

## The Fifth Summit of the Americas: Recommendations for Action

Reversing the Crime Epidemic in Latin America and the Caribbean

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### Executive Summary

Crime is one of the most pressing issues that countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) face. Crime levels in LAC are the world's highest. Criminal violence and the widespread fear that comes with it have become part of daily life throughout the region. While it is true that crime is a global pandemic, it is equally clear that the dimensions of the phenomenon in LAC are as unique as profound are its consequences. In LAC, citizen insecurity has become not just a significant obstacle for the pursuit of human development, but also a clear danger for democracy.

Democracies in LAC must put in place effective and sustainable strategies to deal with high levels of crime. They must do so while resisting loud calls to solve these problems through "iron-fisted" policies and a cavalier attitude towards the rule of law.

If they want to be successful in the fight against crime, governments in LAC must put in place effective social prevention strategies and deepen their commitment to human development-oriented policies. Yet, social prevention policies must be calibrated with a sense of urgency and the acknowledgement that the robust use of state coercion, within the boundaries of the rule of law, is inescapable in the fight against crime, notably organized crime.

Countries of the Hemisphere should recast the discussion on crime, invest in opportunities for the youth, upgrade law enforcement institutions, improve governance of security issues, improve police-community links, regulate firearms, and promote a hemispheric-wide dialogue on drugs.