



DECLARATION OF THE ASSEMBLED PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE AMERICAS ON THE OCCASION OF THE VII SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS

Panama City, Panama

The Government of Panama is hosting the VII Summit of the Americas from April 10 to 11, 2015, to serve as a platform for the heads of State and Government from across the hemisphere to hold debates under the theme of “Prosperity with Equity: The Challenge of Cooperation in the Americas” – including the sub-themes of democratic governance and citizen participation.

As pillars of democracy, parliamentarians from 26 countries of the Americas are convening on the occasion of the Summit, with the purpose of exchanging experiences and knowledge related to national and regional commitments on transparency, with a focus on democratic innovations and parliamentary ethics. To this end, at the *Parliamentary Gathering*, organized by the Latin American Parliament (*Parlamento Latinoamericano*) and ParlAmericas, delegations of parliamentarians committed to the promotion of high standards of legislative transparency:

Whereas:

It is an obligation of our parliaments to contribute to peace and to the region’s democracy through peaceful and constitutional avenues, and for this reason it is urgent to actively promote among citizens that would take advantage of new information technologies for education and citizen participation.

Legislatures benefit from a vibrant civil society and from the existence of strong mechanisms for inclusive political engagement of citizens, both in understanding citizen priorities and in helping ensure accountability of parliamentarians to the citizens they represent;

The nature of legislative representation is evolving, as citizens are able to communicate more easily with each other, and with their representatives, as a result of greater access to mobile communications and the internet, as well as the spread of social media;

The Americas has been a leading region in democratic innovation, from groundbreaking work on participatory budgeting; and through efforts to use new technology to engage citizens;

Latin America has played a leading role globally in sharing information on legislative openness through various organizations, among them the Legislative Openness Working Group of the Open Government Partnership;

New technologies also provide legislatures with increased opportunities to engage citizens in legislative work—including rural populations living in poverty and other marginalized groups—thereby providing an opportunity to strengthen confidence in public institutions;

Advances in digital communications have also helped to increase citizens’ expectations of their legislatures, including an increase in said expectations with respect to transparency and ethics;

Leaders of the parliaments of the Americas issued the Lima Declaration in July 2014, through which they made commitments to bring governments closer to the people, support transparency and accountability in parliamentary work, and facilitate social inclusion;

It is the will of the Parliaments of the continent to promote and improve transparency mechanisms, recognizing the work that various organizations carry out on this issue, among them the *Red Latinoamericana por la Transparencia Legislativa*;

There exists a growing body of international norms and standards on legislative transparency and ethics, including the Santiago Declaration on Parliamentary Transparency and Integrity in Parliaments and Political Parties, which was signed in Santiago de Chile in January 2012; the Declaration on Parliamentary Openness, which has been endorsed by more than 160 civil society organizations in more than 80 countries, and new standards on codes of ethics for parliamentarians being developed by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association;

RESOLVE

To support the following recommendations:

1. To commit to the strengthening of regional cooperation and to the exchange of best practices, keeping in mind the evolution of citizen expectations of legislatures with respect to transparency and ethics in our societies, and to utilize the technological advances and the experience of leaders on these themes in the Americas, with the objective of strengthening regional cooperation and the exchange of best practices, including the possibility of developing common benchmarks on openness and parliamentary ethics and conduct. For this reason, the participating organizations at this Gathering invite other forums and legislative assemblies to promote parliamentary transparency and ethics that respond to citizens' expectations.
2. Facilitate collaboration between the Latin American Parliament and ParlAmericas, with the Legislative Openness Working Group of the Open Government Partnership and other stakeholders to work on legislative transparency that would lead to regional cooperation.
3. Foster among member parliaments of the organizations mentioned above to collect and share information on codes of conduct and codes of ethics, as well as best practices on disclosure of interests, with the possibility of developing regional and sub-regional initiatives on parliamentary ethics and transparency.
4. Encourage the opening of the legislatures of the region so that they may collaborate with civil society groups, technologists and citizens with the objective of improving the capacity of parliaments in the digital era.

Parliamentarians expressed their satisfaction with and approval of the agenda of the VII Summit of the Americas which convenes the Heads of State and Government of our countries and agree with the necessity of achieving true regional integration, the only path for countries to achieve sustainable development on central issues such as education, health, energy, the environment, migration, security, citizen participation and democratic governance.

Adopted on April 10, 2015 in Panama City, Panama