**Policy Dialogue**

**Corruption and COVID-19**

**Within the framework of the Follow-up and Implementation of the VIII Summit of the Americas**

**Opening Remarks
OAS Secretary for Hemispheric Affairs, Amb. James Lambert**

* I am pleased to welcome you to this new edition of the Policy Dialogue organized by the Summits of the Americas Secretariat within the framework of the Follow-up and Implementation Mechanism of the "Lima Commitment: Democratic Governance against Corruption", with the participation of the OAS member states, entities of the Joint Summit Working Group, and civil society and social actors.
* I welcome and thank the Chair of the Summits of the Americas Process represented by Amb. Luis Chávez, Peru’s National Coordinator of the Summits Process.
* This edition of the Policy Dialogue seeks to generate the exchange of experiences and reflections on the risks of corruption in emergency responses, its impact on state actions, as well as the role of judicial operators and control agencies to preserve the integrity of measures to address the crisis of COVID-19, while maintaining the system of weights and counterweights of state actions.
* The Lima Commitment emanating from the Eighth Summit is a key reference point to continue guiding the actions of the States in the current context of the pandemic.
* Our countries face an unprecedented crisis, with the consequent challenges that it presents in the health, socio-economic and governance dimensions. Addressing the emergency due to the recovery of the COVID-19 pandemic is, without a doubt, the highest priority facing the region, which is why various authorities have turned to the State of Emergency as a measure that grants powers for special regulations for national and sub-national governments in their decision-making processes.
* Despite the fact that these exceptional powers are limited in time, they create risks in different areas that could lead to detrimental actions in the fight against corruption. What are these risks? What provisions have been developed to mitigate these risks? What are the concrete actions that can be put in place to detect these risks in advance, and act before they occur? What is the role of the Legislative Power in political control during times of emergency? Have the control agencies' actions been adequate to meet the challenges we are facing?
* To continue with this important reflection, I welcome three reputable panelists who will join us today, leading players in the prevention and fight against corruption at the regional level.
* On behalf of the OAS Secretary General, Luis Almagro, I thank the participation of Dr. Fernando Carrillo, Attorney General of the Nation, Colombia; Dr. Susana Silva Hasembank, Secretary of Public Integrity of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers of Peru; and Dr. Claudia Escobar Mejía, Former Magistrate of Guatemala, member of the Commission of International Experts to Fight Corruption in Ecuador and Executive Director of the civil organization BeJust.
* For this session, we have joined forces with our colleagues from the Latin American Development Bank (CAF) who are commemorating their 50th anniversary as partners and allies in financing the region.
* Likewise, I am pleased to introduce Dr. Pablo Sanguinetti, Vice President of Knowledge of the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF) who will moderate this session. Regarding the topic that summons us, Mr. Sanguinetti coordinated the preparation of the Economy and Development Report (RED 2019) *"Integrity in public policies. Keys to prevent corruption”.*
* This report, which has been presented in several countries in the region, is a valuable contribution to the discussion of the progress made and the pending challenges we still face in the fight against corruption. Focusing on four areas of action: rules and control in public function, mechanisms of entry to bureaucracy and politics, transparency and citizen monitoring, and governance of private interests.
* I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize the important added value of all the entities of the Joint Summit Working Group (JSWG), who have been meeting under the chairmanship of Secretary General Luis Almagro in order to coordinate actions in response to the crisis which has been caused by the pandemic.
* In this Policy Dialogue, we will seek to link these areas to the situation currently taking place across the region, through the experience of three influential regional speakers in the prevention and fight against corruption.
* We thank everyone for their participation and before starting the discussion, I give the floor to Ambassador Chávez Basagoitia, whom as the Chair of the Summits Process will offer us a few words.

Thank you,