



PODER LEGISLATIVO  
*Cámara de Senadores*



## DECLARATION

6th Gathering of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network

**Integrity Matters: Building Stronger Democracies**

March 9, 15 and 22, 2022 | Virtual sessions

We, parliamentarians from 18 countries<sup>1</sup> of the Americas and the Caribbean, met virtually on March 9, 15 and 22, 2022, with the support of the Chamber of Senators of Paraguay, for the 6th Gathering of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network, titled *Integrity Matters: Building Stronger Democracies*.

The Gathering included a high-level dialogue session that brought together parliamentarians and parliamentary staff from the Americas and the Caribbean, as well as a session that facilitated the productive exchange of perspectives between parliamentarians and representatives of civil society and youth organizations. Together, we addressed the importance of fostering collaboration among the public sector, citizens, and the private sector to promote a culture of integrity in society through civic education campaigns.

These sessions culminated in participants recognizing that developing robust public integrity strategies is essential not only to prevent and fight corruption, but also as a crucial step in strengthening good governance, safeguarding the public interest and consolidating pluralist democracies based on the rule of law, respect for human rights, and compliance with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Considering the above and,

### **Recognizing**

1. That public integrity, understood as the set of principles and rules aimed at protecting, maintaining and prioritizing the public interest over private interests, is essential for economic and social welfare, as well as for the prosperity of individuals and societies.
2. That, despite significant efforts and progress made in the hemisphere, corruption persists as one of the most serious challenges to our democracies, not only affecting the adequacy of investments in public resources, but also increasing economic and social inequality, undermining trust in institutions, and creating social discontent and political polarization.

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<sup>1</sup> Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominica, Ecuador, Guyana, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Saint Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago.



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3. That corruption is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon that includes bribery, influence peddling, embezzlement of public funds, illegitimate use of confidential information and illicit enrichment.
4. That corruption has serious socioeconomic effects, particularly on traditionally marginalized groups, as it diverts funds from initiatives designed to promote development and progress, thus perpetuating inequality and poverty, and undermining advances in welfare and income distribution, among other consequences.
5. That, during interactions between the public sector and the private sector, civil society and natural persons, there are risks to integrity that should be mitigated through public integrity systems that provide guidance for both preventing and fighting corruption, and defending the public interest.
6. That safeguarding the public interest and promoting the principles of ethics and public probity, transparency and accountability involve recognizing, protecting, and guaranteeing the human rights of all as constitutive elements of the national public integrity strategies that are essential for democratic governance.
7. That public integrity systems, understood as the set of preventive and corrective mechanisms for promoting ethical behaviour and probity among authorities and public officials, are essential to the fight against corruption, as well as to ensure good governance.
8. That, as representatives of the people, we are responsible for adhering to the highest standards of integrity to effectively meet citizens' needs, recognizing that they vary among all individuals, depending on their gender, age and other identity markers, as well as the intersectionality of these identities.
9. That fostering a culture of integrity is an aim that should involve not only the branches of the state but also society as a whole as a means of ensuring that the interactions that take place between the public and private sectors, civil society, and natural persons occur consistent with the highest legal and ethical standards, and always prioritize the public interest.
10. That national public integrity strategies must establish the necessary conditions so that public officials can report any acts of corruption to competent authorities under protective and non-retaliation mechanisms that take into account the unequal conditions or potential risks faced by the reporting individuals.
11. That the traditional models based exclusively on increasing the number of laws and regulations have shown limited effectiveness in the fight against corruption and its consequences, thereby demonstrating the need to establish more robust public integrity strategies to fortify existing legislation and guide proper public sector governance.



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12. That there are international instruments and conventions to guide the fight against corruption and strengthen public integrity, such as the [Lima Commitment](#) and the [Inter-American Convention against Corruption](#) of the Organization of American States, the [United Nations Convention against Corruption](#) and the [OECD Recommendation of the Council on Public Integrity](#).
13. That, as democratic institutions and workspaces, parliaments must foster a culture of integrity within themselves, whereby the values of equity, transparency, respect for diversity and non-exploitation are promoted among its members.
14. That aspects of the processes relating to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic incur risks to public integrity, particularly in relation to public procurement and economic stimulus packages, which must be mitigated by short- and medium-term actions designed to defend the public interest and ensure that government actions benefit those who need them most.

**We commit to:**

1. Insist on the need to update and otherwise strengthen existing public integrity systems, according to the guidelines set forth in the [OECD Recommendation of the Council on Public Integrity](#).
2. Foster the adoption and improvement of codes of conduct for public servants in the entire state apparatus in accordance with the highest standards of ethics, probity and transparency, pursuant to the [Lima Commitment](#) and the [Inter-American Convention against Corruption](#) of the Organization of American States, the [United Nations Convention against Corruption](#) and the [OECD Recommendation of the Council on Public Integrity](#).
3. Request that competent authorities incorporate gender perspectives in the design of national public integrity strategies to ensure that they take into account the different experiences and needs of all members of the population in the fight against corruption.
4. Advocate for competent institutions to compile data disaggregated by gender and by other variables that reflect the different impacts and effects of corruption to inform actions and measures in matters of public integrity and in the fight against corruption.
5. Promote, among competent authorities, the importance of developing continuous training programs for themselves and for public officials to foster the correct, honourable and appropriate performance of their functions, with these programs taking into account the relationship between public integrity,



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human rights, and gender equality and promoting a better understanding of the risks of corruption inherent in the performance of their duties.

6. Create synergies among the Ministry of Education and other competent authorities in order to develop civic education campaigns on public integrity aimed at raising awareness of the benefits of public integrity and its importance in reducing tolerance for violations of integrity standards in the public sector.
7. Advocate horizontal and vertical cooperation among public officials, entities and agencies at all levels of public administration to avoid duplication and to exchange lessons learned and good practices in the fight against corruption and the strengthening of public integrity.
8. Promote the participation of the private sector and civil society, academia, community-based movements and grassroots organizations, specialists and other social actors in the development, implementation and regular updating of national public integrity strategies, especially focusing on the inclusion of women and traditionally marginalized groups to ensure that their experiences are taken into account at every stage of the process.
9. Promote the strengthening of the principles of transparency and citizen participation in all phases of the political process and the public policy development cycle in such a way that accountability processes are strengthened, and the public interest is prioritized.
10. Advocate for the strengthening of mechanisms established for whistleblower protection and the bolstering of existing national legislation to encourage both citizens and public officials to report acts that violate public integrity standards and affect the public interest.
11. Promote the adoption or strengthening of legislation, policies and/or codes of ethics and conduct of a binding and consensual nature for parliamentarians and parliamentary staff, with these instruments addressing the prevention of misconduct, establishing investigation processes and mechanisms, including portals for submitting queries and filing reports, and determining sanctions, in compliance with such international standards and principles as the United Nations Convention against Corruption and the recommendations set forth in the [ParlAmericas Road Map towards Legislative Openness](#).
12. Advocate for the establishment or strengthening of a public integrity system in parliament through the incorporation of an institutional structure alongside preventive mechanisms, including an integrity office and/or staff supporting its implementation.
13. Promote, in our parliaments, the adoption or strengthening of laws and provisions on the management of lobbying to establish a public registry of lobbyists, including national and international individuals and organizations.



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14. Exercise gender-responsive oversight of the implementation of national public integrity and anti-corruption policies, especially considering their specific effects on women and traditionally marginalized groups.
  
15. Establish and/or consolidate consultative bodies in our parliaments responsible for providing guidance to parliamentarians and parliamentary staff to ensure that their duties are performed in accordance with the principles of public integrity.
  
16. Promote short- and medium-term measures aimed at ensuring integrity, transparency and accountability in procurement and award procedures related to economic stimulus packages in the context of post-pandemic recovery processes.

Adopted on March 22, 2022