



DECLARATION

14th ParlAmericas Plenary Assembly: *Parliamentary Actions to Promote Responsible Political Discourse*

November 15-17, 2017 | Medellin, Colombia

We, parliamentarians from 19 countries of the Americas and the Caribbean, met in Medellin, Colombia, on November 15, 16 and 17, 2017, on the occasion of the 14th ParlAmericas Plenary Assembly, ***Parliamentary Actions to Promote Responsible Political Discourse***.

During the meeting, we shared experiences and perspectives regarding the effects of phenomena such as “post-truth” and the distribution of fake news and propaganda on democracy, governance, and political representation.

Through the dialogue and working sessions, we had productive exchanges on our role in promoting initiatives at the institutional and individual levels to foster responsible discursive practices that model tolerance, respect, and recognition of plurality, as a response to the challenges presented by these complicated realities.

RECOGNIZING:

That participation in the democratic process requires that citizens have access to truthful, rigorous, and diverse information as a basis for constructive and critical dialogue on public issues;

That while the digital communication era democratizes the distribution and consumption of information and news, it also generates new challenges to sovereignty, governance, security, and democratic stability;

That phenomena like fake news and the distribution of propaganda through social media erode the credibility of institutions, undermine citizen rights to information, and create challenges for democratic dialogue and coexistence, exacerbating antagonism and hate speech;

That some forms of fake news have real effects on the human rights of individuals and communities, and can instigate hostility, discrimination, and violence, particularly against women and other traditionally marginalized groups.

That the complexity of these realities and their serious consequences have been addressed at the United Nations, the Organization of American States, and the European Union, among other multilateral actors, as well as by parliamentary peers around the world;

That in this context it is crucial to safeguard the rights to information and free expression as core principles of the Rule of Law, understanding that the aforementioned facts cannot be an incentive to restrict free speech nor to suppress dissent;

That media and journalism – undertaken freely, independently, and responsibly – are fundamental pillars of democracy, and their work is indispensable to informed public debate and to denouncing the abuse of power, corruption, and impunity;

That civil society organizations, universities, the media, and the private sector have been developing innovative initiatives to address the causes and consequences of fake news and the distribution of propaganda, promoting journalistic fact-checking projects, and building media and information literacy;

That given the general climate of citizen distrust in public institutions, including the legislative branch, it is imperative to strengthen open parliament and legislative transparency practices;

That at this juncture, which tends to incite antagonism and polarization, parliamentarians have a duty to promote responsible discursive practices that foster respectful, tolerant, and pluralistic dialogue as a contribution to the sustained commitment to strengthen our democracies.

WE COMMIT TO:

1. Evaluating, according to the distinctive features of each of our countries, the need to advance debate and establish legislative committees dedicated to addressing the fake news phenomenon and the distribution of propaganda, considering the policies and legislative measures necessary to counter them, and raising public awareness on their consequences.
2. Working with ministries of communication, relevant authorities, the media, the private sector, and civil society organizations to update policies, protocols, and regulations, in order to respond appropriately to the development of new information and communication technologies.
3. Insisting upon the adoption of legislation that guarantees citizens' right to access public information and promotes the proactive disclosure of governmental and parliamentary information to foster evidence-based public debate, using as a reference the *Roadmap towards Legislative Openness* developed by the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network.
4. Strengthening our parliaments' institutional communication strategies as a mechanism for incentivizing citizen participation, increasing understanding of legislative work, and contributing to informed discussion of public affairs.
5. Advancing educational reforms that recognize the importance of media and information literacy and the development of competencies necessary to train citizens to navigate critically through the complexities inherent to the development of information technologies.
6. Promoting collaborative work with the media, the private sector, and civil society to identify and counter fake news, and to raise awareness of its effects – including on women and other marginalized groups – without undermining freedoms of opinion and expression.
7. Encouraging respectful, inclusive, and tolerant discursive and communicational practices in our parliaments and in our public interactions (both in person and virtually) that foster constructive dialogue and recognize the value of the plurality of our societies.

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