



# Lagging Anti-Corruption Progress Challenges OAS As Secretary General Assumes New Mandate

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## LAGGING ANTI-CORRUPTION PROGRESS CHALLENGES OAS AS SECRETARY GENERAL ASSUMES NEW MANDATE

### VENEZUELA BLOCKS CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION AT MEETING

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Translation of: [La falta de avances contra la corrupción sigue retando a la OEA ante el nuevo período del Secretario](#)

The lack of concrete progress in the fight against corruption coupled with the successful blocking of civil society repeatedly exercised by the government of Venezuela, are two major challenges facing José Miguel Insulza, Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS), re-elected on the 24. March, according to Transparency International (TI).

On three consecutive occasions, the Venezuelan government has vetoed the participation of civil society in the monitoring process of the [Inter-American Convention Against Corruption \(IACAC\)](#), making it the only country without an official shadow report on its efforts and the sole censor of civil society at the OAS. TI and other organisations presented independent reports reviewing how governments are implementing the Convention. Venezuela alleges that the TI chapter [Transparencia Venezuela](#), a legally constituted entity in the country, does not represent Venezuelan society.

"The OAS cannot tolerate censorship, especially when it concerns the monitoring of its own legal instrument to combat corruption," said José Ugaz, a member of TI member and former prosecutor in the Fujimori-Montesinos case. "It is essential that the OAS guarantee full civil society participation so these commitments are monitored independently, transparency in monitoring is ensured and these reports serve their purpose."

The monitoring of the Convention's implementation undertaken by TI chapters in [Colombia](#), [Mexico](#), [Trinidad and Tobago](#) and [Venezuela](#) as well as Grupo Faro, an affiliated group in [Ecuador](#), show that these countries have made few advances. In Colombia and Venezuela, no legislation guarantees access to public information. In Ecuador such a law exists, but remains virtually unknown and therefore unused. In Mexico, there is a need to radically improve coordination between the different public bodies addressing corruption. Asset declarations by public officials in Ecuador, Colombia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela are not verified as required by law, making it impossible to detect illicit enrichment. All TI linked organisations at the OAS underlined the need for indicators that reflect real levels of implementation regarding the Convention, in order to know if countries are truly advancing in the fight against corruption.

"Although the region has made recent economic gains, poverty remains a persistent problem that is linked to corruption, feeding impunity and criminal networks that seep into public institutions. We urge governments to fully comply with their commitment to fight corruption," added Ugaz.

The convention is an agreement adopted by 33 countries in the Americas that are committed to implementing laws and practices that criminalise and prevent acts of corruption. From 22 to 26 March, governmental representatives to the OAS are evaluating to what extent five countries in the region -Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela- have advanced in their implementation

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of the convention. With the exception of Venezuela, delegates from TI and other organisations presented their reports during a special session at OAS headquarters. Areas of the convention under review include the prevention and sanction of bribery of public officials, transnational bribery, illicit enrichment and extradition.

Ugaz urged the OAS to commit to a meeting of the convention's member states this year since the last conference to specifically address corruption took place four years ago. Such a meeting could propose urgent reforms for the monitoring mechanism which are vital to make the process more transparent and inclusive. Such potential reforms could include: modifying the rules of procedure that allow governmental veto of civil society reports; publishing the minutes for all meetings of the committee charged with reviewing implementation of the convention and country review visits reviewing visits, a matter now pending for 10 years. The Chair of the Experts Committee, Vânia Lúcia Ribeiro of Brazil, supports the need to gather the parties to the convention and committed to promoting the three main reforms submitted TI. The delegate of El Salvador also voiced concern, saying it is unacceptable to limit civil society and critical voices at the OAS.

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

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