

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Internal Workshop of Democratic Solidarity: CIVIC PARTICIPATION

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Civic participation is key to the consolidation of democracy and is a determining factor in ensuring inclusive and stable democratic transitions. Likewise, a strong participation on the part of the society strengthens the democracy from its roots, being a powerful engine of change. This panel highlighted the examples of Colombia, in relation to the peace process, and of Cuba, where they are continually facing great risks in terms of civic participation.

Conditions:

1. It is necessary to have a **civil society informed and educated** in values and principles of human rights and peace studies in order to strengthen the democratic transition.
2. **Recognition** of civil society from the institutions as well as the **opening of spaces for action** are necessary conditions for democratization.
3. The **opening of democracy**, that is, inclusion of all sides in peace negotiations can strengthen democracy.
4. Addressing the **structural problems** that have led to the situation of conflict or violation of human rights is essential for a true and lasting democratic transition.
5. The **structural inequalities** that persist in Latin America provoke social mistrust, impede the cohesion of society as a joint actor and serve as food for the growing influence of populism.

Recommendations:

1. In order to resolve internal conflicts and tensions in a country and take it to the path of democracy and peace, it is necessary to focus primarily on the **interests of society**.
2. The democratic society of Latin America needs ingenuity to **connect with all the citizens**, especially with the groups that have suffered historically a greater discrimination: women, afro-descendants, etc.
3. It is essential that **civil society gains space** to support and foster a transition characterized by inclusiveness.
4. It is imperative to avoid an attitude that arises out of grievance and leads to naming and shaming without any kind of proposals on the part of the **groups of victims**, or they run the risk of becoming the main obstacle to peace.

5. It cannot be acceptable that crisis situations in the region are prolonged by the will and desires of political power in other countries, fomenting fear as a political weapon for their own benefit.
6. In order to strengthen civic participation, the **globalization of civil society** in the region should be productive and focus on the common problems of the region and strengthen democratic values and principles jointly and not only locally.
7. We must work on **promoting behavior and civic values within civil society** to empower citizens in democratic values.
8. It is necessary to **fight against the co-optation of civil society by antidemocratic government forces**, which causes the shift from the interests of the citizenry, weakens the democratic process in the Americas and prevents the recovery of democracy through civil society.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Conclusions were issued in the workshop 'Civic Participation in Latin America' organized in the framework of the Democratic Solidarity project during the 21<sup>st</sup> annual conference of the Forum 2000 Foundation.