***SUMMIT TALKS***

***Democratization of Information: Open data in preventing and combating corruption***

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Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of the Chair of the Summits of the Americas Process, I am especially pleased to be welcoming you to this virtual session of Summit Talks, on *Democratization of Information*: *Open data in preventing and combating corruption*.

I would like to thank the Summits Secretariat for organizing this seminar, part of Lima Commitment follow-up and implementation efforts, drawing participation from states, Joint Summit Working Group (JSWG) institutions, civil society organizations, and social actors, as reflected in the composition of the panel for this seminar.

The ***Lima Commitment: Democratic Governance against Corruption***, which the Heads of State and Government adopted at the Eight Summit of the Americas on April 14, 2018, reaffirmed the Hemisphere’s commitment to strengthening democratic institutions and fighting corruption, based on the conviction that it undermines governance and public confidence in institutions, and adversely affects the enjoyment of human rights and attainment of sustainable development.

As we know, commitment involves a series of concrete measures in, among other areas, transparency and access to information; financing of political organizations and election campaigns; prevention of corruption in public works; measures for legal cooperation; and strengthening of the inter-American anti-corruption mechanisms, including the MESICIC.

One of the objectives of the Summit was to help restore public confidence in the state by improving the relationship between citizens and public institutions. Paragraph 19 therefore articulates the commitment to promoting transparency and strengthening accountability mechanisms of regional and international organizations in which the countries hold membership; and paragraph 20, the push for establishment of an Inter-American Open Data Program, within the OAS, to strengthen open information policies while increasing the capacity of governments and citizens to prevent and combat corruption. That program was adopted at the forty-ninth regular session of the OAS General Assembly session, in Medellín, Colombia, in June 2019.

Open data evolved out of the right of access to public information, based on the principles of transparency, accountability, citizen participation, and integrity in public office; calling for public institutions to make information available to citizens without the latter needing to file a request for access to it, thus allowing for it to be reused, as well as for open data derived services to be created.

In the Americas, open data were quickly entrenched in the last decade, and 13 countries so far have regulations in place to govern them, while there are 19 national data portals. Establishing these portals certainly requires states to have appropriate platforms that are easily accessible and the necessary work teams to constantly update them.

This seminar’s objective is therefore a laudable one: to deepen the exchange of experiences and knowledge, from a variety of perspectives, in terms of the use of open data to prevent and combat corruption, and how this is increasingly relevant to efforts at responding to emergency situations, such as the global health emergency caused by COVID-19.

Experience shows that corruption does not let up in times of crisis and that it also operates under the guise of urgent public procurement or contracting of services to deal with it. This means we must strengthen our commitment to promoting effective, responsible, and inclusive institutions at all levels, if we were to prevent corruption from degrading or limiting the enormous state-led efforts; while committing society as a whole to guaranteeing health for our citizens and slowing down economic reactivation efforts.

I would like to make a comment about the case of Peru. Fighting corruption is state policy and during the state of the emergency, special attention was paid to possible cases of corruption, hence it was ruled that the General Comptroller of the Republic should directly observe the work of the executing agencies in order to face them with resolve. Likewise, the Office of the Public Prosecutor and the judicial system maintain operations in this field.

In addition, the field devoted to COVID-19 on the Peruvian Government’s portal gives information about public resources allocated and expenses incurred to tackle the pandemic, the donations received, the public purchases made, and bonds issued; while reports are received on possible cases of corruption. This is all with a view to ensuring transparency, keeping citizens informed, facilitating accountability, and strengthening democratic institutions at this critical juncture.

Before concluding, I would like to emphasize that Peru remains committed to promoting forums such as this seminar. We are also committed to the global agenda through the United Nations General Assembly against Corruption, scheduled to take place in April 2021. It was convened on the initiative of Colombia and Peru a couple of years ago. We are therefore also counting on your contributions to this common cause.

I thank you very much.