

Transparency International's Recommendations Thirty-Eighth Regular Session of the OAS General Assembly Medellin, June 1- 3, 2008

Youth play an important role in building democracy and have great potential to contribute to the fight against corruption. **Transparency International** (TI) believes that youth play a vital role in the decision-making and advocacy activities of the States' anti-corruption agendas. Young people are tomorrow's active citizens and the development of increasingly transparent and participatory democracies depends on them. It is therefore essential to educate by example and empower youth to address transparency and ethics issues. TI has contributed to this process by actively working on the development of initiatives to foster the principles of integrity among youth and to encourage honest behaviour in adults that will serve as a model for generations to come.

TI has also been actively involved in all the General Assemblies of the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Summits' processes held since 1994. We have used these meetings to promote and strengthen democratic governance, transparency and civil society participation. Many of our recommendations have been adopted and incorporated into final declarations and thematic resolutions, addressing the following priority issues:

- Promoting the Inter-American Convention against Corruption and the United Nations Convention against Corruption, their ratification and follow-up mechanisms
- Access to public information
- Transparency in political funding
- Transparency in public procurement

Listed below are a series of recommendations for the States Parties to adopt in the 2008 General Assembly Declaration and the thematic resolutions regarding the fight against corruption. We hope that by providing these recommendations we will contribute to the debate and the advancement of a corruption-free region of the Americas.

I. DRAFT DECLARATION OF MEDELLIN: "YOUTH AND DEMOCRATIC VALUES"

1. The OAS should recognize the importance of education programmes that incorporate ethical values and integrity; this requires the inclusion in the Draft Declaration (point 4) of specific formal and non-formal education programmes to develop citizenship capacities in terms of ethical values, integrity and democratic practices.

2. The OAS should actively promote the concept and practice of transparency and access to public information. We request that the concepts of transparency and access to public information be included in the Declaration (point 13), as basic prerequisites for young people to be able to have a free opinion, and to exercise informed and responsible participation and constructive criticism of public action.

The access to public information is a necessary condition for democracy, and that is the reason why promoting access to information among youth means fostering their democratic involvement.

II. STRENGTHENING GOOD GOVERNANCE AND TRANSPARENCY

Follow-up Mechanism for the Implementation of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption – MESIC

3. At the beginning of the third evaluation round of implementation of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption (IACAC), the Committee of Experts should begin with on-site visits as part of the country review process, as set forth in Article 33 of the MESICIC Rules of Procedure. We recommend that the MESICIC Conference of States Parties adopt the methodology model for conducting these visits used by the OECD Working Group on Bribery. This working group has been carrying on-site reviews since the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions came into force. Only through on-site visits will it be possible to assess the progress of the implementation of the Convention in each country in a reliable and responsible manner.

4. States Parties should require that a clear profile of the experts is established, including the requirement of a high level of technical expertise and independence, so that they are qualified to issue recommendations to the States concerning the implementation of the articles that are under review at each evaluation period.

5. States Parties should publish action plans and annual progress reports on the recommendations issued to them by the Committee of Experts, and civil society must be involved in the preparation of such plans.

6. States Parties should institutionalize the participation of civil society organizations in the meetings of the Committee of Experts, and civil society organisations should serve as permanent observers of the Committee's work.

7. States Parties should provide financial support to civil society organizations so that they may continue their necessary and meaningful engagement in the MESICIC, including the preparation of reports and the attendance to the Committee meetings, as well as the permanent involvement of civil society representatives during the whole session of the Committee.

8. The MESICIC Secretariat should provide a Hemispheric Report at the end of the 2nd Round that indicates the degree of compliance of the States Parties with the IACAC, as well as with each of the recommendations that have been formulated in the 1st evaluation Round.

9. The MESICIC Secretariat should agree upon a set of indicators with the States Parties that help assess the level of implementation of the IACAC, based on harder and more objective information.

10. The MESICIC Secretariat should systematize and disseminate best-practice tools in the implementation of the IACAC.

11. The MESICIC Conference of States Parties should meet in 2008 and annually thereafter as it is essential that an annual evaluation of IACAC compliance be performed.

12. The MESICIC Conference of States Parties should adopt a strategy of coordination of the IACAC and UNCAC monitoring systems, pursuant to item 7 of the Inter-American Program of Cooperation to Fight Corruption.

Access to public information

13. States Parties should ensure the right to free access to public information pursuant to the international standards included in the Declaration of Atlanta of February 29th, 2008, through the legal guarantee and advancement of this right, and by ensuring that mechanisms are instituted, which enable citizens to receive the information requested in a manner that is free of charge, fast and simple, including electronically and/or via the internet, and that exceptions under which authorities can deny access to public information are established by law.

Transparency in political finance

14. States should require the internal accounting of political parties and electoral campaigns.

15. Political parties and candidates should keep accounting books and provide the legally-corresponding electoral bodies or tax authorities with monthly updated financial reports.

16. The OAS should promote and support the States in the modernization of the electoral bodies and the implementation of accountability mechanisms for political parties and candidates.

17. Political parties, candidates and the electoral body should be required by law to fully disclose information regarding the funding of political parties and election campaigns.

18. The OAS and the States have to stimulate and support civil society initiatives that monitor political finance and increase its transparency.

Transparency International is the global civil society organisation leading the fight against corruption.

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TI collaborates with civil society organizations in those countries where there is not a formal ally.

For more information visit www.transparency.org/americas/conventions or

Contact the regional conventions team at TI's Secretariat:

Ximena Salazar

OAS Liason
Santiago de Chile, Chile
Tel: +56 2 4152901
xsalazar@transparency.org

Marta Erquicia

Programme Coordinator
Berlin, Germany
Tel: +49 30 3438 20651
merquicia@transparency.org