

The Summit: Democratic Leaders

QUESTION

Doesn't the Summit tend to legitimize really bad governments in the region? Isn't democracy more than just having elections?

SUGGESTED REPLY

- Unlike many multilateral institutions, Summit nations all have democratically elected leaders.
- It's true that democracy is more than elections -- a broad range of rights, including freedom of speech and association, personal security, independent judicial systems and others are essential. But being able to choose one's leader is central to democracy, and in this area, the hemisphere has made great progress.
- The Summit process encourages democracy -- it was a major theme at the Miami Summit and is one of the four main themes at the Santiago Summit.
- The Protocol of Washington entered into force in 1997. The Protocol makes it possible for a state to be expelled from the OAS if its democratic system is interrupted.
- The Summit agenda encourages action in areas that strengthen democratic institutions and values: protection of human rights; education for democracy; judicial systems; fighting corruption, terrorism and illegal drugs; protecting basic rights of workers; freedom of expression.
- The defence and promotion of the democratic system is one of the central mandates of the Organization of American States (OAS), to which all the Summit countries belong.