

Who are the candidates for Secretary-General of the Organization of American States?

Hugo de Zela

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Peruvian Ambassador to the U.S.

Hugo de Zela is a Peruvian diplomat. He studied Administrative Sciences and Economics at the University of Uruguay, and he graduated with a license in International Relations from the Diplomatic Academy of Peru. He also has a Doctorate in Political Science from the Universidad del Salvador in Argentina.

Hugo de Zela is the acting Peruvian Ambassador to the United States. He has occupied various positions in the Peruvian government. This includes Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs (2018-2019), permanent representative to the Organization of American States (2010-2011), Ambassador to Argentina and Brazil (1997-2002; 2007-2010), member of the Peruvian delegation to border negotiations with Ecuador (1997-1998), and National Coordinator of the Rio Group (1996-1997). He also acted as Chief of Staff of the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States on two occasions (1989-1994; 2011-2015).

The candidacy of Mr. De Zela was presented by Peru.



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What are the main attributes that make you the suitable candidate to assume the position of Secretary General of the OAS, or be reelected to the position, for the period 2020-2025?

My candidacy proposes to strengthen the OAS as a forum for dialogue and consensus in order to respond effectively to the principle challenges of the region. My candidacy is a constructive and institutional alternative to the proliferation of polarized perspectives that deepen the divisions and weaken the relevance of our organization. I offer the professional experience of serving as a diplomat for over four decades, specializing in multilateral affairs, negotiation and conflict resolution. I have worked in the OAS for more than 16 years, as chief of staff for two Secretary Generals and as Representative of my country to the organization. This professional experience reaffirms my conviction that the close collaboration between the member states and the General Secretariat is essential for the OAS to be effective in defending the principles and values of the Inter-American system, in promoting regional development and prosperity, and in addressing the priorities of our countries in the four pillars of the organization—human rights, democracy, security and integral development—through an efficient and transparent administration of resources.

Some of the main obstacles to the proper functioning of the OAS have to do with the lack of financial sustainability, the administrative challenges of the organization, and the

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political challenges in the region. Could you share with us some of the strategies that you propose to face them?

It is necessary to establish, through joint work between the Member States and the Secretary General, a rational and balanced use of the organization's resources. It is also essential to ensure the effective application of transparency and accountability, which is a widespread demand in the OAS.

Within that framework, if elected, I will work resolutely to generate greater administrative efficiency, all without undermining the execution of the programs that the states prioritize, which will maximize the organization budgets. I will promote coordination between units and integrated work to avoid the repetition or dispersion of efforts.

The people who work in the OAS are the most important strategic resource we have for the fulfillment of the organization's purposes. Therefore, I am committed to exercising active leadership and effective management to achieve the

creation of a positive workspace that allows maximum development for its own benefit and that of the OAS.

Regarding political challenges, I am convinced that the region needs the OAS to regain its capacity to participate effectively in solving the crises and challenges we face. For this, the General Secretariat must work closely with member states to mitigate the political polarization that characterizes the region, bringing divergent positions closer together. Political dialogue is the only means we have available to reach agreements and effective decisions. The strength of OAS resolutions lies in the extent of the support they manage to consolidate. Consequently, the General Secretariat must be able to participate actively through diplomatic negotiation and in coordination with Member States in the search for concrete solutions. That is the best and most effective way to defend common principles and values, regional development and prosperity, and the resolution of disputes and conflicts.

The OAS was created to strengthen the peace and security of the continent, consolidate democracy, protect human rights, prevent conflicts and ensure the peaceful settlement of disputes among member states, among other reasons. In this framework, what would be the three main challenges to address in the region during your term? What is the role that the OAS Secretary General should have in the current crises in the region?

The OAS was created to be a meeting place in order to reach agreements relevant to its four pillars. For this reason, the first challenge to be addressed is the polarization that our hemisphere is going through, and strengthening the capacity of the OAS to promote dialogue and the search for consensus. For this, it is essential that the Secretary General guarantees impartiality and has credibility as an interlocutor capable of mediating or negotiating effectively; it should not be part of the problem by deepening the confrontation or proposing the use of force as a solution to a crisis. What gives the OAS relevancy is the adoption of significant agreements, not the focus of the Secretary General on media-attention. Two other challenges are to reshape the Secretary General's joint work with the member states, as well as to ensure the efficient management of the organization's resources to meet the urgent needs of all the geographic areas of our region. Likewise, the OAS must work more closely with regional financial organizations, such as the Inter-American Development Bank and the Development Bank of Latin America to design, finance, and implement projects of common interest.

The Inter-American human rights system plays a fundamental role in the hemisphere. To fulfill its mandate, the Commission and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights require adequate resources, as well as independence and autonomy in their work. If you are elected (or reelected) as Secretary General, what measures will you take to guarantee the independence, autonomy and adequate financing of the organs of the Inter-American human rights system? What are the main challenges you identify to implement these measures and how would you address them?

The Inter-American Human Rights System (IACHR) is fundamental for the promotion and protection of human rights and democracy in the hemisphere. That is why I promise to fully support it. Through the decisions and recommendations of its programs and the definition of Inter-American standards, the IACHR has had a great influence on the protection and promotion of fundamental rights in the hemisphere.

The independence and autonomy of the Commission and the Court are two of its essential values and, therefore, one of the main objectives of the General Secretariat must be to preserve and promote them. It is essential that the Commission and the Court have adequate resources so that they can exercise that independence and autonomy effectively. In 2017, during the General Assembly held in Cancun, the States agreed to double the budget of the IACHR within three years. Peru, during my tenure as Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, was one of the countries that presented the original proposal. Since then, Peru has supported the implementation of the agreement every year in budget negotiation meetings.

In the case that I am elected, I pledge to guarantee the implementation of the mandates that the States have adopted regarding the financing of the Inter-American Human Rights System, fully executing the allocated budget, and avoiding the use of these resources for other purposes. I also commit to finding creative solutions and identifying additional resources through various sources of financing.

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The OAS has demonstrated its technical capacity for monitoring elections in recent years. What is the main contribution of the OAS when carrying out electoral monitoring actions in the hemisphere? Do you think that some changes or adjustments to this mechanism should be implemented?

Within the functions entrusted to the OAS, I have been responsible for organizing and directing the organization's Democracy Promotion Unit, which institutionalized the Electoral Observation Missions (MOE). In this sense, I am convinced of the usefulness and valuable contribution of the MOEs, which is based on their main objective: to guarantee the holding of free, fair and transparent elections in the region. The MOEs are called to support the strengthening of national electoral systems, while always ensuring full respect for the principles on which democracy is founded. The technical, professional and impartial nature of these

missions is what sustains their credibility. The Secretary General must support the work of the MOEs by seeking the necessary resources, respecting their autonomy and, above all, coherently and consistently defending the democratic principles on which the Inter-American system is based, without subjecting the defense of these principles to political calculation or media-attention.

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