

[Join the Coalition](#)[Newsletter](#)[Blog](#)[Events](#)[Work with us](#)

SECOND REGIONAL MEETING FOR LATIN AMERICA: POLITICAL FINANCING, CORRUPTION AND INTEGRITY

24 May 2021 –

A lively exchange of ideas on the need for more transparency and integrity in political financing resulted in calls to cooperate as a united force to guarantee clean elections in the region in the UNCAC Coalition's Second Regional Meeting for Latin America, held on May 19th, 2021. Three speakers from Puerto Rico and Argentina, as well as the other 15 representatives from UNCAC Coalition member and affiliate civil society organizations (CSOs) from all over the region presented and discussed innovative initiatives of advocating for more transparency in and monitoring of political expenditures.



Ahead of the [UN General Assembly Special Session \(UNGASS\) against Corruption](#), to be held on 2-4 June, Vienna Hub-representative Danella Newman called on Coalition members to “make some noise” leading up to the UNGASS to make it a landmark event in anti-corruption advocacy. The UNCAC Coalition will hold **two identical briefings for civil society on the UNGASS tomorrow, 25 May at [11:00-12:00](#) and [17:00-18:00](#) (CET)**, where it will discuss civil society participation and advocacy efforts before, during, and after the UNGASS. Sign up by clicking on the links on the time slots above.

To set the scene of the meeting, regional coordinator for Latin America Iñaki Albisu Ardigó noted the importance of many Coalition members' work on the crucial topic of transparency and integrity in political financing, highlighting [Article 7, paragraph 3 of the UNCAC](#) as an essentially pro-democracy

article, a way of guaranteeing an international legal instrument to prevent big money and undue influence from jeopardizing our democracies.

Guaranteeing integrity in political financing in Latin America

The following are summaries of the presentations held by the three speakers:

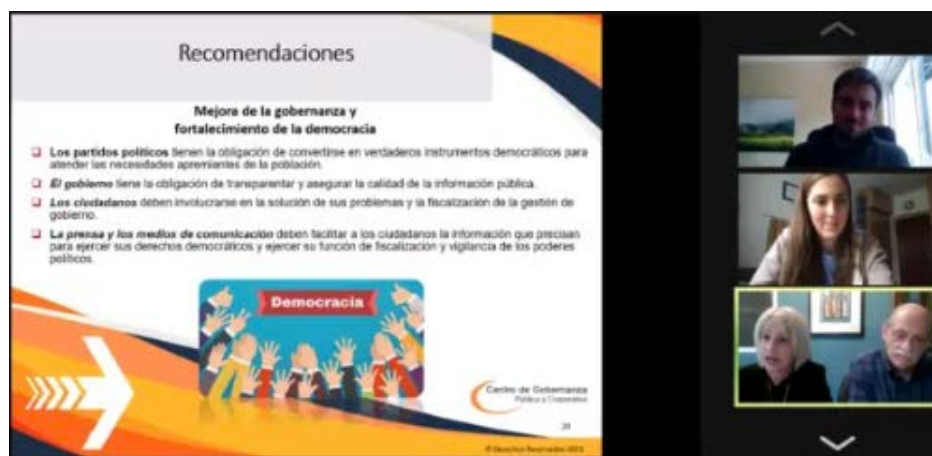
Puerto Rico

Eneida Torres, Executive Director, and Rafael Durand, Secretary of the Board of Directors, of Coalition member organization [Centro de Gobernanza Pública y Corporativa](#), Puerto Rico's leading anti-corruption watchdog, provided a run-down of the current state of political financing in Puerto Rico. As part of the United States, Puerto Rico is similarly affected by the influence of big or dark money through the abuse of Super Political Action Committees (PACs), used to circumvent electoral financing regulations. Although the island's government has created new rules and procedures to monitor campaign finances, Super PACs operating in Puerto Rico are set up in other US states with less regulation.

Eneida and Rafael showcased one of their organization's projects which aims to curtail the influence of illicit money in elections: After having worked with media and academic organizations to collect concrete answers from each party's candidate to the gov-

ernorship to a series of questions relating to their future policies, appointments and, more importantly, their financiers, they published [a study](#) of the answers in 2020. They noted that while the study provides an in-depth insight into the gubernatorial candidates' intentions, the lack of participation by the two leading candidates in the section about corruption and integrity is, for them, a warning sign.

Argentina





The Argentine UNCAC Coalition member organization [FUNDEPS](#) works mostly on anti-corruption and integrity matters at the sub-national level, focusing on the province of Córdoba. Nina Sibilla, Coordinator of the Democracy Area of FUNDEPS gave an ac-

count of [an important initiative](#) the organization launched in order improve the enforcement of and adherence to political finance regulations. FUNDEPS had noted that political finance reports, to be presented to provincial judicial authorities upon the completion of the electoral cycle, tended to be presented with notable delays; years after the elections had taken place. As the 2019 elections were wrapping up, FUNDEPS requested political finance reports from the provincial judiciary, but their request was denied. Consequently, they coordinated with other NGOs and journalists to campaign for the publication of these reports. In the end, the pressure worked: in 2020 they managed to access the reports one week before the planned launch of their campaign.

The example of FUNDEPS shows how civil society organizations and the media can work together to make sure electoral finance transparency rules are enforced.

Other CSO initiatives on promoting integrity and fighting corruption on political financing:

- Claudia Vega from [Ecuador's Fundación Ciudadanía y Desarrollo](#) shared a relatively new initiative called [Cuentas Claras](#) (Clear Accounts), where the organization requested, digitized and analyzed campaign financing data from the Consejo Nacional Electoral (National Electoral Council). In only a few months, they were able to call foul on candidates submitting incomplete, unreadable or erroneous financial statements.
- [Transparencia por Colombia](#) provided some insights into a report they wrote called [Elecciones y Contrataciones Públicas](#) (Elections and Public Procurement). This initiative cross-referenced party and campaign donors with public sector contractors and providers. They noted a clear link between donations made to a successful political campaign and companies receiving public contracts.
- Paraguay underwent a massive electoral system reform in 2020. According to Marta Ferrara from [Semillas para la Democracia](#), [the new system compromises electoral integrity](#), and also makes it easier for state funds and dark money to infiltrate the electoral finance regime.

Conclusions and moving forward

The second UNCAC Coalition Regional Meeting for Latin America provided a great opportunity for civil society organizations in the region to talk about an issue that most of them work on: integrity in political financing. The exchange of ideas and calls to cooperate as a regional force to guarantee clean elections in the region shows how Latin America is clearly working towards a revamping of political finance regulations. The topic for the next regional meeting, access to information, is without a doubt a key component in any political finance reform.

If you are a civil society activist from Latin America or the Caribbean and would like to become involved, please contact our Regional Coordinator Iñaki Albisu Ardigó at inaki.albisu@uncaccoalition.org.