRIBUNAL OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Dominican Republic

April 20, 2023



On April 20, a DECO delegation, headed by Laura Chinchilla, former president of Costa Rica and leader of the OAS High Level Group for the strengthening of women's political participation, visited the Dominican Republic to deliver the diagnosis on the incorporation of a gender perspective in the Superior Electoral Tribunal of the country, a project that began in the second half of 2022.

The report, prepared by a DECO technical team with the support from the Inter-American Commission of Women (OAS/CIM), analyzed the strengths, weaknesses and needs of the TSE in this area, to identify the opportunities and difficulties on incorporating the gender perspective at the institutional level. The report provided recommendations aimed at advancing towards gender equality in the organizational culture.



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DIAGNOSIS OF THE JCE'S ELECTORAL COUNTING SYSTEM FOR THE 2024 ELECTORAL PROCESS

Dominican Republic
June-December 2023



At the request of the Central Electoral Board (JCE) of the Dominican Republic, a technical team from DECO carried out a diagnosis of the electoral counting system (SCE) of the institution, with the aim of strengthening the management, security and efficiency of the technological processes associated with the system, for the 2024 elections. The DECO team made several visits between June and December, during which they held regular meetings with the IT area and were able to observe the development of various tests.

Within the framework of this technical cooperation, the team provided preliminary reports and a final report with recommendations for the consideration of the JCE, which addresses opportunities for improvement in different areas of the SCE.



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PARTICIPATION IN CONSULTATIONS AND TECHNICAL REVIEW OF PROPOSALS ON ELECTORAL REFORM

Dominica

August- December 2023



In July 2023, the Government of Dominica invited the OAS to observe a series of consultations with national actors on an electoral reform and to provide technical support to review legislation drafts containing the reform proposals. The consultations process arose after the Electoral Reform Commissioner, appointed by the Prime Minister, submitted the legislation proposal aimed at modernizing the existing electoral system in Dominica.

The consultations took place from August 14 to 31, 2023 in Dominica. A DECO specialist observed the consultations from August 14 to 24 in person and from August 28 to 31 virtually. In December, a report was delivered to the government with a technical analysis of the draft bill developed by an expert in electoral and constitutional law.



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WORKSHOP ON EOMS RECOMMENDATIONS ON WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Dominican Republic

August 7-9, 2023



The three-day event gathered a total of 63 participants, including representatives from the Central Electoral Board and the Superior Electoral Tribunal, the Ministries of Women and Foreign Affairs, the Ombudsperson's Office and the Santo Domingo City Hall, as well as women deputies, members of 9 political parties, and representatives of 8 civil society organizations.

Those who participated in the workshop were able to work collaboratively in the analysis of the recommendations on women's political participation that have been formulated by the OAS Electoral Observation Missions in the Dominican Republic. The discussion provided the opportunity to explore possible strategies and actions that allow the implementation of these recommendations. The workshop also included the intervention of specialists in the field and international guests who presented the experience of other countries, to learn lessons and progress at the regional level.



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ELECTORAL TECHNICAL COOPERATION TO THE TSE OF EL SALVADOR ON VOTING ABROAD

El Salvador

November- December 2023



In September 2023, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) of El Salvador requested technical cooperation from DECO to strengthen the electoral process for voting abroad. A technical team from DECO made two visits to the country, during which it held meetings with various areas of the TSE, including the Directorate of the Electoral Registry, the Computer Services Unit (USI), the Directorate of Training and Civic Education, and TSE plenary.

The DECO technical team identified opportunities for improvement to strengthen the management of the overseas voting implementation project for the upcoming 2024 elections. A report was presented with recommendations for the consideration of the Tribunal, based on the analysis of the documentation, the information gathered during the meetings with the technical staff and authorities of the TSE and the observation of a test of the remote voting module via internet.



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WORKSHOP: “STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITIES OF THE JCE OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC IN THE FIGHT AGAINST DISINFORMATION”

Dominican Republic

November 27, 2023



The workshop aimed to address the phenomenon of disinformation, learn from experiences in the electoral field on the subject, highlight key elements and providing tools to confront it, with the objective of contributing with the strengthening of the capacities of the Central Electoral Board of Dominican Republic in the subject.

The program included a conceptual presentation on disinformation and its potential effects, the different types of disinformation and strategies/recommendations for its prevention, identification and rapid response to mitigate it. In various groups, participants analyzed which decisions and courses of action can be adopted in the face of disinformation campaigns, and how to define plans to counteract eventual situations. Finally, the conditions and decisions for a successful experience of strategic communication from the point of view of an electoral management body were discussed. The workshop was supported by Chequeado and the Supreme Electoral Tribunal of Costa Rica.



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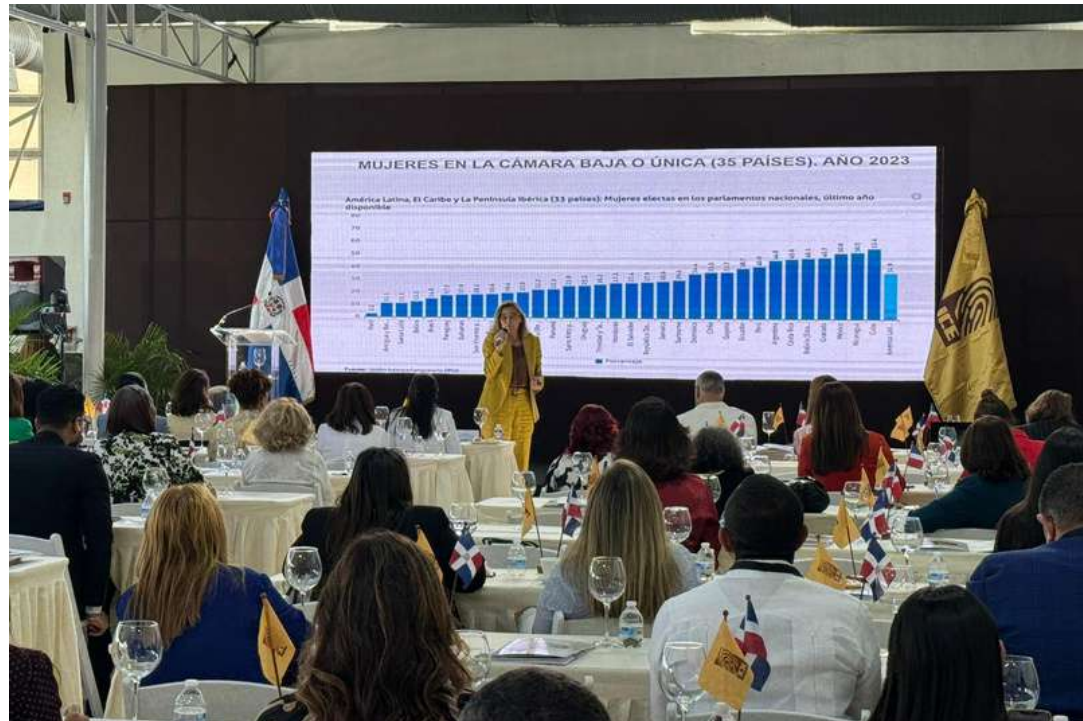




TRAINING FOR PARTIES, CIVIL SOCIETY AND ELECTORAL BODIES: “WOMEN’S RIGHT TO A POLITICAL LIFE FREE OF VIOLENCE”

Dominican Republic

December 8, 2023



The training, developed for political party representatives, civil society, the Central Electoral Board (JCE), and the Superior Electoral Tribunal (TSE) of Dominican Republic, aimed to strengthen knowledge about the political rights of women who participate in different areas and levels of politics and public life, as well as the violence they face in the exercise of these rights.

This initiative provided an overview of the definitions of the International, Inter-American and national legal frameworks in relation to violence against women in politics; strengthened capacities to apply a gender perspective in the administration of electoral services; addressed experiences for the recognition and identification of manifestations of political violence, as well as the effective implementation of legal frameworks and formulation of policies related to the prevention and eradication of political violence against women.



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03

Professionalization of Electoral Observation



The OAS Electoral Observation Missions, which originated more than six decades ago, and which have become an invaluable regional democratic heritage, whose objective is the unrestricted defense of democracy in all its forms, are a fundamental instrument for compliance of the roadmap outlined by the Inter-American Democratic Charter through the implementation of specialized methodologies that allow for the analysis of key aspects of the processes, present findings, and formulate recommendations of a technical nature with the purpose of contributing to the strengthening and improvement of the electoral systems and processes.

Francisco Guerrero
OAS Secretary for Strengthening Democracy



ELECTORAL GOOD PRACTICES GUIDE

Revised version 2023

The Electoral Good Practices Guide for Strengthening Electoral Processes was developed in compliance with General Assembly resolution number 2931 (XLIX-O/19), which requested the General Secretariat, through the Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation, to develop a draft electoral good practices guide for strengthening electoral processes in the region.

This comprehensive document consolidates, for the first time, the principles, rights, electoral procedures, and substance of the juridical development of the Inter-American system, as well as the decisions of the Inter-American Juridical Committee, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, along with the resolutions of the OAS General Assembly and Permanent Council, and the recommendations emanating from the Electoral

Observation Missions. Taken together, these render the document a fundamental instrument for the effective exercise of democracy.

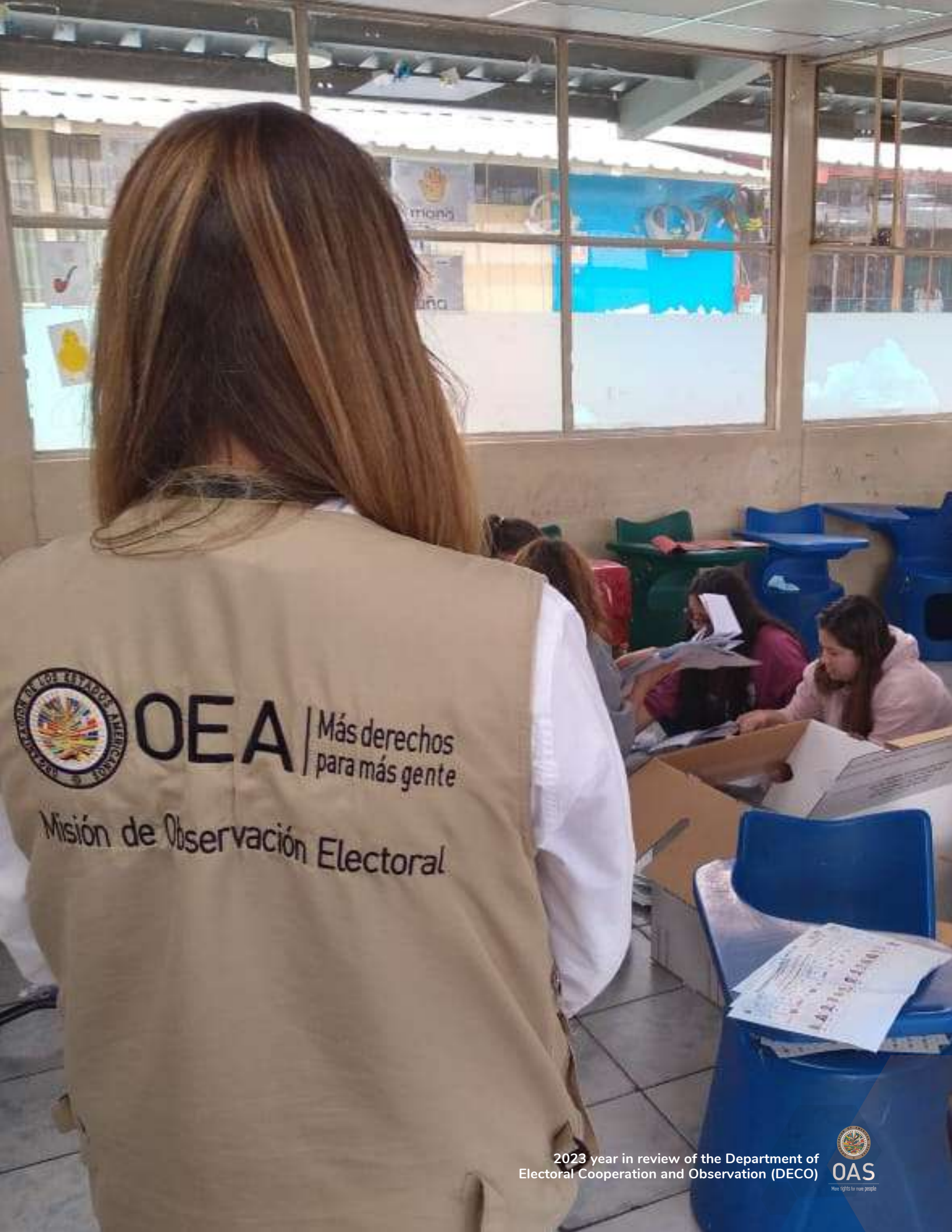
While much of the content of this guide has been variously addressed in different documents, there is no single paper dealing with the subject in an orderly manner. Thus, the guide attempts to compile the various rights, principles, freedoms, and facets of the Inter-American system underlying the efforts of the Organization of American States to foster and promote democracy in the Hemisphere.

The 2023 revised version includes concepts from the Advisory Opinion OC-28/21 of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights on reelection, agreements reached at the ninth Summit of the Americas, held in June 2022 in Los Angeles, California, resolutions of the 52nd General Assembly held in October 2022 in Lima, Peru, and the publication of the Methodology for Observation of Direct Democracy Mechanisms.



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04

Institutional Exchanges





XVI INTER-AMERICAN MEETING OF ELECTORAL AUTHORITIES

Ottawa, Canada

September 25–26, 2023



In collaboration with Elections Canada and the Government of Canada, DECO, as Technical Secretariat, organized the XVI Inter-American Meeting of Electoral Authorities (RAE for its Spanish acronym) in Ottawa, Canada. The XVI RAE brought together 48 authorities and representatives of 36 electoral bodies from 27 OAS member states.

During the two-day meeting, electoral authorities shared their knowledge and challenges on topics such as resistance to democratic erosion, artificial intelligence in electoral contexts, electoral observers as human rights defenders, the participation of fake election observation groups, and effective models for the regulation, transparency and oversight of political financing. At the XVI RAE, authorities also exchanged ideas on strengthening the capacity of electoral bodies to learn and effectively apply principles of mediation.



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PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL SEMINARS AND EVENTS

- The “**Conference on Electoral Observation in the Americas**”, organized by the Electoral Institute of the State of Mexico (IEEM) was held on January 11, 2023, and included the participation of Gerardo de Icaza, Director of DECO.
- The Conference on “**International Principles of Electoral Law**”, organized by the Law School of the Torcuato Di Tella University, was held on May 4, 2023, and included the participation of Gerardo de Icaza, Director of DECO, who shared about international standards and political rights, electoral justice systems and good practices.



- DECO participated in the **opening of the exhibition “Modern Direct Democracy”**, which explored the history of direct democracy in Switzerland and the Americas. The exhibition also discussed the broader opportunities and challenges related to direct democracy and its role in the promotion and protection of human rights. The exhibition took place on May 22, 2023.
- The exchange with **18 Students from the International Seminar of the Anáhuac University Training Program** on May 31, 2023, included the participation of Gerardo de Icaza, Director of DECO. During the activity, he shared on strengthening electoral processes and systems; elections, political parties and democracy in the Americas; public leadership, evolution and challenges of democracy.

- The **Conference on Electoral Observation in the “West”: Challenges, Lessons Learned, and Future Perspectives**, organized by the Carter Center and Election-Watch.EU on July 6, 2023, included the participation of Brenda Santamaría, Chief of DECO’s Electoral Observation Section, as a speaker on “what are the existing legal frameworks for electoral observation, what are the challenges and future opportunities for electoral observation ‘at home’.
- The event **“Challenges of Electoral Processes in Latin America: How is electoral fraud created and how to dismantle it? Electoral Observation Missions and their effectiveness,”** organized by Casla Institute on August 5, 2023, included the participation of Gerardo de Icaza, Director of DECO.
- On September 5, Melene Glynn, DECO Specialist, spoke with the **International Electoral Policy and Practice class at Georgetown University**, Washington D.C., about DECO’s work in elections, including its framework and activities in electoral observation and electoral technical cooperation, and other areas of the Department’s engagement in electoral matters.



- At the **“Conference on the State of Democracy in Latin America 22 years after the Inter-American Democratic Charter”**, organized by Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education, on September 11, 2023, Gerardo de Icaza, Director of DECO, shared the challenges democracy faces in the region and how the Inter-American Democratic Charter can serve as a solution.
- Gerardo de Icaza, Director of DECO, participated in the Panel **“Electoral Support Methodologies: Impact on Latin American Democracies”** of the Electoral Tribunal of the Judiciary of the Federation (TEPJF) on September 12, 2023, sharing the work of the OAS in the observation of Electoral Justice Systems and the OAS Manual for Electoral Observation Missions.
- At the event **“Além da Missão – Um Giro Global de Observação”**, organized by Electoral Transparency of Brazil on September 15, 2023, Gerardo de Icaza, Director of DECO, presented on objectives, experiences and relevant developments of electoral observation in the region.

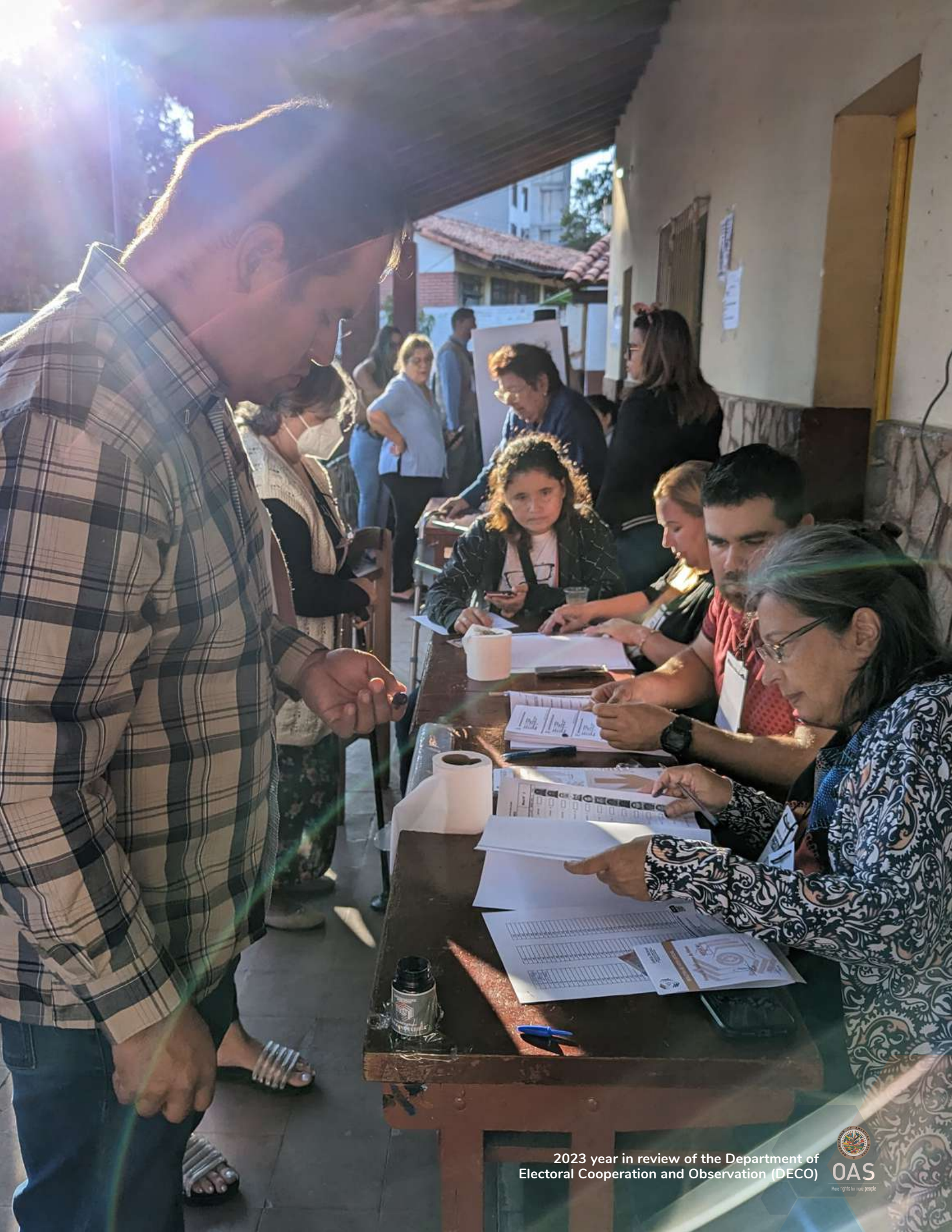
- The “**OAS Diploma in Governance, Management and Public Leadership in the Inter-American System**” was held in September and October and featured Gerardo de Icaza, Director of DECO, as a panelist where he spoke about the evolution of the Electoral Observation of the Organization of American States and the current challenges of democracy.
- The session “**Safety of journalists in elections and crisis contexts: risks to democracies**” took place on November 2-3, 2023, in the framework of the World Commemoration of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists. The event, organized by UNESCO in partnership with the Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS), the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and its Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression (RELE) discussed the security, violence and attacks against journalists and communicators during election periods and crisis contexts, as well as the specific obligations and responsibilities of States, officials and electoral authorities in these contexts.



- The **Cyber Policy Dialogue for the Americas (CPDA)** of **Stanford University’s Cyberspace and Democracy Program** counted with the participation of Gerardo de Icaza, Director of DECO, on November 7, 2023, to discuss issues related to cyberspace and democracy. The dialogue covered topics such as digitalization in electoral processes of the region and the state of cybersecurity in electoral infrastructure.
- The meeting of the **Committee for the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation (DoP)**, held November 14-17 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, was attended by Cristóbal Fernández, Chief of DECO’s Electoral Technical Cooperation Section, and Specialist Melene Glynn.
- DECO participated in the “**Forum for the Validation of Findings and Recommendations 2023**”, organized by the National Electoral Council of Ecuador (CNE) on November 15 and 16, 2023. Specialists Rogelio Cantoral and Tomás Quesada presented the preliminary report of the Electoral Observation Mission to Ecuador in 2023, which included findings and recommendations.



- At the **Gala of the Latin America Program of the Woodrow Wilson International Center** on November 28, 2023, the Secretary for Strengthening Democracy, Francisco Guerrero, and DECO Director, Gerardo de Icaza received the Wilson Award for Public Service in recognition of the important role of the OAS Electoral Observation Mission in Guatemala.
- On November 28-29, Melene Glynn, DECO Specialist, participated in the **Annual Conference of the European Platform for Democratic Elections (EPDE), “Follow-up on Recommendations’ Implementation Conference 2023”**, in Brussels, Belgium, and spoke as a panelist, about DECO’s approaches to formulating, presenting and following up on recommendations it issues in electoral processes.
- In the event **“Towards a Comprehensive Model Law to Prevent, Sanction and Eradicate Gender-Based Violence against Women Facilitated by Technologies: Tools and Proposals for Regional Regulation”**, organized by the Technical Secretariat of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI), of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) on November 30, 2023, DECO Director, Gerardo de Icaza shared his expert view to coordinate actions destined to promote a comprehensive legal framework for the prevention, protection and investigation of online gender-based violence against women.
- From December 10 to 14, Veronica Álvarez, DECO specialist, participated in the **International Course on Methodologies for the Strategic Implementation of Electoral Observation** organized by the National Electoral Institute (INE) of Mexico, where in two panels she shared methodologies for systematizing information and observation of women's political participation, including issues of violence within the framework of the OAS EOMs, and the work of DECO in cooperation to contribute to the prevention and fight against gender-based political violence.
- On December 12, the Secretary for Strengthening Democracy, Francisco Guerrero, and the Director of DECO, Gerardo de Icaza, participated in the **79th Meeting of the Council for Democratic Elections (CDE) and the 137th Plenary Session of the European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission)** in which the Contribution of the Study on Term Limits by the Venice Commission (Opinion 908/2017) to the development of Inter-American Law, the status and challenges faced by International Electoral Observers were discussed.



2023 year in review of the Department of
Electoral Cooperation and Observation (DECO)



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05

Execution of Voluntary Funds



2023 year in review of the Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation (DECO)





EXECUTION OF VOLUNTARY FUNDS 2023

Electoral Observation Missions	USD \$4,259,800
Technical Cooperation Projects and Monitoring of EOM Recommendations	USD \$680,800
Professionalization of Electoral Observation	USD \$12,800
Institutional Exchanges	USD \$14,000
TOTAL	USD \$4,967,400

The amounts provided are referential and correspond to the funds executed during the period January 1 to December 31, 2023, for the EOMs, projects and activities corresponding to the year 2023. The totals for each category are approximate since they have not yet been audited or certified.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The OAS Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation would especially like to thank the Governments of **Brazil, Canada, France, Italy, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Panama, Peru, Republic of Korea, Spain, Switzerland, and the United States of America** for their financial contributions, without which the work of DECO would not have been possible.





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