

**EXECUTIVE COUNCIL TO THE
INTER-AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR
GLOBAL CHANGE RESEARCH
Sixtieth meeting (EC-60)
Videoconference, 8 January 2026**

Report of the 60th meeting of the IAI Executive Council

1. This document was prepared by the Directorate.

Introduction

2. The Executive Council of the Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research (IAI) held its sixtieth meeting (EC-60) on 8 January 2026, videoconference.
3. The account of the proceedings and discussions of the meeting are provided in Section I of this report.
4. The meeting adopted two decisions, which are provided in Section II of the report.
5. Article VI, paragraph 3 of the *Agreement establishing the Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research* (IAI), states:

The Executive Council shall meet at least twice a year and shall strive to hold its meetings in different locations among the Parties.

Section I: Proceedings of the meeting

6. In accordance with Article VI, paragraph 3, of the *Agreement*, the 60th meeting of the Executive Council was held via videoconference on 8 January 2026 and represented its post-CoP Executive Council Meeting.
7. Due to the absence of the EC Chair, Maria Uhle, United States of America (the U.S.), Rule 22, stating that *If a vacancy occurs in the Bureau, its remaining Members should change position(s) as appropriate*, was applied. Therefore, the meeting was presided over by the Second Vice-Chair of the EC, Milagro Mainieri, Panama, who served as Acting Chair of the EC, and Fernando Méndez, Paraguay, acted as First Vice-Chair of the EC.

8. The following Parties to the Agreement, which are members of the Executive Council, attended the meeting: Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Jamaica, Panama and Paraguay. The following Parties to the Agreement with membership in the Executive Council did not attend the meeting: the U.S. and Venezuela.
9. The following observer Parties attended the meeting: Ecuador, Guatemala, Peru and Uruguay.
10. The following members of the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) attended the meeting: Alexandra Mallet (Chair) and Laura Ramajo (Vice-Chair).
11. The following members of the Science-Policy Advisory Committee (SPAC) attended the meeting: Amparo Martínez (Chair).
12. The following members of the Indigenous People Advisory Committee (IPAC) Attended the meeting: Cristina Fures (Chair).
13. The list of observer Parties and other observers attending the meeting is provided in the List of Participants available on the EC-60 [web page](#)

Opening of the meeting

Welcome by Milagro Mainieri, Acting Chair of the Executive Council

14. The Acting Chair welcomed all participants to the meeting and thanked members of the Executive Council for their commitment and participation in the Executive Council.
15. Before proceeding with the scheduled agenda, the Acting Chair informed participants of an important development that had occurred the previous evening. The Government of the U.S. had issued a Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments the previous day, 7 January 2026, indicating its withdrawal from 35 non-UN organizations, including the IAI, and 31 UN agencies.
16. As a result of this development, the U.S. representative, who served as the EC Chair for the period 2025-2027, was unable to participate in the meeting. Consequently, Milagro Mainieri, Panama, in their capacity as First Vice-Chair of the Executive Council, presided the meeting.
17. In closing, the Acting Chair expressed deep appreciation to the U.S. representative for her continuous support of the IAI and the Executive Council.

Agenda item 1: Approval of the agenda

18. The Acting Chair proposed the following amendments to the provisional agenda:
 - The inclusion of a closed session with members of the Executive Council to provide updates on the progress of an ongoing investigation and ensure members of the Executive Council were fully informed.

- The addition of a final agenda item to address the implications of the U.S.' non-participation in the IAI.
19. Participants were invited to propose additional modifications or agenda items. No further suggestions were made.
 20. The Acting Chair invited members of the Executive Council to approve the agenda (document no. IAI/EC/60/1) with the proposed amendments.
 21. The agenda with the proposed amendments was approved by consensus.

Agenda item 2: Closed session to address matters related to the investigation

22. The members of the EC moved to a closed session to address matters related to the investigation. The rest of the participants moved to a breakout room.

Agenda item 3: Overview of the Core Budget and Country Contributions for FY 2025-2026

23. The Acting Chair invited the Directorate to present a summary of the Core Budget and country contributions received to date.
24. The Administration, Finance and Operations Officer presented an update on the status of country contributions and the core budget.
25. A financial update was presented, covering the period from July to October of the current fiscal year 2025-2026. The presentation focused on an overview of contributions, expenditures, and budget execution.
26. It was reported that country contributions during this period were relatively low, representing a limited percentage of the overall budgeted expectations for that timeframe. Some countries had not yet made their contributions.
27. The representative of Colombia raised a question regarding the low percentage of assessed contributions collected to date, and whether there had been communications from Parties indicating difficulties, delays, or inability to pay.
28. In response, the Executive Director, Anna Stewart Ibarra, clarified that the financial report covered only the period from July to October, which is less than half of the fiscal year. Most Parties traditionally make their payments later in the fiscal year. To date, there have been no indications of systemic non-payment or alerts suggesting that countries that usually pay would not do so. It was also recalled that the organization's fiscal year runs from 1 July to 30 June, and that additional payments are expected throughout the remainder of the period.
29. Regarding expenditures, overall spending was described as contained and conservative, reflecting careful financial management.
30. Salaries and benefits were met at the minimum levels required to fulfill contractual obligations.

31. A significant number of activities and events were held virtually, contributing to cost containment.
32. Equipment expenditures were minimal, limited primarily to the necessary replacement of a computer to ensure continuity of operations.
33. The Executive Director provided additional context regarding communications received from the U.S. Government in late December, indicating that it was unlikely that its voluntary contribution would be fulfilled.
34. In response, the Directorate had immediately prepared a financial summary and budget scenarios for the Executive Council Bureau. She presented information reflecting these updated scenarios and illustrating the impact of the absence of the U.S. voluntary contributions.
35. The presentation outlined the general structure of operational costs, including personnel costs, technical consultants and fellows, and other operational and administrative expenses.
36. The Executive Director stated that, at present, the organization's financial situation remains stable, allowing it to meet all existing contractual obligations and commitments to staff and contractors.
37. However, it was emphasized that the current situation represents a critical transition period, during which strategic decisions will be required to ensure the long-term financial health of the institution, alignment of the organizational structure with the Parties' priorities, and the sustainability of operations under a revised budget scenario.
38. The Acting Chair expressed deep appreciation to the representative of the U.S., Maria Uhle, acknowledging the continuous communication and cooperation with colleagues from the U.S. over the past year. The commitment and efforts of the U.S. was recognized, particularly in a period of significant change.
39. It was noted that, without the U.S. voluntary contributions, maintaining the current core budget would require significant reductions, potentially amounting to a two-thirds decrease in available operational resources. Essential core operations could be maintained with approximately one-third of the current budget.
40. The Executive Director reported ongoing and active efforts to diversify funding sources, including fundraising initiatives. However, a key challenge remains that many available funds are earmarked for specific projects, rather than for core operations such as central administration and executive management salaries.
41. Given the limited timeframe available, it was stressed that decisions would need to be taken promptly to preserve the institution's financial viability. The current organizational structure was deemed unsustainable under the reduced budget scenario.

42. With no further comments on the financial presentation, the Acting Chair proposed moving to the next agenda item, corresponding to the summary report of activities of the Directorate.

Agenda item 4: Summary report of the Directorate's activities to implement the Decisions adopted at the 33rd meeting of the Conference of the Parties

a. Report from the Executive Director

43. The Executive Director provided an overview of the current organizational structure. The Directorate is composed of a relatively small team. The main areas include finance and administration, science diplomacy, science and communications and the virtual campus. The team includes a mix of staff members, consultants, and fellows participating in the Science, Technology, and Policy Fellowship Program (STeP).
44. She reported that efforts had been made to diversify the Institute's sources of funding. Recently, cooperation agreements were signed with two development banks in the Americas: CAF, the Development Bank of Latin America, and FONPLATA, the development bank for the La Plata Basin region. The cooperation with CAF builds on engagement initiated several years ago and focuses on biodiversity-related issues, including support for developing biodiversity-related indicators to guide regional investments. Collaboration with FONPLATA has also been particularly positive, given the alignment of priorities in the La Plata Basin region, especially regarding water security, which was a central theme of the most recent IAI Conference of the Parties held in Paraguay in May 2025.
45. Engagement with these institutions included joint activities around CoP, participation in events linked to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Panama, and invitations to take part in several side events related to climate change conferences. These interactions resulted in the formalization of cooperation agreements and the development of joint funding proposals. In parallel, the Institute has been working with non-traditional funders and philanthropic organizations, including engagements facilitated through the Belmont Forum and the Pew Charitable Trusts. These interactions have helped position the Institute at a global level, aligning its priorities with those of the Parties.
46. Efforts are also underway to establish a new non-profit organization in the U.S., in collaboration with the Belmont Forum, with the objective of mobilizing philanthropic funding. An agreement is being prepared to allow funds to be managed through Panama. In addition, relationships have been cultivated with other philanthropic organizations, including the Rockefeller Foundation, Common Ground Challenges Canada, and the Avina Foundation. While these relationships are promising, it was acknowledged that tangible financial results often require time.
47. A non-exhaustive list of funding sources targeted was presented, including proposals already funded, those under review, and those not selected. These efforts reflect a sustained and coordinated commitment by the entire team to secure resources for the Institute. The Directorate has also remained actively engaged in multilateral spaces, responding to decisions of the Parties and recommendations from the Institute's committees, and maintaining a strong presence in global environmental forums. The Institute has additionally been invited to participate as an observer or partner in various international conferences.

48. She highlighted progress achieved by the Indigenous Peoples Committee. Since May 2025, the Committee has held regular meetings and advanced its onboarding processes, capacity-building activities, internal knowledge-sharing, and exchanges with other committees. The Committee has been developing its internal procedures, selecting its leadership, and promoting active participation of its members in international spaces, representing one of the most successful areas of recent work.
49. Despite operating under constrained financial conditions, the Institute has maintained a high level of activity. Since June alone, three in-person training activities have been conducted, along with four in-person courses, including one in El Salvador, and three virtual courses. These achievements have been made possible through the support of the Parties and collaborating institutions, allowing the Institute to continue serving the region by mobilizing knowledge, resources, and expertise, even in a context of limited funding and staffing.

b. Science

50. The Science Director, presented a summary of the main activities undertaken by the Directorate to advance IAI's agenda.
51. He provided an overview of activities carried out during the intersessional period. Three ongoing research projects are currently operating within the Belmont Forum Collaborative Research Actions on Migration and Immobility. These projects are in their final year and have begun to generate academic outputs.
52. One project, led by a team working in Brazil, focuses on mobility, examining the limitations faced by human groups in moving under conditions of climate change and extreme events, and exploring the implications for public policy and equitable adaptation strategies. Another project addresses social conflicts and their interaction with international migration, highlighting the role of climate factors, particularly droughts, in increasing migration flows. These research lines align closely with discussions held during the recent IAI Conference of the Parties, particularly on drought response in the Southern Cone.
53. In addition, the Institute is implementing a program focused on the climate–environment–health nexus. This includes twelve seed projects, each with modest funding, addressing different dimensions of the linkage between climate, environment, and health, as well as six larger teams resulting from Belmont Forum collaborative research actions, with support from the U.S. National Science Foundation for Latin American teams. The seed projects are nearing completion and beginning to deliver results, while the collaborative research projects are advancing through their research phases.
54. Regarding forest-related research, eight seed projects are currently under implementation, six supported directly by the Institute and SENACYT, and two funded by the Foundation for Research Support of the State of Santa Catarina (FAPESC) in Brazil. These projects, together with those integrating Indigenous knowledge systems, stem from the Transdisciplinary Academy, completing the cycle from capacity building in transdisciplinary methodologies to project implementation and knowledge generation.
55. The Institute aims to close the knowledge cycle by translating research results into practical outputs for the Parties, including policy briefs and guidance documents. To this end, focal points will be contacted, and three webinars are planned for 2026 to

disseminate results across the region. Efforts have also been made to enhance regional understanding of climate science through a recent partnership with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). A series of webinars was delivered to meteorological offices and the general public, focusing on El Niño forecasts and the transition to La Niña, as well as impacts on agriculture, energy, and other systems. These webinars were well received, attracting more than 3,000 participants and significantly increasing the Institute's visibility.

56. In parallel with fundraising efforts, the Institute continues to build collaborative bridges through multi-country projects. A regional project addressing the emerging challenge of sargassum in the Caribbean, involving seven countries, has been formally submitted after more than three years of preparation, including workshops held in San Andrés, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic. Locally, collaboration is underway in Panama for the organization of the International Mangrove Congress of the Americas, with recent support from UNESCO and an expected attendance of more than 500 participants from across the region.
57. Additional activities include the organization of a multilateral simulation workshop in Colombia, with support from Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology, and Environmental Studies (IDEAM), the Degrees Initiative, and the Alliance for Just Deliberation on Solar Geoengineering. Participants from sixteen countries took part, strengthening decision-makers' capacity to understand emerging technologies, their benefits, and potential impacts.

c. Science Diplomacy Center (SDC) and the STeP Program

58. The Director of the IAI SDC presented a summary of capacity-building activities under the Science Diplomacy Program. The Institute officially launched its Science Diplomacy Curriculum. Since then, efforts have focused on disseminating this material and raising awareness of science diplomacy through the Virtual Campus. The curriculum is available in three languages, which has significantly facilitated participation and outreach among professionals across the region.
59. In early December, a webinar was organized with the participation of focal points and experts from the region and beyond. This event enabled the exchange of experiences and showcased how countries are advancing science diplomacy initiatives. Interest in the topic remains strong, as reflected in the number of activities organized between August and December 2025, involving national representatives of the Parties, associated institutions, and collaborating organizations.
60. Two in-person workshops were highlighted: one held in Brazil in August and another in El Salvador in November. Together, these activities trained approximately sixty professionals, the majority of whom are government decision-makers. Both workshops received very positive evaluations from participants and coordinators, with scores reaching the maximum rating, underscoring the value and relevance of the curriculum materials for the Parties.
61. It was noted that all events were self-financed, meaning they were funded by the Parties, host institutions, and organizers. This was identified as a positive indicator of country ownership and commitment, including willingness to support the training of public officials.
62. Looking ahead, several strategic collaborations were outlined. In Peru, plans are underway to work closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, together with institutions

such as National Council for Science, Technology and Innovation (CONCYTEC) and the National Meteorological and Hydrological Service (SENAMHI). Regional initiatives were also highlighted, including a project led by Panama for Central America and the Dominican Republic, scheduled to begin in February in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Additionally, a substantive dialogue was held with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification's (UNCCD) Regional Office in Panama to explore the provision of science diplomacy training for Latin American delegations.

63. She reported on a major event hosted in Brasilia, where a tailored introductory course on science diplomacy was delivered to seven ecosystem-related units. Despite the senior level of participants and the complexity of discussions, the course was highly successful, as reflected in evaluations from both the host institution and participants. The event fostered meaningful dialogue between academia, government decision-makers, the private sector, and civil society.
64. Additional initiatives in Brazil included collaboration with the State of São Paulo, which led to the first course on innovation diplomacy in partnership with the University of São Paulo and international partners, including Wellcome Trust. Peru reported significant impacts resulting from participation in these activities.
65. Innovation-focused workshops were also highlighted, particularly one held at the request of National Council for Science and Technology (CONACYT), El Salvador, aimed at decision-makers and the national scientific community, with regional participation from Central American countries and the Dominican Republic. This initiative was implemented in collaboration with Canada and regional integration mechanisms, serving as an example of political and diplomatic regional cooperation and an opportunity to strengthen international scientific collaboration.
66. High-level dialogues with governments were reported, including engagements in Brazil, Mexico and Panama. Meetings were held with senior officials, including Eduardo Ortega, National Secretary for Science, Technology and Innovation of Panama, and Rosaura Ruiz, head of the National Council for Humanities, Sciences, and Technologies (CONACYT) of Mexico. These discussions emphasized the role of science diplomacy as a key interface between science and public policy and reflected strong interest from the Parties.
67. The SDC Director also highlighted the growing network of program alumni, who, despite having completed the program, remain engaged and continue contributing as their careers advance in science and policy across different countries.
68. An update was provided on the redesigned STeP Program, which now places stronger emphasis on impact and on benefits for host institutions, particularly government institutions in Member Countries. Enhanced monitoring and accompaniment mechanisms have been introduced, including closer engagement with supervisors and mentors, to ensure measurable impacts on public policies over a one- to two-year period.
69. Upcoming cohorts will prioritize themes identified by the Parties, such as biodiversity and bioeconomy, with participation expected from Ecuador and ongoing negotiations with Brazil. A Canada-funded project supported by Global Affairs Canada, in partnership with academic institutions, will be implemented in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru, with the first cohort expected to begin in early 2027.

70. The presentation concluded with an overview of fundraising and financing initiatives aimed at diversifying resources and strengthening program sustainability. A major regional proposal, linked to the La Plata Basin, is under development, including a planned submission to the German Government for approximately fifteen million euros. If approved, the project would support the implementation of international conventions and national commitments across multiple Latin American countries.
71. She reiterated that many activities continue to be self-financed by the Parties, with the Directorate contributing through coordination, organization, reporting, and impact generation. The ultimate objective remains to ensure that capacity-building efforts effectively support national government agendas, foreign policy priorities, environmental policies, and Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) frameworks, while positioning the Institute as a regional articulator for joint initiatives.

d. Communications, Virtual Campus, and Partnerships

72. It was reported that the website had been migrated and launched.
73. The presentation described social media engagement. LinkedIn was identified as the primary professional platform, reflecting broader trends in digital communication.
74. She also highlighted that all the staff members and collaborators provided information for the production of news. Audience metrics for newsletters and news items were presented. Notably, the biodiversity compendium has exceeded one thousand downloads across its three language versions.
75. A collaboration was highlighted with the Barcelona Supercomputing Center in Spain, which recently funded the participation of more than five professionals from different Latin American countries. This initiative focused on training participants in the use of a data harmonization tool integrating climate, environmental, territorial, and sociodemographic data. The project is expected to continue with discretionary funding from the Wellcome Trust as part of a broader research program in which the Institute also participates.
76. The proposal under development represents an estimated budget of approximately sixteen million euros, with a significant share allocated to implementation activities in Latin America. The project is currently in the joint design phase and is intended to support large-scale research and capacity-building efforts in the region.
77. She reported that 213 courses were available on the Virtual Campus and 200 certificates were issued through the platform. These certificates support participants in strengthening their curricula, acquiring new skills, and expanding their technical knowledge.
78. The presentation then briefly summarized key capacity-building efforts undertaken during the reporting period, including pilot and development phases for several online training courses, the expansion of asynchronous learning modalities to enhance accessibility, and the delivery of multilingual course content through strategic partnerships with international organizations and government institutions. In line with the agreed plan, selected courses, including those related to climate and health, are expected to be incorporated into the Institute's Virtual Campus.
79. The Acting Chair opened the floor for questions and comments related to the preceding presentations.

80. A representative requested access to the presentations, suggesting that a concise and visually clear summary of achievements would be highly valuable for sharing with key officials in universities and national institutions. It was noted that while the results presented were impressive and clearly articulated, they were not always widely known, particularly when viewed collectively. The preparation of a shorter, high-level version highlighting key outcomes was suggested as a useful tool to strengthen visibility and engagement.
81. A question was also raised regarding the status of institutional relationships with strategic partners, specifically the Belmont Forum, and whether current circumstances would affect these collaborations. In response, it was clarified that there were no immediate implications for the Belmont Forum, as it operates with its own funding mechanisms. The Institute continues to fulfill its role as the administrative host, and existing commitments remain in place. It was emphasized that the Executive Council should remain mindful of ongoing obligations with Belmont and other partners.
82. The discussion further highlighted the importance of tailoring institutional communication and reporting to national priorities. It was suggested that, beyond consolidated reports, more strategic and customized information could be developed to demonstrate the value added by the Institute to individual countries, complementing their financial contributions. This approach was seen as particularly relevant in light of emerging challenges and the need to articulate differentiated strategies at both regional and national levels.

Agenda item 5: Challenges arising from the announced non-participation of the U.S. in the IAI

83. The discussion focused on challenges arising from the announced withdrawal of the Government of the U.S. It was proposed to establish an advisory ad-hoc committee composed of members of the Executive Council to work closely with the EC Bureau to analyze the financial situation and develop recommendations for consideration by the Conference of the Parties. These recommendations would address both institutional restructuring needs and budgetary challenges.
84. Members of the EC and observer Parties agreed that waiting until the ordinary meeting of the Conference of the Parties, mid-2026, to review these recommendations would pose significant risks, particularly with respect to financial sustainability. It was therefore recommended that an extraordinary meeting be convened in early March, in compliance with the notification timelines established in the rules and procedures of the Conference of the Parties, which provides 60 days of anticipation to call an Extraordinary CoP.
85. The committee should prepare a restructured budget proposal and recommendations for consideration by the Extraordinary Conference of the Parties.
86. The Acting Chair anticipated that the agenda for the extraordinary meeting would include discussion of institutional restructuring and budgetary matters.
87. The Directorate was instructed to email an invitation to the EC members to express their interest in participating in the ad-hoc advisory committee and to coordinate its work.

Agenda item 6: Future meetings: Extraordinary Meeting of the Conference of the Parties; 34th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP-34) and 61st Meeting of the Executive Council (EC-61), virtual

88. The Acting Chair reminded attendees that the 34th Conference of the Parties (CoP-34) and the 61st meeting of the Executive Council would be hosted by Colombia and Jamaica, virtually, in late May or early June 2026, with dates to be communicated to the Parties in due course.
89. The Executive Director provided brief updates regarding coordination with Colombia and Jamaica on the planning of the CoP-34. The planning process would commence during the current month.
90. The Extraordinary Conference of the Parties will be held virtually in early March, in compliance with the notification timelines established in the rules and procedures of the Conference of the Parties, which provides 60 days of anticipation to call an Extraordinary CoP.

Agenda item 7: Closing remarks

91. The Acting Chair closed the meeting by noting the strong commitment of the Directorate, SAC, SPAC, and focal points. The Acting Chair expressed gratitude to all participants for their dedication and emphasized the importance of continued collaboration across IAI's diverse initiatives.
92. The meeting was closed at 11:25 am Panama time on 8 January 2026.

Section II: Decisions of the meeting

1. The Executive Council decided to convene an Extraordinary Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to be held on 9 March, in compliance with the notification timelines established in the rules and procedures of the Conference of the Parties, which provides 60 days of anticipation to call an Extraordinary CoP. The agenda would include discussions of institutional restructuring and budgetary matters.
2. The Executive Council decided to establish an ad hoc advisory committee tasked with preparing recommendations to the Conference of the Parties, to be presented at the upcoming Extraordinary Meeting in March 2026, regarding the restructuring of the IAI in light of the budget reductions associated with the withdrawal of the U.S. from the IAI.