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DECO YEAR IN REVIEW

THE DEPARTMENT OF ELECTORAL
COOPERATION AND OBSERVATION



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“2020 YEAR IN REVIEW OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ELECTORAL COOPERATION AND OBSERVATION (DECO) OF THE SECRETARIAT FOR STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY (SSD)”

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



Luis Almagro

Secretary General

Nestor Méndez

Assistant Secretary General

Francisco Guerrero

Secretary for Strengthening Democracy

Gerardo de Icaza

Director, Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation

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Prepared and published by the OAS Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation (deco@oas.org).

Compilers: Anja Brenes and Yeruti Méndez

Design: Ámbar Reyes

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CONTENTS

	Introduction	5
1	Observing Electoral Processes	8
	Electoral Observation Missions	9
	Electoral Observation Mission to Peru – Special Congressional Elections	9
	Electoral Observation Mission to Costa Rica – Municipal Elections	11
	Electoral Observation Mission to the Dominican Republic – Municipal Elections and Extraordinary Municipal Elections	13
	Electoral Observation Mission to Guyana – General and Regional Elections	15
	Electoral Observation Mission to Suriname – General Elections	19
	Electoral Observation Mission to the Dominican Republic – Presidential Elections	21
	Electoral Observation Mission to the Dominican Republic – Presidential Elections	25
	Electoral Observation Mission to Bolivia – General Elections	27
	Electoral Observation Mission to the United States of America- General Elections	27
	Electoral Observation Mission to Brazil – Municipal Elections	29
	Technical Cooperation and Follow up to the OAS/EOMs Recommendations	35
2	Audit of the Automated Voting Process Implemented in the Municipal Elections of February 16, 2020 in the Dominican Republic.	37
	Strengthening the Technical Capacities of the Plurinational Electoral Body (OEP) of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.	39
	Guide to Organizing Elections during a Pandemic	41
	Publications and Professionalization of Electoral Observation	43
3	Exchanges	44
	Virtual Forum: Elections during a Pandemic	44
	Other inter-institutional exchanges	45
	Professionalization of Electoral Observation	47
	Mobile App and Security Protocol for Electoral Observation Missions	47
	Publications	48
	Cybersecurity Considerations: for the Democratic Process for Latin America and the Caribbean	48
4	Execution of Funds	50
	Execution of funds – 2020	52
	Acknowledgements	53

INTRODUCTION - DECO 2020 YEAR IN REVIEW

This document summarizes the work of the Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation (DECO) of the Secretariat for Strengthening Democracy (SSD) in 2020. It highlights key aspects of the Electoral Observation Missions (EOMs) deployed by the Organization of American States (OAS) in the Americas, as well as the cooperation projects and activities developed by DECO which, throughout the year and despite the COVID-19 pandemic, continued to work to contribute to the improvement of electoral processes in the region.

In 2020, DECO deployed ten (10) Electoral Observation Missions (EOMs) in eight (8) countries: Peru (Special Congressional Elections), Costa Rica (Municipal Elections), the Dominican Republic (Municipal Elections, Extraordinary Municipal Elections and Presidential Elections), Guyana (General and Regional Elections), Suriname (General Elections), Bolivia (General Elections), the United States of America (General Elections) and Brazil (First and Second Round of Municipal Elections).

The OAS was the first multilateral body to deploy an Electoral Observation Mission (EOM) during the COVID-19 pandemic. In total, throughout 2020, seven (7) EOMs were carried out during the pandemic. Due to the global health context and mobility restrictions, OAS/EOMs had to adapt their work methodology, sometimes implementing mixed modalities with experts and observers working in person and virtually. Similarly, the Missions implemented rigorous measures to guarantee the safety of its members and the individuals with whom they met in the host country, which included the use of personal protective equipment, social distancing, ventilation of meeting spaces and the disinfection of surfaces before and after face-to-face meetings.

In this context, and thanks to the financial support of 20 donors, a total of 305 specialists and international observers participated in the EOMs in person or virtually.

In the area of Electoral Cooperation, DECO worked in two countries: the Dominican Republic and Bolivia. In the Dominican Republic, DECO conducted an audit of the automated voting system implemented in the suspended municipal elections. The purpose of this audit was to identify the causes of failure during the February 16, 2020 election. The audit team delivered a final report with its findings and recommendations. In Bolivia, DECO carried out an electoral cooperation project with the objective of implementing the recommendations issued by the Electoral Observation Mission deployed in that country in 2019, as well as the technical team that carried out the Analysis of Electoral Integrity. The areas of cooperation with the Plurinational Electoral Body (OEP) included the chain of custody, the electoral registry, computer security and electoral technology.

With the aim of supporting OAS Member States and seeking the best options to hold democratic elections in during a pandemic, DECO published the “Guide for Elections during a Pandemic”. The document is in the four official languages of the Organization (English, Spanish, Portuguese and French) and was produced with the aim of strengthening the capacities of electoral bodies to organize elections in times of health crisis due to COVID-19. The document was used as a reference in several OAS member states when preparing their sanitary protocols.

Furthermore, DECO organized the Virtual Forum: "Elections during a Pandemic". During the forum, electoral authorities of Bolivia, Ecuador, Uruguay, Paraguay and the Dominican Republic explained the measures taken to overcome the challenges presented by COVID-19 while planning an electoral process in each country.





1

OBSERVING ELECTORAL PROCESSES

“Democracy is permanent work, it can never be taken for granted, we can never rest when it comes to democracy. We must always work on it, we always have more rights to achieve, we always have better institutions to build, we always have to create better and more efficient government conditions”

– Luis Almagro, OAS Secretary General



1. ELECTORAL OBSERVATION MISSIONS

EOMs 2020

Peru, Special Congressional Elections - [January 26th](#)

Costa Rica, Municipal Elections - [February 2nd](#)

Dominican Republic, Municipal Elections - [February 16th and March 15th](#)

Guyana, General and Regional Elections - [March 2nd](#)

Suriname, General Election - [May 25th](#)

Dominican Republic, Presidential Elections - [July 5th](#)

Bolivia, General Elections - [October 18th](#)

United States of America, General Election - [November 3rd](#)

Brazil, Municipal Elections (First and Second Round) - [November 15th and 29th](#)





PARA VOTAR


1



La votación se inicia a las 7:00 A.M.


2

Entras al recinto, ubicas tu colegio y haces tu fila.



3

En tu turno, entras al colegio con tu cédula en la mano.



4




Entregas la cédula, te confirman visualmente, te buscan en el padrón y si estás hábil para votar te entregan una boleta.



Asegúrate que esté firmada y sellada, y que no tenga marcas, para que tu voto sea válido.

5

Te diriges al padium y marcas en el recuadro del partido de tu preferencia el candidato a regidor o vocal, según el caso.




6

Doblas la boleta con el sello y la firmas hacia afuera y la depositas dentro de la urna.



7

En la mesa firmas para tu huella dactilar la Definitiva de la Elección Electoral.



8



Te desinfectan el dedo índice izquierdo.

Te devuelven la cédula y la boleta.



Definitiva de la Elección Electoral

EXTRAORDINARIAS GENERALES MUNE



PERU

Special Congressional Elections
January 26th, 2020



WOMEN 18



MEN 17

NATIONALITIES 16

DONORS



TOPICS OBSERVED

- Electoral Organization
- Electoral Technology
- Political Financing
- Political Participation of Women
- Participation of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants
- Electoral Justice

The OAS Electoral Observation Mission (OAS/EOM) for the Special Congressional Elections of Peru was headed by Eladio Loizaga, former Foreign Minister of the Republic of Paraguay. This extraordinary election was called on September 30th, 2019 after the dissolution of the Congress decreed by the President of the Republic.

The EOM deployed a team of 35 observers and experts from 16 nationalities, who carried out a substantive analysis of different key aspects of the electoral process such as Electoral Organization and Technology, Political Financing, Political Participation of Women, Participation of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendants, and Electoral Justice. On the day of the election, OAS observers were deployed in the Callao province and 14 departments of the country: Lima, La Libertad, Lambayeque, Moquegua, Cajamarca, Piura, Ica, Junín, Huánuco, Cusco, Loreto, San Martín, Puno and Ucayali. The Mission visited 117 voting centers and 432 polling stations.

Some recommendations of the OAS/EOM:

- Adapting the regulations on challenging and ruling out candidates in such a way that if a woman is withdrawn from the list she is replaced by another woman. Establish a specific regulatory framework for addressing, preventing, detecting, and punishing the above-mentioned type of gender-based political violence, in both electoral and non-electoral periods.
- Including the indigenous and Afro-Peruvian variable in the electoral roll to be able to have official data on those segments and their electoral preferences, which would make it possible to design, implement, and evaluate public policies geared to full political participation in democratic processes.
- Establishing in the Constitution and regulatory legislation, as the case may be, clear rules regarding all standards to be applied in both general and special elections.
- Implement an effective reconsideration remedy to prevent possible violations of fundamental rights and set reasonable legal deadlines during the objections and exclusions stage, so as to enable citizens to request a reassessment of any resolution that might impair his or her political rights during an electoral process so as to allow, where applicable, immediate and timely restitution of those rights.
- Establishing a ceiling on private contributions to parties and on expenditure during electoral periods.
- Publishing candidates reports to ensure compliance with the right to citizen oversight, as established in Peru's regulations.

The final report was presented on November 5th, 2020 and is available at the following link:

<http://www.oas.org/EOMDatabase/GetFileA.aspx?id=420-1237-27-0>

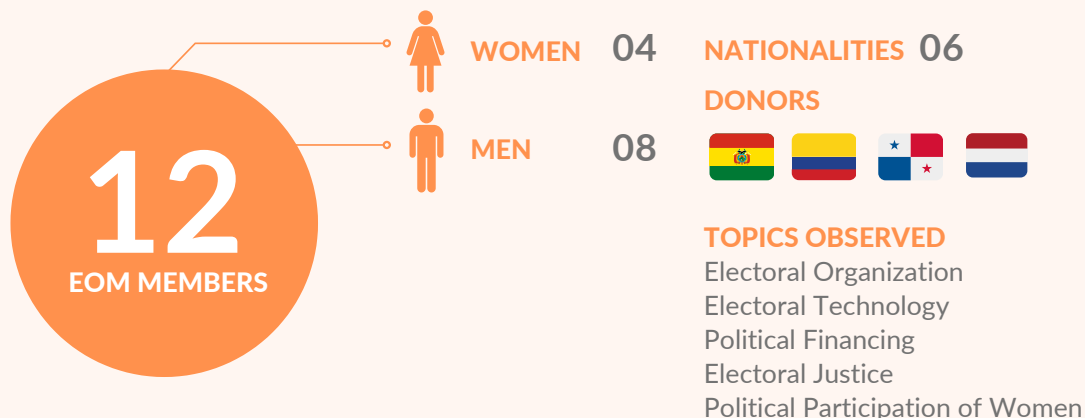


Visiting voting centers. Lima, Peru.



COSTA RICA

Municipal Elections
February 2nd, 2020



The Mission (OAS/EOM) for the 2020 Municipal Elections in Costa Rica was headed by Juan Carlos Galindo, former National Registrar of Civil Status of Colombia.

The EOM had a team of 12 electoral specialists from six (6) countries of the region, who carried out a detailed analysis on topics such as: Electoral Organization, Electoral Technology, Political Financing, Electoral Justice, and the Political Participation of Women.

On election day, OAS experts observed voting centers in the provinces of San José, Heredia, and Alajuela. The Mission observed the implementation of the program “Accessibility for the Exercise of Voting”, designed to preserve the right to vote for persons in jail, the elderly, persons with mental and physical disabilities, and those residing in indigenous areas. As part of this program, 39 polling stations were installed in 12 prisons; 50 polling stations in nursing homes; one (1) polling station at the Center of Care for People with Mental Illness in Conflict; and 97 polling stations in indigenous areas.

Some recommendations of the OAS/EOM:

- Implementing a free electoral advertising section to guarantee space to all parties to present their platforms.
- Set individual limits on the contributions that natural or physical persons can make, as well as limits on party expenditures.
- Revising current provisions and adopting new measures to enable women to effectively access decision-making offices, both nationally and at the municipal level.
- Putting forward a bill on political-electoral violence against women, pursuant to Costa Rica's obligations under international law to prevent, investigate, punish, and provide reparations for all types of violence and discrimination against women.
- Make progress toward issuing specific procedural rules applicable to challenges by establishing a list of evidence that would be admissible, criteria for assessment thereof, rules for processing the case files before the magistratures, and grounds for denying admissibility of each of the remedies.
- Installing points for capturing and transmitting images of vote certification forms so they can be published simultaneously with the results transcribed by the data enterers.
- Revise current legislation, recalling again that, although the continuity of public policy is valuable, rotation is a fundamental pillar of a democratic system.

The final report was presented on June 17th, 2020 and is available at the following link:

<http://www.oas.org/EOMDatabase/GetFileA.aspx?id=421-1220-27-0>



Election Day. San Jose, Costa Rica.



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Municipal Elections (suspended)
February 16th, 2020



WOMEN 10

MEN 15

NATIONALITIES 14

DONORS



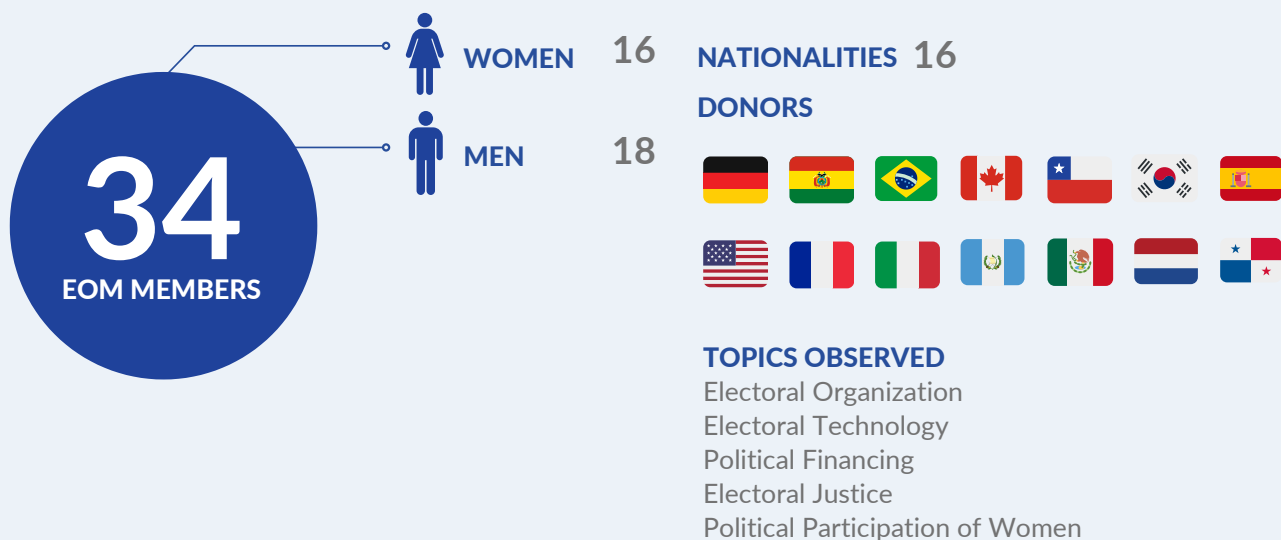
TOPICS OBSERVED

- Electoral Organization
- Electoral Technology
- Political Financing
- Electoral Justice
- Political Participation of Women



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Extraordinary Municipal Elections
March 15th, 2020



Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Table, former President of Chile, headed the OAS/EOMs for the Municipal Elections in the Dominican Republic.

The OAS deployed a Mission for the February 16th municipal elections, which had to be suspended due to widespread failures of the automated voting equipment. As a result, an Extraordinary Municipal Election was held on March 15th.

Taking the complex scenario into account and at the request of the authorities, the Mission maintained its presence in Dominican territory without interruption from its arrival at the beginning of February until the end of the extraordinary elections. Through a technical team specialized in electoral organization and technology, the OAS/EOM sought to contribute with specific recommendations to the successful conduct of the new March elections.

On election day, OAS observers visited 99 voting centers and 435 polling stations in 20 provinces of the country and the National District from the installation of polling stations to the transmission of the results.

Some recommendations of the OAS/EOM:

- Standardize the procedures used in the different stages of the electoral process. This includes harmonizing procedures at the national and municipal levels.
- Strengthen strict enforcement of the legislation to ensure women's equal participation in politics. Candidate lists that do not comply with the gender quota must be rejected until non-compliance is remedied.
- Strengthen the capacity of the JCE's (in spanish *Junta Central Electoral*) Specialized Financial Oversight Unit, providing it with sufficient economic resources, human capital, and institutional backing for it to perform its legally mandated role.
- Provide the JEMs (in spanish *Juntas Electorales Municipales*) with greater technical capacities for resolving contentious matters, which would alleviate the Supreme Electoral Tribunal's workload and allow it to focus on those issues that have the greatest impact on the electoral process.
- Analyze the introduction into the constitutional and legal framework of the fundamental right of petition to the public administration, requiring all government agencies and public employees to respond within a reasonable time to the applications lodged with them.

The final report was presented on April 28th, 2021 and is available at the following link:

<http://www.oas.org/EOMDatabase/GetFileA.aspx?id=425-1286-27-0>



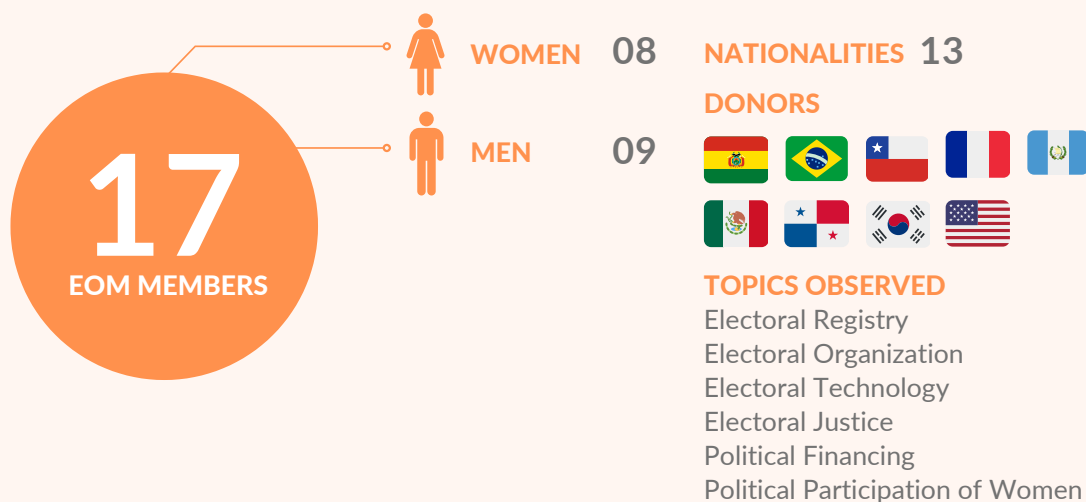
Observation of Voting Centers. Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.





GUYANA

General and Regional Elections
March 2nd, 2020



The OAS/EOM was led by the former Prime Minister of Jamaica, Bruce Golding, who, together with the Core Group, held meetings with electoral and government authorities, political parties and candidates, civil society representatives, international electoral observation missions, and other members of the international community.

For the General and Regional Elections, the OAS/EOM deployed 17 observers and experts from 13 nationalities, who carried out a substantive analysis on topics such as: the Electoral Registry, Electoral Organization and Technology, Electoral Justice, Political Financing, and the Political Participation of Women. The Mission experts also analyzed the laws, regulations, processes, and procedures in force in these areas to fully understand the context in which the election was taking place.

On the day of the elections, the members of the Mission were present in four (4) out of ten (10) regions of the country from the opening of the polling stations to the scrutiny and transmission of the results, visiting a total of 344 polling stations.

Some recommendations of the OAS/EOM:

- Engage in a multi-stakeholder discussion on the structure of the electoral authority to enhance the deliberative nature and decision-making of the Commission.
- The Elections Commission should consider implementing a system to issue preliminary results for national elections, to make this information available on Election Day or on the morning thereafter.
- Comprehensive reform of the voter registration system, along with the necessary legislative authorizations for registration, changes to voter lists and submission of complaints about the exclusion or inclusion of voters.
- As far as practicable, every endeavor should be made on the part of the High Court to establish an appropriate timeframe for the determination of an election petition.
- Revised and modernized political financing norms to include clear limits on campaign spending, the identification of the sources of funding, the prevention of anonymous donations, and the limitation of private and in-kind donations to political and electoral campaigns.
- A revision of the existing legislation to ensure that the extraction of members of parliament from the party lists ensures at least the same percentage of women in the National Assembly.

The preliminary report was presented on March 3rd, 2020 and is at the following link:

<http://www.oas.org/EOMDatabase/GetFileA.aspx?id=423-1212-37-0>



Election Day. Region 9, Guyana.



SURINAME

General Elections
May 25th, 2020



The Mission, headed by Ambassador Gonzalo Koncke, Chief of Staff of the OAS Secretary General, was comprised of a team of 13 specialists from eight (8) countries.

The EOM in Suriname was the first Electoral Observation Mission deployed in the Americas since the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the COVID-19 pandemic. Considering the sanitary circumstances, this Mission required an innovative approach to ensure it fulfilled its observation objectives. Therefore, the OAS applied a hybrid observation methodology: before its arrival in Paramaribo, the Mission used virtual platforms to contact the main actors in the process and, after arriving in the country, OAS specialists held the traditional face-to-face meetings with actors on the ground. The members of the Mission followed the health protocols established by the host country and the guidelines of the WHO, such as social distancing.

The Mission carried out an analysis of key aspects of the electoral process, including electoral organization, electoral technology, electoral justice, political financing, and the political participation of women.

On election day, the members of the Mission visited polling stations in seven (7) of the ten (10) districts of the country from the opening of the polls to the counting and transmission of the preliminary results. The Mission had a presence in 96 polling stations in 53 voting centers throughout the day.

The Mission recognized the efforts of the Surinamese authorities to implement precautionary measures at polling stations in order to protect voters against the transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19. These measures included social distancing, the application of antibacterial spray on the hands of voters when entering the voting center, the use of facial covers and gloves by polling station members, as well as disinfection of the voting booths after each voter, among others.

Some recommendations of the OAS/EOM:

- Creating an independent electoral body that is responsible for the organization of the elections, including the appointment of poll workers.
- Reviewing the seat allocation formula and criteria in order to achieve a more balanced representation of persons per district.
- Implementing an urgent and sustained re-registration campaign to ensure that registered and first-time electors, who are not currently in possession of the new ID card, complete the renewal process before the next election takes place.
- Entrusting the resolution of electoral disputes to a specific institutional body that has judicial functions.
- Establishing a legal framework that ensures decisions of the executive branch can be appealed to a judicial body.
- Enacting legislation on the financing of political parties and campaigns to include clear limits on campaign spending, the identification of the sources of funding, the prevention of anonymous donations, and the limitation of private and in-kind donations to political and electoral campaigns.
- An effective gender quota mechanism is implemented for candidate nomination.

The final report was presented on July 14th, 2021 and is available at the following link:
<http://www.oas.org/EOMDatabase/GetFileA.aspx?id=426-1290-5-0>



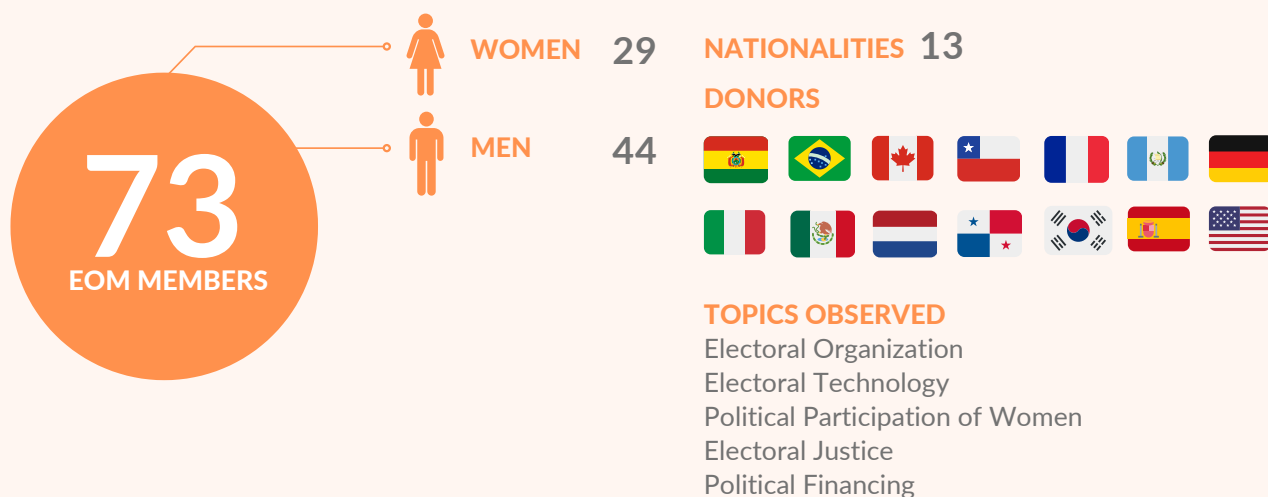
Interview with the Chief of Mission. Paramaribo, Suriname.





DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Presidential Elections
July 5th, 2020



The Mission was headed by Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle, former President of the Republic of Chile. On this occasion, the Mission adopted both face-to-face and virtual methods due to travel restrictions and border closures as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite these limitations, the OAS/EOM deployed a team of 73 observers and experts from 18 nationalities. The Mission had a team of 57 persons in Dominican territory, while six (6) were assigned to voting centers in Spain (Madrid) and the United States (Miami and New York) to observe the voting process of Dominicans residing abroad, and the rest worked remotely.

For the substantive analysis of key aspects of the electoral process, the Mission had specialists in electoral organization, electoral technology, the political participation of women, electoral justice, and political financing. The Mission held meetings and gathered information from multiple institutional, political, social, academic, and private sector actors, gathering different perspectives on the electoral process.

On election day, OAS observers and experts visited 672 polling stations in 230 voting centers, located in 29 provinces of the country and the National District. They observed every step from the installation of polling stations to the transmission of results.

Some recommendations of the OAS/EOM:

- Standardize the procedures used in the different stages of the electoral process. This includes harmonizing procedures at the national and municipal levels.
- Strengthen strict enforcement of the legislation to ensure women's equal participation in politics. Candidate lists that do not comply with the gender quota must be rejected until non-compliance is remedied.
- Install, on the JCE's (in Spanish Junta Central Electoral) computer platform, software to assist political organizations and candidates in preparing their budgets and presenting income and expenditure reports for their electoral campaigns, using pre-determined forms, and requiring the mandatory use of the platform. In addition, the Mission suggests exploring the option of opening this computer tool up to the public to strengthen access to information and facilitate citizen oversight.
- Enact regulations regarding the exclusive competence of the TSE, equip it with greater financial and human resources, and formalize its position as the sole arbiter of the constitutionality and legality of any action taken or resolution issued by the JCE regarding all matters related to the organization of elections.
- Reform the regulatory and organizational design of the Office of the Specialized Prosecutor. The incumbent's appointment, tenure, and functions must be independent of political power, and the office must be assured autonomy and an adequate budget.
- Formalize an electoral sanctions system with the technical and operational capacity for promptly addressing and stopping (through precautionary measures) any identified or reported action that, according to the legal framework, could affect the fairness or correct development of the electoral process.

The final report was presented on April 28th, 2021, and is available at the following link:

<http://www.oas.org/EOMDatabase/GetFileA.aspx?id=425-1286-27-0>

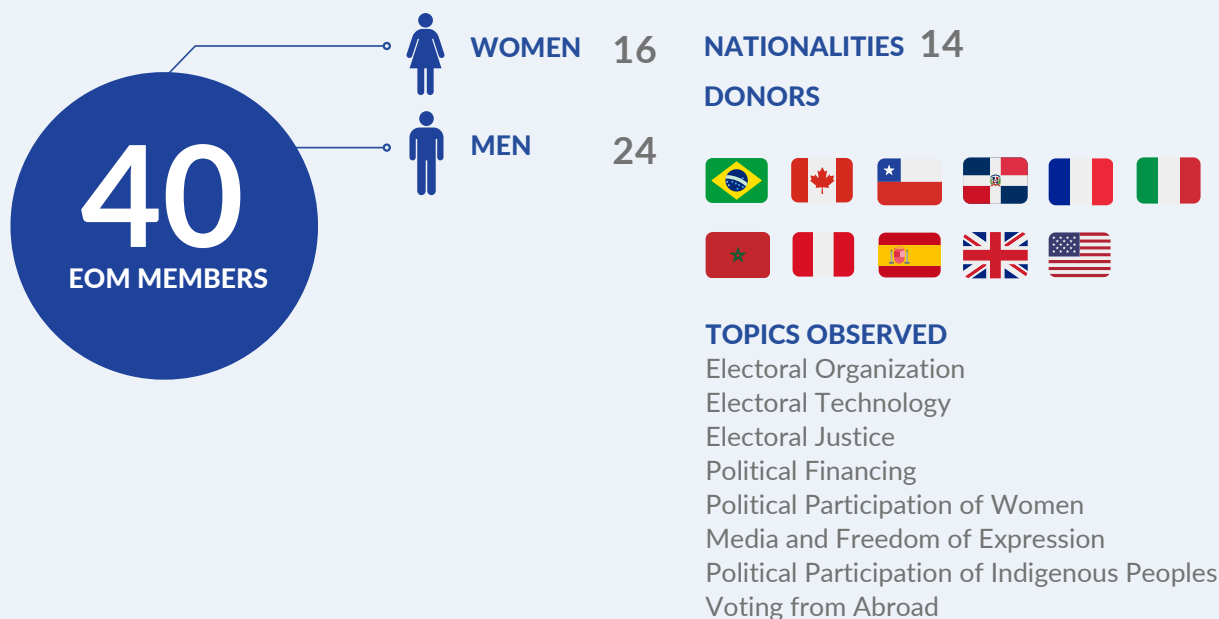


Mission group photo. Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.



BOLIVIA

General Elections
October 18th, 2020



The Mission for the General Elections in Bolivia was headed by Manuel González, former Foreign Minister of the Republic of Costa Rica.

On this occasion, the OAS/EOM was made up of 40 international experts and observers from 12 nationalities, 18 of whom were present in Bolivian territory and other group worked from abroad.

The EOM carried out an analysis of the key aspects of the electoral process, for which it had specialists in electoral organization, electoral technology, electoral justice, political financing, the political participation of women, media and freedom of expression, the political participation of indigenous peoples and voting from abroad.

During election day, the OAS observers were in voting centers from their opening to the transmission of the results in Cochabamba, El Alto, La Paz and Santa Cruz, as well as in polling places located in Argentina, Spain and the United States of America.

Some recommendations of the OAS/EOM:

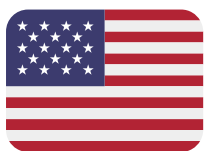
- Develop and implement plans for testing IT systems that include enough simulations to test 100% of the system's operations prior to the elections.
- Setting deadlines such that the final list of candidates is made known to both the public and the candidates well ahead of the election.
- Ensuring effective access to justice for women candidates and incumbents in view of the fact that, from the time the law against political violence and harassment went to effect, no criminal proceedings have resulted in a conviction.
- Requiring Superior Electoral Tribunal (TSE) officials in charge of registering voters to ask each voter about their ethnic identity. This will provide valuable information for developing public policies aimed at securing the full participation of indigenous peoples in democratic processes.
- Implement direct public financing mechanisms that enable the parties to cover political- and election-related spending other than advertising.
- Requiring political parties to submit partial spending reports before Election Day to have information in due time and inform on campaign revenues and expenditures.

The final report was presented on November 5th, 2020, and is available at the following link:

<http://www.oas.org/EOMDatabase/GetFileA.aspx?id=427-1261-5-0>

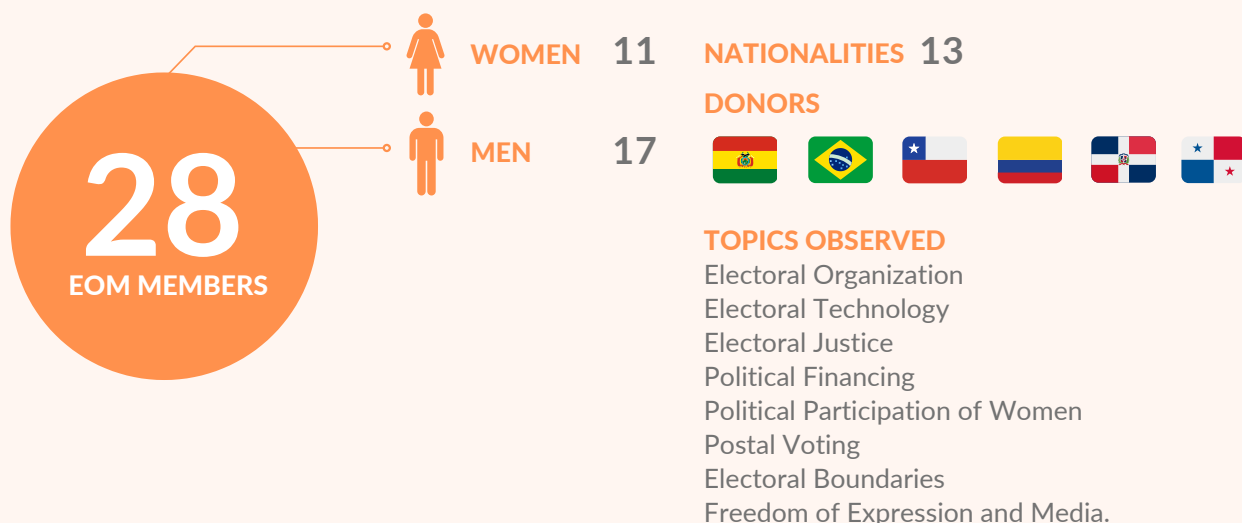


Organization of electoral material. La Paz, Bolivia.



UNITED STATES

General Elections
November 3rd, 2020



Headed by the Secretary General of the Organization of American States, Luis Almagro, the OAS Mission was made up of 28 experts and observers from 13 countries.

The Mission met with federal authorities, representatives of political parties, other electoral observation missions, organizations that work in the field of democracy and elections, representatives of the private sector and civil society actors, among others. Experts attached to the Mission analyzed key aspects of the electoral process, including electoral organization and technology, electoral justice, political financing, the political participation of women, postal voting, electoral boundaries and freedom of expression/media.

On Election Day, members of the Mission were present at voting centers in Georgia, Iowa, Maryland, Michigan, and the District of Columbia, observing the process from the opening of the voting centers to the closing of the polling stations. The members of the Mission also observed the vote counting procedures in the tabulation centers.

Some recommendations of the OAS/EOM:

- Encouraging states that have turned to universal postal voting to strengthen their voters registries and to determine effective ways to update electors addresses (via EMB and USPS) in order to ensure voters' rights.
- Replace outdated Direct Recording Electronic Voting Machines (DRE) with voting systems that produce a voter-verifiable paper record, thus creating a “paper trail” of each voter's selections.
- Promoting the establishment of independent electoral bodies across all states, that are responsible for the organization of electoral processes and the certification of results.
- Promoting reform that delegates redistricting to bipartisan or non-partisan commissions instead of state legislators. Successful reform cases, such as California and Michigan, offer insights on possible approaches that can be considered.
- The courts should provide written, reasoned decisions on election cases available to the public, including on all emergency applications heard and decided. If necessary, given tight deadlines, written reasons can be provided after the ruling has been made.
- States should provide clear and consistent access to recounts and audits, and timelines that facilitate the ability for these recounts and audits to be carried out.
- Employing all means, including an appeal to bipartisanship, to ensure the full complement of the Federal Electoral Commission is installed and thus able to enforce the rules governing federal campaign finance.
- Enacting stronger disclosure laws to ensure equity and transparency in elections.
- Encouraging political parties to support women's political participation through the recruitment of female candidates, facilitating the access of female candidates to financing and relevant training, and appointing more women to party leadership roles to make the party organization itself a source of female candidates.

The preliminary report was presented on November 6th, 2020, and is available at the following link:

<http://www.oas.org/EOMDatabase/GetFileA.aspx?id=428-1234-37-0>



Visiting voting centers. Washington, DC.

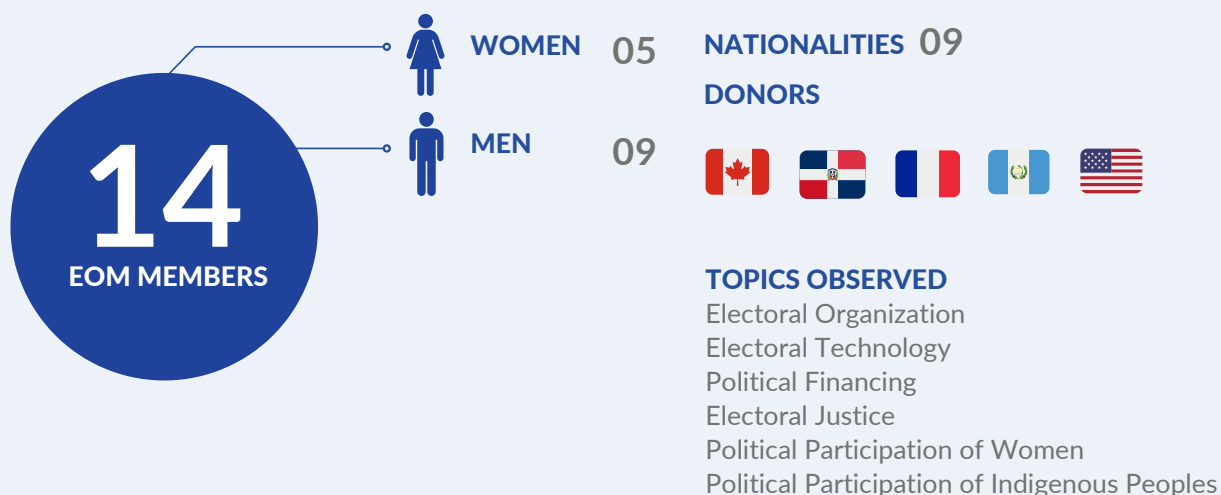


BRASIL

Municipal Elections

First Round: November 15th, 2020

Second Round: November 29th, 2020



The OAS Electoral Observation Mission (OAS/EOM) was comprised of a team of 14 observers and specialists from nine (9) nationalities and was headed by Agustín Espinosa Lloverás, former Uruguayan diplomat.

Due to the effects of the pandemic, the Mission combined a face-to-face and virtual work modality. EOM members hold more than 60 meetings with various actors involved in the municipal electoral process. OAS experts and observers met with political actors, electoral and government authorities, candidates, as well as with representatives of political parties from Brasilia, Goiania, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

The members of the Mission observed the voting process from the opening of the centers to the closing of the polling stations, the printing of the tally sheets and the transmission of results.

Some recommendations of the OAS/EOM:

- Promote a discussion on mechanisms to improve the deadlines and judgments of candidates in order to guarantee a final resolution of the electoral courts in a timely period before the election.
- Give greater dissemination to the activities carried out in the stage of the audit of election day (parallel voting) as a tool to provide guarantees to the population and guarantee the presence of the political parties during the different audit and control processes of the polls.
- Improve the legal tools available for the control of campaign and supporter funds, which take into account greater controls on the expenses incurred.
- Carry out information campaigns and material to promote the vote in indigenous and native languages.
- Invest more resources in the development and updating of the technological tools used for the analysis of the financial reports of the parties and candidates, as well as planning in such a way that these instruments are available sufficiently in advance of election day.
- Seek mechanisms to ensure the inclusion of indigenous peoples in elected representative bodies, such as affirmative measures and earmarked financing.
- Create a record of political violence, both verbal and physical, that allows for documenting, identifying the causes, reporting and promptly addressing such episodes.

The preliminary report was presented on November 30th, 2020, and is available at the following link:

<http://www.oas.org/EOMDatabase/GetFileA.aspx?id=429-1244-37-0>



Observation of polling stations. São Paulo, Brazil.







2

TECHNICAL COOPERATION AND FOLLOW-UP OF OAS/EOM RECOMMENDATIONS

"Democracy is based on the strengthening of institutions, which work and act better and better, thus creating better living conditions for our people. "

– Luis Almagro, Secretary General of the OAS





DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Audit of the Automated Voting System

DONORS 

The municipal elections of the Dominican Republic were planned for Sunday, February 16, 2020. On election day, the Plenary of the Central Electoral Board (JCE) decided to suspend the voting process due to problems related to the automated voting system (electronic voting) that was being implemented in 18 electoral districts and affected 62.04% of voters.

On February 21, 2020, the JCE requested the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (OAS) to perform an audit of the automated voting system implemented in the suspended municipal elections. The purpose of the audit was to identify the cause or causes as to why the automated voting system failed.

The Secretary General of the OAS, Luis Almagro, accepted the request of the JCE, which echoed similar requests from the national government and different candidates and political parties, and instructed the Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation (DECO) of the Secretariat for the Strengthening of Democracy (SSD) to carry out the preparations of an audit on the automated voting process with technical quality standards and professional rigor, and whose results would be thorough and binding.



What was accomplished?

The team of auditors and electoral experts (comprised of five (5) persons from three (3) nationalities) identified the problem that caused the automated voting system to fail on election-day. The origin of the problem was the software designed to customize the machines—that is, the software used to install the electoral choices (candidates) and other data corresponding to a particular polling station on each machine.

The audit team concluded that what transpired with the implementation of the automated voting system was the product of mismanagement in the information technology (IT) area of the JCE. The poor design of the software, in addition to a lack of tools to detect or prevent its failure and the inability to mitigate in a timely fashion also reflected the absence of protocols and the lack of application of good practices. The audit team found no evidence of external attacks, sabotage or attempted fraud. Given the circumstances on the morning of the election, it was impossible to continue with the voting process, so the JCE's decision to suspend was an appropriate measure.

DECO/OAS presented a final report detailing 21 findings as a result of the audit. The report details the audit conclusions based on these findings, and provides a set of 10 recommendations that are considered to be essential in order to strengthen the work of the JCE in the IT area and avoid future events such as those that occurred on February 2020.

The final report can be found at the following link:

<http://www.oas.org/documents/eng/press/Dominican-Republic-Audit-Report-EN-2020.pdf>



Signing of Agreements between the OAS and the Central Electoral Board (JCE), Santo Domingo Dominican Republic.

BOLIVIA

Strengthening the technical capacities of the Plurinational Electoral Body (OEP) of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

DONORS



In response to a request of the Plurinational Electoral Body (OEP) of Bolivia, DECO provided technical cooperation to implement the recommendations presented by the Electoral Observation Mission of the Organization of American States (OAS) deployed for the 2019 General Elections, as well as the technical team that carried out the Electoral Integrity Audit of the same elections.

A team of specialists provided cooperation in the areas of chain of custody, the electoral registry, information security and electoral technology, with the aim of continuing to support the strengthening of electoral processes in Bolivia.

The scope of the project involved four (4) essential components:

- Provide technical support to the Plurinational Electoral Body (OEP) of Bolivia in the adoption of good practices in order to implement a system for the preliminary transmission of electoral results and official tabulation of the 2020 elections, which complies with the necessary requirements, tests and security.
- Contribute technical support to the Plurinational Electoral Body (OEP) of Bolivia for the integration of requirements, policies and security systems for the preliminary results transmission system and official vote count for the 2020 elections.
- Contribute technical support to the Plurinational Electoral Body (OEP) of Bolivia in the generation of mechanisms that allow for compliance with an adequate chain of custody in the handling of electoral material during the 2020 elections.
- Contribute technical support to the Plurinational Electoral Body of Bolivia in strengthening its strategies to update the electoral registry in the future.

What was accomplished?

The established objectives and activities of the project were accomplished. The team of experts held more than 350 meetings (face-to-face and virtual). As a result, more than 60 actions were proposed to the OEP to improve different processes within the chain of custody and the electoral registry, as well as the technology and information security of the OEP.

The results of the OAS technical cooperation with Bolivia include:

- Production of 10 protocols and instructions related to the chain of custody and security process for electoral materials, with technical suggestions from the OAS cooperation team;
- Creation of an information security ecosystem, which enabled the establishment of an information security management system and continuity of operations in accordance with international standards and good practices in electoral matters;
- Implementation of technical criteria, good practices and institutional communication strategies to clearly and effectively transfer information on the technical characteristics, legal foundations and security procedures for the creation and cleaning of the biometric electoral roll of Bolivia.
- Production of protocols for the official results calculation system in order to guarantee that all databases and image repositories are free of information prior to the electoral process;
- Implementation of improvements in the flow processes of the official computation to increase the probability of verification of written records and reduce the number of inconsistencies between original records and published digital records.

GUIDE TO ORGANIZING ELECTIONS DURING A PANDEMIC

The General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (GS/OAS), through the Secretariat for Strengthening Democracy (SSD) and the Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation (DECO), published the Guide for Organizing Elections during a Pandemic.

The document, produced in collaboration with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), aims to strengthen the capacities of electoral bodies to organize elections and, in particular, protect electoral officials and other institutions, guaranteeing the right of citizens to exercise a secure vote, and providing the necessary conditions for political parties to participate in conditions of equity and transparency.

The Guide was presented on July 9, 2020 and was made possible thanks to the financial contribution of Brazil, Canada and the United States of America.

Spanish: <https://www.oas.org/documents/spa/press/OEA-guia-para-organizar-elecciones-en-tiempos-de-pandemia.pdf>

English: <http://www.oas.org/documents/eng/press/Guide-to-Organizing-Elections-During-a-Pandemic-vFINAL.pdf>

Portuguese: <http://www.oas.org/documents/por/press/Guia-para-Organizacao-de-Eleicoes-em-Tempos-de-Pandemia.pdf>

French: <http://www.oas.org/documents/fre/press/guide-pour-l'organisation-d'elections.pdf>







3

EXCHANGES AND PROFESSIONALIZATION OF ELECTORAL OBSERVATION

“Democracy and democratic governance must be maintained at all levels of society and in the most inclusive way. That means not only protecting the democratic rights and individual freedoms of the people, but also protecting the legal and political instruments, and the civic space that allows democracy to flourish.”

– Luis Almagro, Secretary General of the OAS



VIRTUAL FORUM: "ELECTIONS IN TIMES OF PANDEMIC"

The Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation (DECO) of the Secretariat for the Strengthening of Democracy (SSD) organized the **Virtual Forum: "Elections in times of Pandemic"**, with the aim of supporting OAS Member States in seeking the best options to hold democratic elections in times of a pandemic.

During the forum, the five (5) following electoral authorities discussed the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and shared the measures in place for the elections in each country: Julio César Castaños, President of the Central Electoral Board of the Dominican Republic; Wilfredo Penco, Vice President of the Electoral Court of Uruguay; Diana Atamaint, President of the National Electoral Council of Ecuador; Salvador Romero, President of the Supreme Electoral Court of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, and María Elena Wapenka, Minister of the Superior Court of Electoral Justice of Paraguay.

On behalf of the OAS, the Secretary for Strengthening Democracy, Francisco Guerrero; the Director of DECO, Gerardo de Icaza; and the Chief of the Electoral Observation Section of DECO, Brenda Santamaría, were part of this virtual forum.

The virtual event was broadcast live and was attended by more than 1,200 people in 25 countries.

The recording of the event is available at the following link:

<https://www.facebook.com/deco.oea/videos/653102718878054>



EXCHANGES

DURING 2020 DECO PARTICIPATED IN THE FOLLOWING EXCHANGES

- The session of the **Human Dimension Committee** of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) was held virtually on June 9, 2020. Brenda Santamaría, Chief of the OAS Electoral Observation Section, participated on behalf of DECO.
- After the publication of the **Guide to Organizing Elections during a Pandemic** on July 9, 2020, Gerardo de Icaza, Director of DECO; Cristóbal Fernández, Chief of the DECO Electoral Technical Cooperation Section; and Ignacio Álvarez, DECO Electoral Specialist, offered several presentations for national and subnational electoral authorities and officials, such as the Association of Electoral Institutions of Federative Entities (AIEEF) of Mexico, the Superior Electoral Tribunal of Brazil, the Local Executive Board of National Electoral Institute of Tamaulipas (Mexico) and the Local Observation Network of the Electoral Institute of Mexico City.
- The seminar **Electoral Processes in a Pandemic: Experiences and Challenges**, which was held virtually on August 4, 2020, was organized by the Center for Development Studies in Chile and featured a presentation by Cristóbal Fernández, Chief of the Electoral Technical Cooperation Section of DECO.
- The DECO team held a meeting with representatives of the **National Electoral Commission of South Korea**, to exchange experiences on the implementation of measures to carry out elections in the midst of a pandemic. The meeting was held on August 18, 2020, thanks to the Korean Observer Mission to the OAS.
- The **1st. Seminar on Youth Democratic Participation** was held on August 20, 2020 and was organized by the Superior Court of Electoral Justice of Paraguay and International IDEA. Panelists included Gerardo de Icaza, Director of DECO; Diana García, Paraguayan Sociologist; and Ernesto Rodríguez, Director of the Latin American Center on Youth (CELAJU).

- The **3rd. Seminar on Youth Democratic Participation**, held on September 4, 2020, featured a presentation by Yerutí Mendez, DECO Electoral Specialist. This initiative, organized by the Superior Court of Electoral Justice of Paraguay and International IDEA, sought to promote political and citizen participation of youth in the elections to be held in Paraguay in 2021. The specialist shared the importance of youth participation in electoral processes.
- The Chief of the OAS Electoral Observation Section, Brenda Santamaría, participated as a speaker in the **2nd Virtual Conversation: Political-Electoral Participation in Times of COVID-19**. The event, which was organized by the Superior Court of Electoral Justice of Paraguay, took place on September 8, 2020, and featured panelists from Mexico, Colombia and Argentina.
- Representing the OAS General Secretariat, the Secretary for the Strengthening of Democracy, Francisco Guerrero, and the Director of DECO, Gerardo de Icaza, participated in the hearing on the **Request for Advisory Opinion Relating to the Figure of Reelection of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights**. The hearing was held on September 28, 2020.
- In the **International Virtual Course for Latin America about Elections in the Context of a Sanitary Contingency**, Cristóbal Fernández, Chief of the DECO Electoral Technical Cooperation Section, offered a presentation regarding the adjustments implemented by the OAS for its Electoral Observation Missions, together with the findings of these EOMs deployed during the pandemic. The event took place on October 26, 2020 and was organized by the National Electoral Institute of Mexico.
- Ignacio Álvarez, DECO Electoral specialist, shared experiences and findings of the OAS electoral observation mission during the Municipal Elections of Brazil 2020, during a **Conversation with National Observers of Brazil**. The event took place virtually on December 5, 2020.

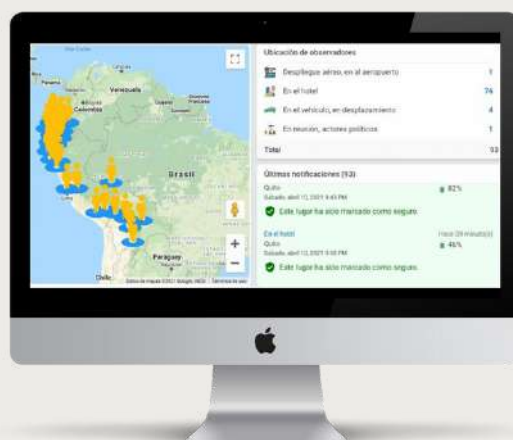
MOBILE APP TO IMPLEMENT THE OAS SECURITY PROTOCOL FOR EOMS

In order to continue advancing in the improvement and professionalization of Electoral Observation Missions, the Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation, with the support of the Department of Public Security (DSP) of the Secretariat for Multidimensional Security (SSM), created a Security Protocol for EOMs. The protocol allowed DECO to standardize the coordination and execution of security mechanisms for the deployment of Electoral Observation Missions, in order to mitigate risks to its members.

In order to implement and coordinate the activities provided in the security protocol for the OAS/EOMs, as well as to facilitate communications between the security office and the rest of the Mission's members, in 2020 DECO developed a mobile application that will be installed on the phone provided by the EOM.

This new mobile application allows for different types of alerts to be received and sent in order to monitor the well-being and safety of the members of the Mission. Observers will be able to send and received notifications about their location, emergency alerts in cases of natural disasters, accidents or incidents of violence, and about their state of health. The security officers have a web application that allows monitoring of notifications through an interactive map.

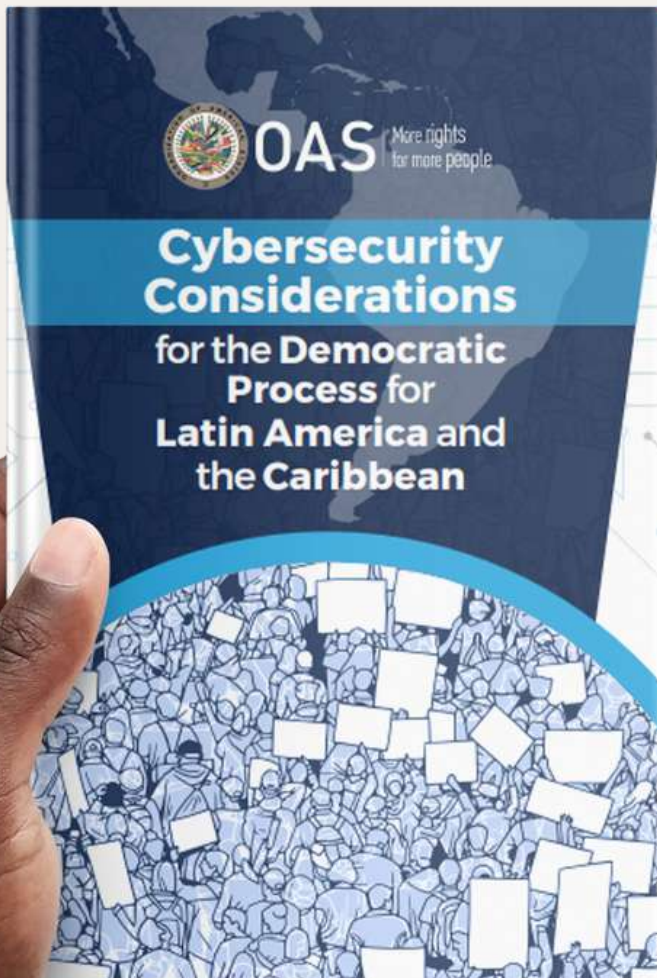
Likewise, a standardized video was prepared to communicate the main recommendations and instructions contained in the security protocol to the members of the EOM. This material will be used for security training, both for EOM staff and for electoral observers during each deployment. Similarly, an audiovisual manual was produced to train the members of the EOM on the correct use of the security application.



Control panel of the mobile app.

PUBLICATIONS

CYBERSECURITY CONSIDERATIONS: FOR THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



This document, developed by the Secretariat for Multidimensional Security and the Secretariat for Strengthening Democracy of the OAS, with the support of the Commonwealth, seeks to raise awareness about the problems related to technology and democracy and to encourage global dialogue on the theme. The first section sets the context by exploring how the distribution of information over the internet impacts the democratic process. Subsequently, the results of a survey applied among OAS Member States on cyber threats in democratic systems are analyzed. The document concludes with suggestions and recommendations on how to facilitate positive discourse and practices at the local, regional and national levels.

The document is available in two languages and can be downloaded via:

Spanish: <http://www.oas.org/es/sms/cicte/docs/ESP-Cybersecurity-Democratic-Process-LAC.pdf>

English: <http://www.oas.org/en/sms/cicte/docs/ENG-Cybersecurity-Democratic-Process-LAC.pdf>





4

EXECUTION OF FUNDS





EXECUTION OF FUNDS DECO - 2020*

* This information is approximate. These amounts have not been audited or certified.*

Electoral Observation Missions	US\$ 2,311,953
Technical Cooperation and Follow-up to the recommendation of OAS/EOMs	US\$ 350,360
	<hr/>
Total Funds Executed (2020)	US\$ 2,662,313

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



Bolivia



Mexico



Brazil



Morocco



Canada



Netherlands



Chile



Panama



Colombia



Peru



Dominican Republic



South Korea



France



Spain



Germany



Sweden



Guatemala



United Kingdom



Italy



United States of America

¡Gracias! | Thank you! | Merci! | Obrigado!

DECO YEAR IN REVIEW 2020







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**DEPARTMENT OF ELECTORAL COOPERATION AND
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www.oas.org/en/sap/deco/
deco@oas.org
(202) 370-4526
www.facebook.com/deco.oea/

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