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PRESENTATION BY THE CITIZEN FORUM OF THE AMERICAS

(Molvina Zeballos, *Desco punto focal y escenario nacional FCA Perú*)

Good morning, everyone. I am Molvina Zeballos, a Peruvian and a member of the Citizen Forum of the Americas, a platform for dialogue and the strengthening of civil society in Latin America and the Caribbean. I would like to share with you the contributions that we have made in our national, subregional, regional, and population dialogues with respect to the commitments derived from the last Lima Summit and the commitments of the next Summit. I will not address all the issues. I have prioritized two:

The Inter-American Plan of Action on Democratic Governance

Human Rights

Through the various consultations mentioned above, the need has been identified for multisectoral work and meaningful consultative processes between civil society, government, and relevant private sector actors to strengthen democratic governance in the region.

These multisectoral bodies particularly need to work on enacting and implementing public policies, laws, investments, and acquisitions, as well as setting in motion high-impact development projects for communities, which may require control and follow-up mechanisms for their execution.

We also emphasize the need to create safe and propitious opportunities for the participation of civil society and other stakeholders, with sufficient and accessible information, which will enable them to make qualified contributions to decision-making.

It is necessary to continue advocating against the authoritarian measures taken by governments to control and limit the work of civil society organizations and the rights of citizens in the region. State repression against organizations, the press, and human rights defenders must cease, as must the unwillingness of some countries to allow civil society access to public information. The latter is a prerequisite for civil society to carry out oversight and control over government actions.

In the same vein, it is essential to develop, through consultative processes, protection mechanisms sensitive to gender and cultural identity, for human and environmental rights defenders facing security risks or in vulnerable situations. These protection mechanisms should include facilities for them to go about their work, such as increased resources, both financial and in kind.

The commitments must provide special protection for indigenous peoples and communities, which have been at risk due to their efforts to defend their territory and their participation in governance decisions; the commitments need to be in line with the provisions of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The participation of population groups and communities that have been historically relegated from public decision-making, such as Afro-descendants, LGBTIQ+ groups, women and girls, among others, should also be actively promoted.

The strengthening of democratic governance in Latin America and the Caribbean must also highlight and guarantee the inclusion of migrants as a vulnerable population in need of special protection in the region, given the scope and negative impacts of this public and transnational issue.

Finally, regarding electoral processes, a permanent invitation should be extended to the Organization of American States and other relevant organizations to participate in electoral observation missions, facilitating the work of missions led by civil society and guaranteeing their effective access to observation platforms.

On this same subject, but in relation to Transparency and Anti-Corruption:

Based on the work done by the Citizen Forum of the Americas with the Citizen Corruption Observatory of the Americas in its 19 national chapters throughout the region, which included a technical follow-up process to the Lima commitment and a notable process of participation and consultation with civil society, we would like to make the following contributions:

It is necessary to recognize that corruption is a systemic phenomenon involving the participation of different actors and, as such, requires the contribution of all sectors and citizens in general for its eradication.

Therefore, multi-stakeholder working groups should be encouraged and the necessary conditions provided for their effective participation in decision-making, as well as in the formulation and implementation of public policies.

It is necessary to guarantee technical tools, opportunities for dialogue, and complete information, conducive to the active and effective participation of civil society in the fight against corruption and the forging of conditions for transparency. Access to public information must be guaranteed for all citizens, especially for rural communities and communities far from urban centers.

Information and statistics need to be continuously generated, including statistics broken down by sex, age, and socio-economic status, so as to make it possible to monitor and assess the results of transparency and access to information policies and of anti-corruption strategies, with a view to determining their actual impact, while providing public access to these statistics for independent evaluation.

In partnership with civil society, a review of national, regional, and international anti-money laundering and anti-terrorism laws is needed to assess potential adverse impacts on freedom of expression, assembly, and civil society activity, including legislation that restricts civil society access to funding and registration requirements. Work must be done to challenge or amend laws that have an

adverse impact on freedom of assembly and association and that restrict the legitimate activity of civil society.

Strengthen protections for whistleblowers who expose acts of corruption, particularly women who have been victims of crimes such as sextortion.

The relationship between the fight against corruption and human rights must be understood, as well as the differentiated impact of corruption on the most vulnerable population groups and citizens.

2. Regional program for digital transformation

We consider that:

It is necessary to work towards the joint development and implementation of a regional digital agenda for accountability, transparency, and transformation in the Americas based on shared commitments for 2023.

Respect for human rights on the Internet and in the dissemination, use, and impact of emerging and digital technologies should be promoted.

The protection and privacy of citizens' personal data must be guaranteed, especially that of civil society groups and organizations involved in denouncing, monitoring, and control activities.

Transparency and accountability in the design and use of digital technology need to be promoted. This includes the responsible and ethical use of reliable artificial intelligence and the establishment of independent audits for the largest technology platforms.

It is essential to ensure minimal requirements for the success of digital health solutions (such as electricity and Internet coverage, devices, and digital literacy) with an approach that prioritizes populations with the least access (remote rural areas, indigenous groups, etc.). Thus, for example, although digitalization has helped maintain isolation and quarantines in our region, it has also been an obstacle to free access to information for civil society and citizens, who do not always have the means and tools to access the Internet.

Thank you very much for this opportunity and for considering our contributions.