

DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT

2nd Gathering of the Open Parliamentary Network: Strengthening the ties between citizens and legislatures San Jose, Costa Rica | March 16-17, 2017

Parliamentarians and civil society representatives from 25 countries, gathered in San Jose, Costa Rica, from March 16 to 17, 2017, for the **2nd Gathering of the Open Parliamentary Network**, discussed strengthening the ties between citizens and parliaments through promoting the participation and involvement of citizens in the legislative work. These debates enabled us to further the work we have undertaken to implement ParlAmericas' **Road Map towards Legislative Openness**, exploring strategies to achieve its objectives under the pillar on citizen participation.

Fruitful exchanges were held concerning the use of co-creation models for drafting legislation, overseeing its implementation and strengthening the legislative agenda. Furthermore, we discussed the ways technological tools are empowering citizens from all sectors of society to participate in legislative work, facilitating an inclusive and participative decision making process. Therefore and,

Recognizing:

That citizen participation is a fundamental principle of our democracies, since it aims to ensure that citizens are informed, involved and participate actively in public decision making processes, contributing to the development of a spirit of collaboration and trust between citizens and democratic institutions.

That the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals aspire to leave no one behind, and that Goal 16 highlights the importance of ensuring inclusive, participatory and representative decisions that correspond to the needs of all sectors of society.

That citizen participation is a core element of the Open Government Partnership, reflected in the requirement to maintain ongoing dialogue between public institutions and civil society throughout the design and implementation process of developing action plans.

That legislators, as representatives of citizens' interests, hold the responsibility to personify their voices and facilitate their participation in parliamentary decision making processes.

That advances in information and communication technologies have transformed the way citizens interact, and that these technologies are indispensable for sharing information and creating spaces to contribute to parliamentary work.

That the creation of laws and public policy is more inclusive and beneficial when contributions and considerations from all sectors of society are integrated, relying on a collective intelligence stemming from broad-based collaboration.

That the effective participation of citizens is possible when our parliaments and governments ensure the right to access public information, are accountable and create spaces or mechanisms to include citizens in decision making, as well as act with probity and ethics.

That the Latin American Network for Legislative Transparency, which comprises 25 civil society organizations from 13 countries, actively promotes transparency, access to information and accountability in the region's congresses, and facilitates international measurement and comparison of the advances and areas for improvement in said topics with its Legislative Transparency Index.

We commit to:

1. Promote the adoption of regulatory frameworks that guarantee the effective participation of citizens in the legislative process in order to ensure the adoption of inclusive, participative and representative decisions that meet the needs of all sectors of society in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal 16.
2. Ensure the institutionalization of spaces and adopt methodologies and mechanisms that facilitate citizen participation in: setting legislative priorities, identifying problems, devising solutions, as well as drafting, implementing, overseeing and evaluating legislation.
3. Encourage the use and design of technological tools that facilitate spaces for collective intelligence, recognizing the opinions and contributions of citizens throughout the different stages of the legislative process, and thus improving the results of parliamentary tasks through mechanisms such as crowdsourcing, petitions, consultations, public hearings and other online spaces.
4. Establish measures to evaluate the level, quality and extent of participation in the practices applied to ensure they are inclusive, with particular attention to traditionally marginalized groups.
5. Strengthen the ties with our constituents through in-person meetings or activities carried out in secure and easily accessible places, at convenient times and with appropriate services to reduce difficulties that prevent the attendance of women, youth, the elderly and minorities, as well as through the publication of proposals and/or agreements made during these activities.
6. Foster dialogue and interaction with our constituents, taking into account the reach of social networks through which they can be informed of the issues we are working on and their impact, and through which they can be involved in discussions on topics of their interest.
7. Disseminate the rights of citizens in the area of civic participation, the importance of participation for democracy strengthening, and the mechanisms through which it is possible, on parliaments' websites, in traditional media and social networks, and through civic education programs.
8. Promote the revision, adoption and updating of regulatory frameworks concerning access to public information and ensure implementation through an independent enforcement body with the authority to settle issues.

9. Promote the co-creation of national plans and commitments on legislative openness with civil society, and their integration in the national action plans presented to the Open Government Partnership, in accordance with its legislative policy.

We request the *Open Parliament Network of ParlAmericas* to develop a toolkit on citizen participation that will explore strategies and best practices to implement the adopted commitments within the citizen participation pillar of ParlAmericas' Road Map towards Legislative Openness.

Signed in San Jose, Costa Rica, on March 17, 2017