



Transparency International Chapters In The Americas Endorse The OAS Follow-Up Mechanism To The Inter-American Convention Against Corruption

Transparency International

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TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL CHAPTERS IN THE AMERICAS ENDORSE THE OAS FOLLOW-UP MECHANISM TO THE INTER-AMERICAN CONVENTION AGAINST CORRUPTION

TI CALLS ON OAS MEMBER-STATES TO EMBRACE CIVIL SOCIETY EXPERTISE TO ENSURE THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE FOLLOW-UP MECHANISM OF THE CONVENTION

Posted 5 June 2001 by [Transparency International Secretariat](#)

Transparency International and its chapters in the Americas welcome the signing of an agreement at the [Organization of American States](#) (OAS) General Assembly in Costa Rica on June 3-5 to put into action the commitment of the heads of state at the Third Summit of the Americas in Quebec, Canada (April 2001), to "create, as soon as possible, a follow-up mechanism for the Inter-American Convention Against Corruption". Transparency International has been working for the past two years to secure an effective follow-up mechanism to review the implementation and enforcement of the Convention.

"This is an important and a welcome step," said Luis Moreno Ocampo, President of TILAC (Transparency International in Latin America and the Caribbean). "The seriousness of this commitment will be reflected in the appointment of qualified experts, on the one hand, and in an open and technical dialogue with civil society, on the other hand, to make the monitoring process as independent and as objective as possible."

The agreement provides for a Committee of Experts, supported by the OAS General Secretariat, to select the Convention provisions and the order of countries to be reviewed in each "round" and to develop a methodology for gathering the information, including the possibility to "consult with civil society".

The chapters of Transparency International in the Americas call on the OAS to take the following steps:

- Issue clear instructions to enable civil society participation in the follow-up monitoring and guarantee a transparent and participatory process, with the publication of questionnaires and responses, and consultations with civil society organizations, professional organizations, academia and the private sector;

- Provide and endorse funding to underpin this civil society input, along the lines established by the Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF)*;

- Instigate in-country visits by experts to provide the best possible objective and independent technical expertise to enable steps to be taken to act on any shortfalls in the implementation and enforcement of the Convention;

- Convene the first few meetings of experts by the Fall of 2001, and commence evaluations before the end of this year;

- Publish an annual progress report.

Finally, the chapters of Transparency International recognize that funding will be critical to making this process effective, and call on the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank to back up the pledges made in the Convention to provide the resources necessary to implement the Summit of the Americas commitment.

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The Inter-American Convention Against Corruption sets out a road map for a comprehensive attack on corruption. It commits the member-states of the OAS to: criminalize a wide range of corrupt acts; step up enforcement; enhance legal and judicial cooperation; and strengthen preventive measures, such as codes of conduct for public officials, disclosure of assets, and whistleblower protection.

The TI chapters in the Americas have taken a constructive approach to cooperation with the OAS in order to make the regional convention enforceable. In 1999, for instance, together with the Inter-American Bar Association and the American University, TI organized a "Roundtable of Experts", which provided insight into monitoring instruments used in other international agreements, and their relevance and implications for taking similar action in the case of the region's Convention. In November, 2000, a report was prepared by TI-Chile into the changes needed in Chilean legislation to meet the requirements of the above-mentioned Convention. "*The Chilean report*," says Miguel Schloss, Executive Director of TI for Latin America, "*provides a good illustration of how a civil society organization can provide the kind of assessment being sought to review compliance with the Convention. Other chapters in the region have done similar work.*"**

According to Miguel Schloss, "*it is imperative that our region comes into line with the codes of conduct being put into place at the international level. The adoption of these codes is key to the success and competitiveness of the region. The follow-up mechanism that has just been agreed, if implemented together with the steps outlined above, will enable the region to move political commitments from the realm of words into deeds - and with increasing speed.*"

* Note for Editors: Last autumn the Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF) was launched to finance expertise in the design and delivery of anti-corruption measures. Where a government, bilateral or multilateral agency is seeking the involvement of civil society in anti-corruption initiatives, tools such as surveys, monitoring mechanisms or information systems, the PTF can fund specialists to assist in specific, time-bound activities to strengthen that capacity.

** The Chilean report is available from Luis Bates Hidalgo, President, TI Chile,

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