



PRESS RELEASE

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ParlAmericas participates in the International Symposium on Transparency and Access to Public Information during the Pandemic

As part of the events held on the International Day for Universal Access to Information, on Monday, September 28 and Wednesday, September 30, 2020 the International Symposium, Transparency and Access to Public Information during the Pandemic: Perspectives and Challenges, was held by the Citizen Participation Department of the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica, Movimiento de Iniciativa Popular (Popular Initiative Movement), the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights, the National University of Costa Rica, Ideario Costarricense del Bicentenario (Bicentennial Costa Rican Values and Principles), Fundación Konrad Adenauer, and ParlAmericas. This symposium aimed to analyze and reflect on the impact of the current pandemic in various areas, considering transparency and access to public information as key pillars. The two-day event included four panels that covered political communication; public policies for economic, social, and cultural welfare; innovation and resilience in public administrations; and best practices for transparency in parliaments.

The event was inaugurated on Monday, September 28, and included the participation of representatives from organizing institutions. Member of the National Assembly Elizabeth Cabezas (Ecuador), President of ParlAmericas, and President of the Legislative Assembly Eduardo Cruickshank (Costa Rica) delivered welcoming remarks via video. In her speech, Member of the National Assembly Cabezas highlighted, "In ParlAmericas, we uphold the open parliament principle so that all citizens can have greater access to information—information that is accurate, concrete, and that reflects the reality of each parliament. We are convinced that having access to adequate information is the best tool citizens can have in order to truly understand the role of their institutions and dignitaries." Two sessions were held following the inauguration: the first focused on [political communication in the context of transparency and the right to access to public information on the pandemic response](#), while the second session focused on [transparency and access to public information in the elaboration of public policies for economic, social, and cultural welfare](#). Both sessions involved the participation of specialists and representatives of organizations from Costa Rica and other countries in the region, including Members of the National Assembly Laura Guido Pérez and Carolina Hidalgo (Costa Rica).

On Wednesday, September 30, two additional sessions were held: the first addressed the issue of [innovation and resilience of public administrations within the context of COVID-19 in relation to transparency and the access to information](#), with the participation of Member of the Legislative Assembly Wagner Jiménez (Costa Rica), while the second session presented [best practices in transparency and access to information within parliaments during the pandemic](#). The latter was organized by ParlAmericas and included presentations by Member of the Chamber of Deputies Dolores Martínez (Argentina) and Members of the Legislative Assembly María Inés Solís, ParlAmericas Board Member, and Carmen Chan

(Costa Rica). Presentations were also made by Mr. Emmanuel Barrantes of the Costa Rican civil society organization Movimiento de Iniciativa Popular (Popular Initiative Movement), and Mr. Luis Rojas, Deputy Secretary of the Chamber of Deputies of Chile, who also moderated the panel. In her speech, Member of the Chamber of Deputies Martínez shared her experience with the modernization program of the Chamber of Deputies of Argentina, where important initiatives have been carried out to promote transparency, also highlighting open parliament commitments that include open data and open law portals. In addition, she gave a brief overview of the [Legislative Transparency Toolkit](#), a publication that seeks to continue promoting best practices in transparency within the hemisphere's legislative bodies. Member of the Legislative Assembly Solís stressed the importance of having a lobby law—one of her legislative proposals—in order to bring transparency to the decision-making process and thereby ensure higher standards of integrity in civil service. On this note, Member of the Legislative Assembly Solís pointed out that having a law of access to public information was a key step and that it was necessary to appoint an oversight body to ensure its efficacy and implementation by regulated bodies. Mr. Rojas commented on the latest developments and initiatives carried out by the Chilean parliament, including the Virtual Congress platform that aims to create a forum for a more fluid exchange with the citizenry through bills that are presented and included in the portal. Lastly, Mr. Barrantes noted that co-creation was a highly relevant aspect in transparency and access to public information processes because it allows for closer collaboration with civil society organizations promoting this agenda.

The International Symposium culminated with closing remarks by Mr. Juan Carlos Chavarría, Director of the Citizen Participation Department of the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica, who stressed the relevance of access to information and transparency in a democratic system.

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