

## **Final Declaration: Consolidating the Change: the Inter-American Convention against Corruption in Its Second Decade.**

Caracas, Venezuela  
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The existence and perseverance of corruption continues to be one of the greatest challenges for development in the region. Corruption erodes democratic institutions, distorts the economy, generates and intensifies violence, reinforces inequality and traps millions in poverty.

The Inter-American Convention against Corruption (IACAC), signed in Caracas and ratified by 33 countries, is a key instrument in the fight against corruption as it is a framework to transform commitments into concrete reforms.

We, the participants in this conference called by *Transparencia Venezuela* and *Transparency International*, have come from various sectors -- government, the private sector, civil society, universities, the media and the international community. We have met in Caracas to discuss advances in the implementation of reforms in the framework of the IACAC in these past ten years. We have analyzed challenges and opportunities in the next decade identified ways to intensify our collaboration, overcome challenges and take advantage of opportunities, taking into account the Convention of the United Nations against Corruption, a global instrument in the fight against corruption.

We evaluated positively the contribution of the IACAC in these past ten years. This Convention has contributed to the creation of an international consensus underlining the importance of the fight against corruption, which, in turn, has promoted legislative changes and reform efforts in different countries in the region.

The great challenge for the next ten years is to transform these developments into effective practices that will reduce corruption in the Americas.

During two days we have discussed aspects related to the system of implementation and monitoring of the IACAC, which helped us deepen our analysis in three specific fundamental areas: access to public information, promotion of public integrity and citizen participation.

As a result of discussion among members of different countries, the proposals raised which had the greatest support are:

1. To report on the concrete advances in the 2007 General Assembly of the Organization of American States; to establish a schedule for the fulfillment of the application of the IACAC and the Expert Committee recommendations in the next ten years; and to begin to generate information, indicators and statistics on how the fulfillment of the IACAC has advanced and to ensure its dissemination.
2. To promote the exchange of good practice between different state organizations and actors in society.
3. To eliminate any restrictions on civil society participation.
4. To acknowledge the States in their fulfillment of the IACAC.
5. To promote the creation of a transnational entity with coercive powers to guarantee the fulfillment of the IACAC and its recommendations.
6. To strengthen efforts to take the implementation of the IACAC to local governments.
7. To strengthen the effectiveness, independence and accountability of the control mechanisms, the judiciary and all other public institutions.
8. To strengthen the monitoring mechanism (MESICIC) by providing sufficient economic and technical resources. To accelerate the countries' review process and extend spaces for civil society participation.
9. To coordinate efforts to identify and make effective the interconnectedness between the IACAC content and monitoring mechanisms and the United Nations Convention against Corruption, as well as other international legal instruments.
10. To create instruments that guarantee the fundamental right of access to public information, as a cornerstone to the commitments acquired with the IACAC.

Additionally, the conference participants discussed the need to show advances in the following areas

**On access to public information:**

- ▣ To create legal instruments that guarantee access to public information that comply with international standards.
- ▣ To complement the role of institutions with Archives Law and Laws for Protection of Personal Information.
- ▣ To strengthen institutions that guarantee the right of access to public information, whether they be specialized agencies or agencies for the administration of justice.
- ▣ To create performance indicators and statistics for a country's own monitoring of the implementation process, standards of transparency and access to public information.
- ▣ To train civil servants in topics of public ethics. To establish training programs for civil servants in order to promote and deliver public information.
- ▣ To generate awareness among citizens on the right of access to public information and how to exercise it.

**On public integrity:**

- ▣ Whistleblower protection: to promote legislation and establish systems that promote and protect whistleblowers, including their families, assets and employment.
- ▣ Conflict of interest: to generate regulations and identify and strengthen the independence and effectiveness of the authority (or authorities) in charge of enforcing them.
- ▣ Sworn declaration of assets: to create and strengthen organisms to undertake timely controls (including the entry and exit from the civil service including a period of monitoring time after leaving the position) to confirm the veracity of the information in sworn declarations and promote its broad publication.
- ▣ Hiring of civil servants: to strengthen a competitive and transparent process for the selection of civil servants. To create Internet websites to encourage a uniform and merit-based procedure.

**On citizen participation:**

We recommend the member States:

- ▣ To institutionalize mechanisms of citizen participation in the different stages of decision making.
- ▣ To promote the presentation of citizen interests in the legislative committees of National Congress.

We recommend to civil society organizations:

- ▣ To extend cooperation networks to a wide range of social actors (universities, private sector, grassroots organizations with a wide base, etc.).
- ▣ To create opportunities for collaboration with State institutions.
- ▣ To build support networks to help social leaders to work more closely with the State.
- ▣ To create social sanction tools against those who do not fulfill the IACAC.
- ▣ To generate information to evaluate advances in the fulfillment of the IACAC to better inform public decisions.

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