



## **International organizations support constitutional reforms in favor of judicial independence in Guatemala**

**Washington D.C., New York, San José Costa Rica, and Guatemala City,** February 13 2017. The signatory organizations observe with concern the recent scandals related to influence peddling and manipulation of the elections processes of the Supreme Court of Justice of Guatemala, in which Judges Blanca Stalling and Eddy Orellana are publicly implicated. These cases reveal the external interferences in the system of election of magistrates and judges, and demonstrate the necessity of carrying out extensive reforms in order to guarantee impartiality and independence in the administration of justice.

In this sense, we consider it important that the Congress of the Republic of Guatemala approve the appropriate constitutional reforms to guarantee judicial independence. The constitutional reforms will permit the creation and regulation of effective mechanisms for the selection of the Attorney General of the Republic, the judges of the Supreme Court of Justice and of the Chambers of the Court of Appeals, and the judges of the Constitutional Court. The reforms will also strengthen a system of judicial career that is objectively administered by a qualified internal authority so as to avoid the interference of political interests and influence peddling within the Judicial Branch.

The international standards on the subject state that it is necessary to separate the judicial functions from the administrative functions as a guarantee of internal independence, and that it is important to count on an objective system of judicial career that will promote professional excellence and judicial ethics. International experience also demonstrates that it is important to recognize the indigenous law to guarantee the access to justice for indigenous peoples, with full respect for their cultures.

It is important to highlight that the proposals for reform of the judicial sector were formulated through a process of broad and transparent consultation with distinct sectors of society and that the Congress of Guatemala has the responsibility to legislate in favor of the common good of all citizens, including Indigenous Peoples. Finally, we urge the upstanding public servants and the civil society organizations to continue defending judicial independence as a fundamental guarantee to protect the rights of citizens, and to keep working towards the establishment of the Rule of Law.