Corruption in El Salvador is not a recent matter. In 2018 alone, the Corruption Perceptions Index by Transparency International ranked us at 105 out of 140 countries, representing our worst rating in 10 years. In December of last year, the World Economic Forum placed us at 135 out of 136 countries, with the greatest diversion of public funds second only to Venezuela. These tools combined with our own annual studies of multidimensional poverty help us to understand that corruption is present in all levels of public office and affect our entire society.

The last 3 presidents and many high public officials have been accused of corruption: the first died while awaiting trial, and as a result his case was closed; the second has confessed to money laundering and other corruption charges of more than $350 million and is currently serving time in prison; and, the third is currently receiving asylum from a neighboring country. It is publically known that members of his own political party and officials in his succeeding government warned this third corrupt official and negotiated for his asylum in order to avoid due process. Of these 3 presidents it is estimated that more than $800 million has gone missing from public funds.

The new government and its vision for Public Integrity
The incoming administration has established a clear agenda that combats corruption based on three fundamental pillars:

1  No Statute of Limitations for Corruption Cases – Legal Reform

**Penal Code Reform:** Grand corruption cases, by their very effects on society over the long term, must not be able to expire. This measure will help eliminate impunity and guarantee victims, and society as a whole, direct access to justice, truth and legal recourse as a mechanism to dissuade corrupt actors.

**Declaration of Grand Corruption as a Crime Against Humanity:** According to the unanimous agreement of the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC) in 2013, where El Salvador was a participant and it was agreed to promote grand corruption crimes as crimes against humanity, and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Article 7, Section 1(k), where corruption cases fall under crimes against humanity due to their damaging effects on society. A simple modification of our Penal Code could be achieved with a majority vote in the Legislative Assembly, which would be at least 43 votes.

2  Prosecution

**International cooperation and technical assistance:** This will be a key element. We are strengthening our justice system through utilizing new technology and knowledge for investigations that are more effective, better trial and prosecution of crimes, and public policies destined to prevent corruption and impunity. A primary role for our government will be acting as both an investigator and a claimant to guarantee thorough and impartial investigations.
CICIES: Creating the International Commission Against Impunity in El Salvador (Comisión Internacional Contra la Corrupción e Impunidad en El Salvador – CICIES) will require several steps:

1. Establishing framework agreements and cooperation protocols between the key control institutions of the State will be the first step in assuring effective teamwork between the CICIES and our institutions. Strengthening our Attorney General’s Office and the judicial system in all areas, with special attention to their internal integrity processes, will reduce risk and vulnerability.
2. Establishing citizen participation mechanisms that oversee the Attorney General and Judiciary’s activities. Establishing the witness, claimant and victim protection infrastructure that limits vulnerabilities and supports the legal case.
3. Acting as a parallel claimant in accordance with our Penal Code. Denouncing private persons and public officials who attempt to hinder investigations and cases or attempt to benefit themselves or others.

Anti-Corruption Commissioner: A commissioner will be named by the President to monitor and sound the alarm when someone, including in our own government, is diverting public funds or services for their own benefit or for that of a third party.

Prevention

The government’s preventive approach to protect Public Integrity focuses on the transparency and modernization of institutional processes, with the primary objective being the creation of the necessary conditions for efficient and transparent actions, which close the window of opportunity for corrupt practices. This process will be composed of 4 areas:

Governance: whereby each institution will be subjected to a re-engineering process based on the development of management systems designed to promote public integrity and prevent corruption, overspending and bad government. Internal audits and accountability of processes and projects by public servants, real time involvement of controlling institutions and opportune citizen supervision will be key aspects for the continued improvement of Public Integrity.

Public Integrity Management Systems: Starting with risk assessment and subsequent management, the preparation of corruption prevention plans at all levels will facilitate the alignment of public services towards a common purpose and an effective management of public resources, which will focus on achieving public good goals based on the government’s vision and strategic plan.

We have developed a management system standard which stipulates the minimum requirements for corruption risk management that shall be implemented in all government institutions. Similar to quality management systems such as ISO 9000 which have been instrumental for improving quality throughout the world, this Management System for Public Integrity will establish the framework for preventing corruption and assuring integrity throughout our institutions.

Given the logic that there is always a corruptor for every corrupt person in public office, and that this corruptor is normally in the private sector, Global Financial Integrity, located here in Washington, DC, which measures Illicit Financial Flows in developing countries like El Salvador, reports that an average of between $1.6 and $2.4 billion disappears via money laundering, corruption, evasion and elusion from the
country each year. For this reason we have also begun discussions with private sector associations, with the goal of extending an accreditation and certification system whereby they can also prevent becoming corruptors via Management Systems for the Integrity Assurance. I am pleased to say this proposal was very well received and we hope to see the private sector become a protagonist in this process.

**Elimination of secret budgets**: Over the years, our presidents have had at their discretion “special or secret” budgets that were not subject to scrutiny. During the last 6 governments, the total fund in these budgets was over one billion dollars. The president who recently pled guilty and is serving time in prison was indicted for laundering $350 million dollars, his entire secret budget. As a result, the new government will not operate any form of budget that is not subjected to public scrutiny.

Our confidence in transparency and anti-corruption is based on establishing a State of Public Integrity, where the indirect costs of providing public services are minimized, as is the risk of their diversion from any other purpose than the common good.

Thank you