

CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES OF THE ORGANIZATION OF THE AMERICAN STATES (OAS) DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC¹

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Abstract: The main objective of this paper is to explain the actions and measures taken by the Organization of American States (OAS) to combat the COVID-19 pandemic in the field of democracy, human rights and cooperation among the States. It sets out to investigate the position of the OAS vis-à-vis the pandemic in relation to the principle of democracy in the region and its response to the challenges of protecting human rights and strengthening cooperation between the States in order to prevent, control, and overcome the pandemic. The paper combines descriptive and analytical approaches in an attempt to provide an overview of the behaviour of the OAS in view of the major multidimensional crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Organization of American States, Covid-19, pandemic, democracy, human rights, cooperation.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact in the Americas in terms of loss of human life and in the economic, social, educational, and cultural fields. Experts agree that the region has been hardest hit by the impact of the pandemic due to

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“structural factors” that focus on a “development style” which has questioned its sustainability “from the social (inequality), economic (persistence of productive and technological asymmetries with advanced countries) and environmental (exceeding planetary limits in the use of natural resources and the biosphere) approach” (Bárcena and Cimoli, 2020, p. 18). In that scenario, the Organization of American States (OAS), the main Organization representing the American continent, has carried out a series of measures of political and legal nature in order to combat the effects of COVID-19 and prevent its consequences on the norms and institutional architecture of the Organization, as well as on the achievements that have been made in areas such as democracy, human rights, and inter-American cooperation.

Two questions need to be addressed to assess the measures adopted to tackle the pandemic within the OAS: first, the activities carried out by the organs of the Organization, in particular, the Secretary-General, the Permanent Council and the Assembly, based on the guide for political action to address the COVID-19 pandemic under democratic principles, launched in June 2020. The research in this area will be based on the Organization’s beliefs and principles. It will also investigate the extent to which they may be jeopardized by this exceptional health crisis. Second, it is necessary to determine the areas in which American cooperation should be effective in the fight against the pandemic, including situations of special concern in relation to vulnerable groups, the determination of specific health standards and the components of cooperation among the American States.

Thus, three areas stand out: a) the link between the pandemic and the declaration of the democratic principle in the Americas; b) the achievements of the Inter-American system protection of human rights and the risks produced by the health crisis; and c) the cooperation among the States of the region in the sanitary field to prevent, control, and combat the pandemic. We, therefore, try to provide an overview that shows the behaviour of the OAS in response to such a serious crisis affecting the region’s institutional architecture.

THE PRINCIPLE OF DEMOCRACY AND THE RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN THE AMERICAN CONTINENT⁴

One of the purposes of the OAS is to prevent Latin American democratic institutions from being seriously eroded by the health crisis, in other words, to avoid the pandemic being used to undermine the rule of law. That is because democracy

⁴ In this section, and also in some aspects of this work, are reproduced or taken into account the positions adopted in the article by Díaz Galán, “Postulados de la Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA) en tiempos de pandemia: democracia y derechos humanos”, in *Revista La Red de la Red Interdisciplinaria Justicia Global e Integración Americana (RIJIA)* (in press).

is one of the main pillars of the hemispheric Organization and, consequently, one of the sectors in which this Organization intervenes and has received greater attention since its creation. The OAS mission is to “help strengthen political processes in the member states, in particular, to support democracy as the best option for ensuring peace, security and development” (OAS, 2021).

The important fact is that the OAS has established a strong link between the pandemic and democracy and is aware that the health crisis could affect democratic institutions in the region. This explains why appropriate measures must be taken to preserve democratic stability in the Americas. In any case, the pandemic cannot be used as an excuse to alter the democratic framework. On the contrary, as noted by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), “during the crisis, it is essential to strengthen democratic institutions and spaces for participation and dialogue.”⁵ It is, therefore, understandable that the OAS has addressed some fields in which democratic institutions in the region could be affected by the effects of the pandemic. In particular, additional emphasis has been placed on electoral processes in times of a pandemic in order to guarantee the respect of the democratic context and the enjoyment of electoral rights. That is to say, to ensure fair, safe elections, with every democratic safeguard, without being prevented or hindered by health circumstances.

In terms of deliverables, the OAS General Secretariat published the *Guide to Organizing Elections in Times of a Pandemic* in July 2020, an extraordinarily useful document for the member states. This document aims “to contribute to strengthening the political processes of member states, particularly to supporting democracy as the best option for guaranteeing peace, security and development” (OAS, 2020). In addition, concrete indications are required to ensure the proper conduct of electoral processes in times of a pandemic. The guide provides guidelines and, in a detailed manner, addresses the obstacles to be overcome. Indeed, it points out “measures for holding safe, clean and transparent elections that aim to reduce the risk of the COVID-19 infection for those participating in organizing and carrying out elections”. In this sense, it is highly significant that the document takes a pragmatic approach or, in other words, “it is a practical guide through which each

⁵ CEPAL. (15 October 2020). Informe Especial Covid-19 [Covid-19 Special Report], No. 8, p. 9. A specific analysis on people in situations of vulnerability, electoral process and Covid-19 can be seen at: Muñoz-Pogossian, B. (2021). Inclusión electoral de grupos en situación de vulnerabilidad en América Latina en la era del covid-19 [Electoral Inclusion of Groups in Vulnerable Situations in Latin America in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic], *Opera*, 29, pp. 31-46, retrieved from <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3872100>, Accessed 11 September 2021.

country and electoral body can benefit when planning and managing electoral processes" (OAS, 2020a, p. 7).

Furthermore, the guide aims to preserve health, avoid contagion risks, and, at the same time, ensure the proper development of the electoral processes. It also intends to protect health and ensure that the scheduled elections have all the democratic guarantees. Consequently, as noted, it incorporates two major perspectives: measures to protect health and those related to the organization of elections in the Member States. Although it is not a legally binding instrument, it can serve as a guideline, in times of pandemic, for the behaviour of the States, especially when deciding to hold elections that meet all the requirements of a democratic regime.

In this sense, the OAS had an active presence in the electoral missions, in some of which "innovative approaches" were incorporated into the observation work in states such as the Republic of Suriname⁶, the Dominican Republic (OAS, 2020c), Bolivia (OAS, 2020d), Brazil (OAS, 2020e), the United States (OAS, 2020f), Ecuador (OAS, 2021a), El Salvador (OAS, 2021b), and Peru (OAS, 2021c), among others. In addition, a *Guide for political action to face the COVID-19 pandemic under democratic principles* was published on June 2, 2020. In the same way, an attempt was made to promote citizen participation with the launch of a Consultation Portal, Forums and Repository on the world during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. All this was accompanied by the aforementioned publication of a *Guide to organize elections in times of a pandemic* in July 2020 (OAS, 2020g). All these efforts add to the concerns of the Pan American Health Organization for democracy in its relationship with health, whose outlook has been extremely aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Overcoming COVID-19 will mean a better environment for guaranteeing and respecting human rights. This reality must suppose a rethinking at the regional level and having the OAS as a determining element of the economic, political and social systems to guarantee human rights. That will have a significant impact on ensuring a democratic environment. The connection between democracy and human rights has been a constant concern in the inter-American system. Without human rights, there is no democracy, and without democracy, there is no guarantee for human rights. COVID-19 represents a serious obstacle to the guarantee and respect of human rights and, therefore, for democracy in the American continent.⁷

⁶ For example, the electoral mission in the Republic of Suriname used an "innovative approach to its observation work", with the use of "virtual encounters before their arrival in Paramaribo, such as face-to-face meetings with the different actors on the ground" (OAS, 2020b).

⁷ See, for example: Ayala Corao, C. (2020). Retos de la pandemia del Covid-19 para el estado de derecho, la democracia y los derechos humanos [The Challenges that the Pandemic

PANDEMIC AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE OAS

Regarding human rights, the response within the framework of the OAS has been produced by its main bodies, as well as the Inter-American Human Rights Protection System. On April 17, 2020, the OAS Permanent Council adopted Resolution 1151 (2280/20), entitled “The OAS Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic”, which in terms of human rights emphasized several points: “the need to make the prevention of and response to gender-based violence a priority in all measures relating to COVID-19” and to ensure “full respect for human rights and transparency and prevent any form of discrimination, including racism and xenophobia, as they response to the crisis”⁸. The Secretary-General of the Organization, and various committees and commissions, such as the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism and the Inter-American Commission of Women, have focused on human rights situations during the pandemic, for instance, the situation of political prisoners in Nicaragua. It launched the *Practical Guide to Inclusive Rights-Focused Responses to COVID-19 in the Americas*, aimed at supporting the States with “a series of tools to consider responses that take into account the particular circumstances of groups in a situation of vulnerability” (OAS, 2020h). In addition, it has called the member states to “pay special attention to their indigenous populations during the health crisis caused by COVID-19” (OAS, 2020i); it published reports on the situation of Venezuelan migrants and refugees in Chile, Bolivia, on “the official recognition of gender identity in the countries of the Hemisphere” (OAS, 2020j), the “difficulties for Venezuelans returning or trying to return home” (OAS, 2020k), as well as documents such as “COVID-19 in women’s lives: Reasons to recognize the differentiated impacts” of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM). We should also mention the “Proposals to improve the situation of Venezuelan migrants and refugees in the framework of COVID-19” (OAS, 2020l), and cybersecurity of women during the COVID-19 pandemic (OAS, 2021d), among others. It launched a regional campaign “against discrimination and xenophobia against displaced Venezuelan migrants and refugees” (OAS, 2020m).

Caused by Covid-19 Has Presented for the Rule of Law, Democracy, and Human Rights], *Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law & International Law (MPIL) Research Paper*, 2020-17, retrieved from <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3596040> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3596040>, Accessed 12 September 2021.

⁸ Iso, on a specific problem in relation to human rights treaties, their derogations by the States and Covid-19, see the work: Helfer, Laurence R. (2021). Rethinking Derogations from Human Rights Treaties, *American Journal of International Law*, 115, (1), pp. 20-40.

In relation to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR), within the framework of the Inter-American System for the protection of human rights, it adopted a wide-ranging declaration on April 9, 2020, with a guiding character for the States, entitled "COVID-19 and Human Rights: The problems and challenges must be addressed from a Human Rights perspective and with respect for international obligations". In the same way, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights adopted on July 27, 2020, Resolution 04/20 establishing the inter-American guidelines on the "Human Rights of Persons with COVID-19" and Resolution 01/20 Pandemic and Human Rights in the Americas, as well as different communiqués on the subject. There would also be a Joint Declaration entitled "Joining Forces in Latin America and the Caribbean to help minimize the Coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis and foster responsible and sustainable enterprises."

In addition to the relevant declaration adopted by the IACHR, which has no binding force, we stress that it contains important guidelines for the States. This regional judicial instance has issued rulings related to COVID-19 "*through the supervising mechanism of compliance with the judgment and provisional measures*" (Bertot, 2020, pp. 224-225). Thus, it cautions against "the adoption of provisional measures in the supervision stage of compliance with judgments, as was in the *Case of Vélez Lóor v. Panama*, subsequently ratified by resolution of July 29, 2020. However, such provisional measures pursuant to Article 63.2 (63, par. 2) have not been considered in other cases, but there has been a reference to a 'reinforced supervision' (in the framework of sentence supervision) as in the *Case of the Miguel Castro Prison v. Peru*, Request for Precautionary Measures and Supervision of Compliance with Sentence Resolution of July 29, 2020, which linked the prison regime to applicable measures in the framework of COVID-19, among other aspects." (Bertot, 2020, p. 225).

PRINCIPLES OF COOPERATION AND SOLIDARITY AMONG THE STATES OF THE AMERICAN REGION VIS-À-VIS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: THE ROLE OF THE OAS AND THE PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION (PAHO)

The principle of cooperation, nowadays of a structural nature — though it is difficult to specify the States' obligations (Díaz, 2021, p. 135) — has shaped the evolution of this continent at a very early stage and found a viable direction through international organizations. In one of his famous courses at the Hague Academy of International Law, J. M. Yepes referred to the fact that the spirit of international cooperation and organization "has given birth to and developed the most daring ideas about cooperation among people on the American continent". He was right when he gave the example of Bolívar's attempt to create a society of

nations that later inspired the foundational principles of the League of Nations of 1919 (Yepes, 1934, p. 14). Conceived as a “key principle of the American space” and as “a specific value of the hemisphere and a solid leverage that fosters close cooperation among the states of the region” (Díaz, 2021, p. 40), the principle of InterAmerican solidarity has its roots in a “sense of solidarity and fraternity” (*sentiment de solidarité et de fraternité*) that Yepes places in the birth of the Latin states of the New World and which makes them consider themselves as part of “the same family of nations” and shapes their willingness to create a “distinct international community” (Díaz, 2021, p. 40).

These principles of cooperation and solidarity have marked the development and functioning of the Organization of American States. The preamble of the OAS Charter points out the “true significance of American solidarity”, which together with the “good neighbourliness” are referred to as the consolidation “within the framework of democratic institutions, of a system of individual liberty and social justice based on respect for the essential rights of man”. Likewise, it places “an intensive continental cooperation” at the basis of “the welfare of all” and the “contribution to the progress and the civilization of the world”. In this sense, Article 1 states that the OAS is the international organization created by the States of the Americas called to “promote their solidarity” and “strengthen their collaboration”. Among the principles recognized by the States, Article 3 envisages “the solidarity of the American States” and “economic cooperation”. Just as in the Charter, these principles are the platform and basis of the integral development of the Member States.

Although these principles are still inadequate, they have found tangible realizations within the OAS as a response to the crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The OAS Permanent Council approved Resolution 1151 (2280/20) on April 17, 2020, entitled “The OAS Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic”, which resolved, among other issues, to “(u)nite in a hemispheric response to the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis, driven by democratic leadership, cooperation and solidarity among the member states and inter-American entities to mitigate the adverse impacts and accelerate the recovery.” However, several States (El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago) pointed out that while this resolution acknowledged “the need for more favourable credit conditions for middle-income countries and small island developing states,” it failed to “account for the largest impediment to accessing favourable financing.” In this regard, they called on the OAS to act in the “best interests of its most vulnerable member states to support the appeal to all pertinent multilateral financial institutions to adapt conventional policies and payment terms to the evolving extraordinary

circumstances and, in so doing, alleviate the pressing needs of middle-income and small island developing countries, taking into account, not only their GDP per capita but their vulnerability in the face of this pandemic and vulnerabilities stemming from natural disasters, climate change and external economic shocks.”⁹

Nevertheless, the OAS has played an active role in promoting and strengthening collaboration in various areas in the fight against the pandemic.¹⁰ Efforts carried out jointly by this organization, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), and the Council of Ministers of Health of Central America (COMISCA), aimed to help the governments of the 33 countries that were part of the Inter-American Network on Government Procurement (INGP) — of which the OAS itself is the Technical Secretary — have “access to the Joint Negotiation Mechanism for the purchase of medicines, medical devices, and other goods from the Council of Ministers of Health of Central America (COMISCA)” (OAS, 2020n). In addition, it encouraged the Joint Summit Working Group (JSWG)¹¹, convened by the OAS Secretary-General as its chairman, and the Director of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), to debate on “coordinated and joint responses to COVID-19”. The Summit discussed the “implementation of a group of wide-ranging measures”¹²; the launch of a Virtual Community of the Emergency

⁹ For more details see footnote of this resolution.

¹⁰ See, among others: Ruano, L. and Saltalamacchia, N. (2021). Latin American and Caribbean Regionalism during the Covid-19 Pandemic: Saved by Functionalism?, *The International Spectator*, 56 (2), pp. 93-113. doi: 10.1080/03932729.2021.1900666; Quintana, F., and Uriburu, J. (2020). Modest International Law: COVID-19, International Legal Responses, and Depoliticization, *American Journal of International Law*, 114(4), pp. 687-697. doi:10.1017/ajil.2020.65.

¹¹ The Joint Summit Working Group is integrated by: Organization of American States (OAS), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), World Bank, Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), Development Bank of Latin America (CAF), Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI), International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Organization of Labor (ILO), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

¹² Among the measures mentioned are: emergency support, strengthening of health systems; mitigation of economic effects; flexibility of the use of financial resources; support for MIPYMES and protection of employment and income; support to populations that are disproportionately affected by the crisis, including women employed in the most affected sectors and the migrant population; support to the Caribbean countries, which will be

and Security Systems of the Americas, a “mechanism to support the countries of the region to face the challenges that COVID-19 represents for the operations of emergency and security systems (EMS)” (OAS, 2020o). Together with the Inter-American Development Bank, it supported the VI E-Government Ministerial Meeting of Latin America and the Caribbean, organized by the Electronic Government Network of Latin America and the Caribbean (Red GEALC), which concluded with the Ministerial Declaration of San José, “Digital Transformation for Economic and Social Reactivation”. Some of the key conclusions were the following: “(t)he digital transformation is of the essence to promote the region’s inclusive economic and social reactivation in the face of the COVID-19 crisis; a reactivation that, with the strengthening of digital government, improves equal opportunities while placing citizens at the centre of public policies.” (OAS, 2020p); the organization as technical secretariat of the Inter-American Competitiveness Network (RIAC) together with the government of Ecuador, in its pro tempore presidency, the XI Americas Competitiveness Forum, which “brings together the 34 Member States of the OAS with ministers and other top-level actors related to the competitiveness of government, the private sector, academia, and international organizations”. Furthermore, among the topics on the agenda were “Digital Transformation and SME Citizen Readiness”, “Innovation-driven Business Development and Empowering Entrepreneurs”, “Improving the Regulatory Environment, Trade Facilitation and Regional Value Chains” and “Climate Adaptation and the Post-COVID Recovery” (OAS, 2021e).

During the first months of 2021, the U.S. Department of Commerce awarded \$1.57 million to the Americas Competitiveness Exchange Program through the Economic Development Administration (EDA) — a partnership between the U.S. Departments of Commerce and State and the OAS, through its Secretariat for Integral Development — in order to “help rebuild and re-establish trade and investment networks in the Americas and accelerate recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic” (OAS, 2021f).

doubly affected, as well as the highly indebted low- and middle-income countries. Multilateral Entities Coordinate Response to the Regional Impact of COVID-19 at the Level of the Joint Summit Working Group (April 5, 2020) retrieved from https://www.oas.org/es/centro_noticias/comunicado_prensa.asp?sCodigo=C-031/20; See also: Senior Authorities of the Joint Summit Working Group (JSWG) ratify their support to the countries of the Americas to face the health, socioeconomic and governance impacts associated with COVID-19 (May 1, 2020), retrieved from , https://www.oas.org/es/centro_noticias/comunicado_prensa.asp?sCodigo=C-044/20, Accessed 12 September 2021.

As regards health cooperation, the work of the Pan American Health Organization has been fundamental. Cooperation in health matters in the Americas has had a long history¹³ and immense significance at the Second International Conference of American States when the International Sanitary Bureau, later called the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, was established in 1902, as a proposal of the X Committee called “International Sanitary Policy” (Bustamante, 1952, pp. 471-531). In this sense, the Pan American Health Organization, whose “fundamental purposes” are “the promotion and coordination of the efforts of the countries of the Western Hemisphere to combat disease, lengthen life and the promotion of the physical and mental health of the people” (Constitution of the Pan American Health Organization, Article 1), is a specialized agency of the OAS and, at the same time, the Regional Office of the World Health Organization (WHO). Since January 2020, the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, which is the secretariat of the Organization, has “activated an organization-wide response to provide its 51 countries and territories with technical cooperation to address and mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic” (PAHO, 2020). The activation of regional and national “Incident Management System Team” by the PAHO and WHO has been key from the beginning of the pandemic. Their “direct emergency response to Ministries of Health and other national authorities” covered a wide range of issues: “surveillance, laboratory capacity, support health care, infection prevention control, clinical management and risk communication”; as well as the publishing of technical documents “to help guide the Member States’ strategies and policies to manage this pandemic in their territories” (PAHO, 2020a). In this regard, from the outset, it developed four “fundamental objectives of its regional response strategy” which helped shape surveillance strategies to the regional level. First, the implementation of multi-sectoral emergency response committees at the country level between the PAHO teams and national authorities; second, the development of technical guidelines and training courses related to the restructuring of health services and the strengthening of COVID-19 surveillance in several countries; third, collaboration at the country level between the PAHO teams and the United Nations agencies for the purchase of materials for health personnel and others; fourth, the strengthening of COVID-19 surveillance in several countries and the dissemination of several recommendations at the regional level (namely, “Recommendations for pre-hospital emergency medical services [EMS] preparedness”, “Recommendations on the management of dead bodies”, “Recommendations for medical surge capacities and

¹³ See a complete review of health cooperation in the Americas prior to 1902 in: Moll, Aristides A. (1941). “The Pan American Sanitary Bureau: Its origin, developments and achievements”, *Boletín de la Oficina Sanitaria Panamericana*, 20, 4, pp. 1219-1234.

deployment of emergency medical teams”) and also guidelines (“Guidelines for the detection and diagnosis of the COVID-19 virus infection”).¹⁴

The PAHO’s role in ensuring “fair and equitable access” to the COVID-19 vaccines, in a scenario marked by “vaccine nationalism”¹⁵, is well-known in the American region through the COVAX Mechanism. The PAHO Revolving Fund has become a “procurement agent” before this mechanism for the Member States of the region, whether “self-financing countries” or with “advance market commitment”, and are recognized as a “regional bloc.”¹⁶ Thus, the PAHO has been involved as a representative of 10 countries in the Americas that receive support under the “COVAX Mechanism’s Advance market commitment”, such as Bolivia, Dominica, El Salvador, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, as well as self-financing countries (PAHO, 2021). As of April 26, 2021, the PAHO has bought, on behalf of 28 countries in the region, 4,290,480 doses that have already been delivered, while 147,630 were in transit, for a total of 4,438,110 doses (PAHO, 2021a).

However, since the beginning of April, the PAHO authorities have been clearly calling for the insufficient COVID-19 vaccine supply in a region that, due to the high percentage of diagnosed cases and deaths, should become a “global priority” (PAHO, 2021b). In relation to the “equitable distribution of vaccines”, the OAS Secretary-General himself stressed that “access to and distribution of the vaccines is not equal” in a statement made on 9 March (PAHO, 2021b). In this regard, while welcoming “the COVAX facility, led by the World Health Organization, which was

¹⁴ For more information see PAHO. (2020). COVID-19 Situation Reports, retrieved from <https://www.paho.org/es/informes-situacion-covid-19?topic=All&d%5Bmin%5D=&d%5Bmax%5D=&page=2>, Accessed 14 September 2021.

¹⁵ On “vaccine nationalism” see the interesting work: Evenett, S.J; Hoekman, B.; Rocha, N.; Ruta, M. (2021). *The Covid-19 Vaccine Production Club Will Value Chains Temper Nationalism? Policy Research Working Paper 9565, World Bank Group, Macroeconomics, Trade and Investment Global Practice*. <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/244291614991534306/pdf/The-Covid-19-Vaccine-Production-Club-Will-Value-Chains-Temper-Nationalism.pdf>, Accessed 14 September 2021.

¹⁶ See in this regard the information provided on the official website of this Pan American Health Organization: PAHO Revolving Fund, retrieved from <https://www.paho.org/es/fondorotatorio>; Opportunities for MS and Territories by participating in COVAX Mechanism through the Revolving Fund, retrieved from <https://www.paho.org/es/documentos/oportunidades-para-em-territorios-al-participar-mecanismo-covax-traves-fondo-rotatorio>; Fact Sheet- The Revolving Fund’s role in Global Initiatives, retrieved from <https://www.paho.org/es/documentos/hoja-informativa-rol-fondo-rotatorio-iniciativas-globales>, Accessed 14 September 2021.

designed to help developing countries to secure access to vaccines at affordable prices”, he considered that the “COVAX needs more than pledges of financial support”, as well as the urgent need for “delivery of the necessary funds to facilitate a fair supply and distribution of vaccines”. Therefore, he called on the States, in accordance with international human rights obligations and the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN Agenda 2030, to facilitate “equal access and equitable distribution of the COVID-19 vaccines”.

CONCLUSION

The American continent is facing enormous challenges dealing with the huge effects of the pandemic. In this endeavour, the OAS has become a fundamental pillar. This has given an account of the basic areas in which the organization has worked and where it should focus on and deepen its work in the near future. Along these lines, bearing in mind the impact of the pandemic on the effectiveness of the democratic principle in the region, and the work of the OAS in this regard, efforts need to be directed to calibrating and giving full effect to the measures proposed by the OAS bodies, and making it possible to turn them into tangible results. The same applies to the achievements in the field of human rights, although in this field the consequences of the health crisis are serious, especially in those rights that require major changes in the economic and social order to be fully effective. However, the OAS should place a special emphasis on cooperation, continental solidarity, especially since the serious economic and social situation which the continent is going through at present cannot be addressed from narrow traditions of nationalism without putting into perspective and enforcing compliance with the principles underpinning this international organization that represents the entire American continent.

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