



## TRANSPARENCY AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION NETWORK XXI SUMMIT

### Public Statement

#### **“Access to information and the construction of resilient, participative societies within the region”**

The Assembly for the Transparency and Access to Information Network (RTA in Spanish), gathered on November 19, 2021, within the framework of its XXI Summit, releases the following statement:

**Recognizing** that the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the American Convention on Human Rights agree that the right to freedom of expression includes the freedom to search, receive and disseminate information and ideas of all kinds without borders.

**Recognizing** that the Interamerican Program on Access to Public Information by the Organization of American States (OAS) reiterates the essential role played by the international instruments of promotion and protection to the rights of accessing public information, including the fundamental role played by said right in every electoral and democratic process, in the governance of the State, and in transparency and battle against corruption, which includes the protection and promotion of human rights and in particular the right to exercise freedom of thought and expression, as well as freedom of press.

**Reminding ourselves** that the joint statement given by the International Conference of Information Commissioners (ICIC) within the framework of the 2020 International Day for Universal Access to Information, the role of Commissioners was highlighted as crucial in holding authorities accountable through guaranteeing good upkeep and administration of files, maintaining a solid processing of information and in compliance with legal obligations. All the above within the context of the public emergency that we are facing since 2020.

**Recognizing** that the resolution 1/2020 of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) points out that in states of emergency, both bodies in charge of access to information and other entities bound by obligation must prioritize all requests for access to information related to the public health emergency, as well as to proactively inform, in open format and in an accessible manner, all people, but putting emphasis on vulnerable groups about the impact of the pandemic and the expenses it will entail.

**Reminding ourselves** that, in this sense, resolution 4/2020 of the AICHR points out that, in order to guarantee the adequate exercise of human rights for people suffering from COVID-19, the States have the obligation to inform proactively all patients of their rights with healthcare providers, including existing protection mechanisms, as well as in facilitating knowledge and access to information to all groups about preemptive measures and healthcare practices within this context.

**Reminding ourselves** that the current health emergency has represented several challenges and has also allowed to provide visibility in a clearer fashion to all the disparities and complex realities that the countries of Europe and Latin America go through, since these are the nations facing the consequences of the pandemic in a rather differentiated manner and in conditions of inequality.

**Recognizing** that it is of the essence to continue to make an effort to comply with the principles of an open and transparent government, as they are contained within the Open Government Statement and as part of the Open Government Alliance.

**Recognizing** that it is essential to provide transparency to all forms of performance within public administration in the region, with the aim to provide useful and timely information in favor of citizen participation and accountability.

**Recognizing** that international treaties are important, including the American Convention on Human rights, The United Nations Convention against Corruption or the Council of Europe Convention on Access to Public Documents, and that they are to be considered instruments of promotion to create authorities that protect access to information systematically, proactively, regularly, comprehensibly and in understandable ways with a focus on the protection of indigenous people and vulnerable groups for the signing countries.

The RTA members:

## STATE

That they reaffirm their commitment to continue to provide life to a network that guarantees transparency and the right to access to information for all people through the creation of dialogue, cooperation, and information exchange spaces to facilitate the adoption of public policies aimed at improving, empowering and guaranteeing a modern, efficient, inclusive, transparent and ethical State, at the service of their citizens.

2. That they will continue to foster and exchange specialized knowledge and skills in order to achieve transparency in the many aspects of public life of every country and to ensure the adoption of working policies, plans and programs.

3. That they will continue to encourage and bolster transparency in all government levels for every RTA State member and to incorporate technology as a means to achieve competitiveness in public information, and through that to improve all goods and services available to the population at large.
4. That they will commit to counter disinformation and the spread of fake news by promoting integral response protocols of transparency and use of technology in the numerous aspects of public administration within the countries. This will contribute in such a way that the population at large would be able to access reliable, trustworthy and high-quality information in an equitable manner.
5. That they will ratify the importance of transparency of public data and information, which will allow for better decision-making processes in public budgeting amidst the pandemic, which will further protect the human rights of people with a special emphasis in protecting those who are directly linked to healthcare, life, among others.
6. That they reaffirm their commitment to provide to the population all necessary information in the hopes of full economic upswing and reactivation, which will in turn improve the quality of life of people, and in particular, those of vulnerable groups. The aim is to adopt mechanisms of proactive and active transparency.
7. That they will develop all the necessary tools of focalized transparency to detect information of interest for vulnerable groups. The objective is to create and disseminate the information in an accessible manner throughout these groups and to add said information to the public policy commitments of all region States, as per the parameters established by the Model Law 2.0 of the OAS, including all local laws for every country.

November, 2021.