



11th Plenary Assembly
Mainstreaming Sustainability
September 25-27, 2014 – Santiago, Chile

Working Group 1: “Open Parliament”

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT ON OPEN PARLIAMENT IN THE AMERICAS

During the 11th Plenary Assembly of ParlAmericas, we – national parliamentarians representing 23 legislatures from across the Americas – have convened in Santiago, Chile, alongside representatives of civil society and international organizations, in order to set out a course of legislative action for improving transparency and access to information for the citizens of our countries.

As a point of departure, our discussions started with the Agreements reached at the Working Table on “Transparency and Accountability in Parliamentary Role: Are there any Open Parliaments?” held at the Inter-American Meeting of Presidents of the Legislative Branch in Lima, Republic of Peru, on July 18, 2014.

Recalling this commitment to the above-mentioned Agreement adopted by the participating presidents of the legislative branch in the Americas,

We reaffirm that:

1. Transparency is a central aspect of democracy and a cross cutting issue essential to political, social, and economic development.
2. Open data allows for enhanced monitoring of the legislative branch, its functioning, and makes for richer, more interactive dialogue between parliamentarians and social actors.
3. The pursuit of open parliaments is a shared goal for the Americas and Caribbean, despite differing socio-cultural environments and gaps in connectivity that may present particular national challenges when designing effective and efficient mechanisms that enhance transparency and openness.
4. In working towards the objective of bringing our parliaments closer to the communities and citizens they represent, we recognize the importance of understanding the contexts of specific communities and the most appropriate channels for communication with them (e.g. internet, television, radio, and print media).
5. Many challenges still need to be overcome, particularly in terms of the technical infrastructure, financial resources, processes, and cultures necessary to support and improve open parliament initiatives.

We recognize the following as potential actions to fulfill the points of Agreement:

1. Provide practical training for legislators in information and communications technologies (ICTs) and social media for the purpose of improving direct dialogue with citizens, within an intercultural framework.
2. Support the drafting of laws on transparency and establish specialized oversight mechanisms in countries where these do not yet exist.
3. Examine the experience of the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies as a model for sharing parliamentary information in a more user-friendly manner, avoiding the presentation of information in overly institutional, legalistic, or bureaucratic terms.
4. Invest in education and training that fosters a culture of parliamentary transparency and that deepens the public's understanding of the functioning of public institutions.
5. Make use of free or open source software, collaborate with civil society organizations specializing in transparency, and build public/private partnerships in order to make progress in parliamentary openness.

We commit to:

Report, in writing or in person, on the advances and/or challenges of transparency and access to information at the 12th Plenary Assembly of ParlAmericas to be held in 2015, with active contributions from delegations of our parliaments.

Santiago, Chile, September 27, 2014