SUMMITS TALKS

Emerging Technologies: Prevention and Fight against Corruption
May 26th 2020

Opening Remarks
Maria Celina Conte, Acting Director, Summits Secretariat

On behalf of the OAS General Secretariat, in particular the Summits of the Americas Secretariat, I am pleased to welcome and thank each of the distinguished experts who are here with us today to share their experiences and knowledge – Mr. Edward Hartwig (from the US Digital Service), Ms. Carol Roach (Office of the Prime Minister of The Bahamas), Mr. Miguel Porrua (IDB), Ms. Barbara Ubaldi (OECD); and Ms. Saiph Savage (UNAM and West Virginia University).

I would also like to welcome everyone that is following us via webcast.

This activity is part of the cooperation initiatives promoted by the Summits of the Americas Secretariat in the area of prevention and fight against corruption within the framework of the execution of the follow-up and implementation Mechanism of the Lima Commitment, in which participate different actors of the Summits Process: participating states, international and regional organizations that make up the Joint Summit Working Group (JSWG), including the OAS, and Civil society and social actors.

"The Lima Commitment: Democratic Governance against Corruption" was adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the Americas at the Eighth Summit in 2018. Among its 57 concrete measures to prevent and combat corruption, the leaders called for the use of new technologies that facilitate digital government to promote transparency, interaction with citizens and accountability.

Democratic Governance is strengthened by openness, efficiency, and government transparency, which in the 21st century is supported and anchored through information and communication technologies (ICT). Furthermore, on these ICTs, a series of emerging technologies are built in a world of accelerated innovation.

The Heads of State and Government understand it this way and that is why we are here today meeting in this Summit Talks to discuss the role that these emerging technologies play for more transparent governments and in the fight against corruption.

We live in an increasingly digital world; and without a doubt, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated it, facing the need for citizens, governments, institutions, and the private sector to continue operating in a state of quarantine and social distancing.

Although emerging technologies are a novel event and taken advantage of by the private sector in the first instance, these technologies are still much more novel for public administrations.

Digital transformation offers many opportunities to improve the management of governments, but the reality is that not all countries in the region show the same level of progress on the digital agenda and there is a long way to go.

Likewise, it is also important to note that advances in technology that revolutionize the global economy with transformative impacts in various fields can also open new doors for corrupt behavior, while offering new tools to address them.

I would like to end with a couple of considerations. On the one hand, there is no doubt that digitizing governments is a huge challenge, without a single institutional model for a working digital transformation.

On the other hand, in digital transformation, investment in technology is a first step, however, it is also necessary to invest in the capacities of public officials, promote organizational changes, foster innovation processes in the provision of services, strengthen inter-institutional coordination, in short , surely the political will also prevails.

What then are the factors that support the deepening of the digital agenda for the fight against corruption and how to support the countries of the region in adapting the institutional design for this purpose?

Based on IDB assistance projects in the region and the OECD's digital agenda, as well as the national experiences of the United States and the Bahamas, and other initiatives, which we will hear in this session, it would be interesting, as part of their presentations and discussions, also be able to identify common elements and the main challenges that can be addressed regionally in terms of emerging technologies and the fight against corruption.

It is our interest from the Summits of the Americas Secretariat that this dialogue contributes to building on the mandates of the Lima Commitment, so that Member States can immerse themselves in the safe use of new technologies to make their management more efficient, and at the same time more transparent.

I thank you again for coming to share with all of us your experiences and work.

Thank you.