THE ROLE OF SUPREME AUDIT INSTITUTIONS IN VIEW OF XXI CENTURY NEW INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

DECLARATION OF BUENOS AIRES

OLACEFS XXVIII ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OCTOBER 9 – 12, 2018
BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINE REPUBLIC
OLACEFS Supreme Audit Institutions (SAI), gathered in the XXVIII General Assembly of Latin American and Caribbean Organization, in the city of Buenos Aires, Argentine Republic, state their interest in and commitment to the use of the new technologies of the XXI century applicable to the control of public administration.

The XXI century offers a vertiginous scenario in this aspect. In addition, it poses an important challenge to Supreme Audit Institutions: the use of new technologies for collection, transformation, storage, protection, recovery and analysis of data that constitute the primary matter of their task and mandate.

The use of massive data analysis in the audit function was already discussed at OLACEFS XXVII Ordinary General Assembly (2017). During this meeting, the authorities and auditors expressed their conviction regarding the relevance of these tools in the control of public accounts.

Limitations in the infrastructure of our organizations were recognized and challenges and recommendations for our future were identified at that meeting, taking into account that data analysis tools are not homogeneous nor is the infrastructure available in the institutions for their installation.

The digital awareness of our organizations offers an ideal scenario to advance in close peer collaboration, train our agents and promote sharing of experiences that help overcome possible pitfalls. We share what was stated in ISSAI 12\(^1\), regarding the role of our organizations and their greater responsibility towards citizens, parliament, users and other stakeholders.

\(^1\) Principle5, ISSAI 12
Thus, SAIs assume the changes they must introduce when adopting new technologies that modify the traditional environment in which our auditing work is carried out.

“New technologies” are known as those computerization techniques that allow the acquisition, production, storage, processing, communication, recording and/or presentation of information in the format of voice, images and data contained in acoustic, optical or electromagnetic signals. According to the United Nations statistics, the twenty-first century shows an exponential growth of users of these technologies in the world at large, but in Latin America, the access of citizens to connectivity has been overwhelming.

Consequently, as science moves forward, society migrates from the use of pure information towards the added value of knowledge, which modifies political, social, economic and labor structures, which in turn have a direct impact on the control of the public sector. OLACEFS region, as already recognized in the *Declaration of Asunción*², showed that the development of information systems and tools has become one of the strongest demands on the part of the civil society due to the difficulties citizens generally face in accessing public information easily and affordably.

On this occasion, the region already recognizes that the growth of digital connectivity increases the possibility and ability of our citizens to demand the advances that technology offers in all government departments, including the bodies controlling them.

---

² *Declaration of Asunción* issued at OLACEFS XXI General Assembly on Accountability Principles, City of Asunción, Paraguay.
It should be stressed that OLACEFS region has its own reality in regarding the growth of digital connectivity, access thereto and the ability of our citizens to join the internet revolution. At the same time, a new term called digital literacy arises. It refers to those skills that people have in order to manage themselves within a massive environment of digital intelligence, which according to UNESCO, will give them the possibility to participate in the media system, develop their critical spirit and gain knowledge to participate in the development of society and become active citizens³.

Supreme Audit Institutions, like other organizations, participate in the vertiginous technological revolution and its application to different aspects of human life in this twenty-first century.

Therefore, SAIs should create a bridge between governments and citizens and become a reliable source of information, independence and objectivity through a modern evaluation of the policies that governments design, the programs and activities they implement and the results they produce. In view of our responsibility towards citizens, the parliament and other stakeholders, SAIs assume advances that are necessary to incorporate the tools that new technologies offer to our auditing work. These tools⁴ may refer to the collection, comparison and application of databases, the use of satellite images, as well as the analysis of the evidences that are the core of the auditing work. All this, in real time.

---
⁴ Tools for data visualization, scraping and BI self-service. ETL (Extract, Transform, Load). In data comparison: relational databases and SQL. In predictive models: machine learning and advanced analytics. Also for satellite image analysis: GIS (Geographic Information System) and for Big Data infrastructure: hadoop, spark, among others.
The challenge requires budgets, training and adequate digital infrastructure to carry out an efficient and timely control of the governments of our countries. This effort will contribute to transparency and accountability through the evaluation of the policies that governments design, the programs and activities they implement and the results thereof, within the framework of a healthy democracy, in order to promote and share our audit work and make it available to all citizens in a simple and efficient way.

WHEREAS:

• The use of information technology means a real revolution in the complex tasks carried out by public bodies including Supreme Audit Institutions (SAI), which promotes the modernization of basic information systems and supports and fosters a new era in the public service.

• Recommendations and conclusions issued at OLACEFS XXVII Ordinary General Assembly (2017) highlighted that information systems support the work of SAIs in a sustainable and innovative way while increasing efficiency and effectiveness and improving the services they provide to citizens.

On the other hand, threats to security in information systems inside SAIs force to strengthen their systems infrastructure, to modernize the rings of cyber security thereof and improve the skills required from governmental auditors to carry out efficient controls in this area.

5 Through the growth of Performance Audits (ISSAI 300)
• Likewise, the recommendations issued by the UNITED NATIONS through the Sustainable Development Goals and the contributions contained in the paper “Information technologies and public control in Latin America”, guide the region in this direction.

The present declaration will be formally conveyed at the next INCOSAI Congress to be held 23 – 29 September 2019, as a commitment of OLACEFS member SAIs to this matter.

**THEREFORE,**

Full members constituted at OLACEFS XXVIII Ordinary General Assembly in the City of Buenos Aires, Argentine Republic, pursuant to the scope, mandates, constitutional and legal powers in force in each of our countries,

**DECLARE** as follows:

**First.** New technologies of XXI century are a real opportunity for an effective improvement of the quality of public control in compliance with our constitutional and legal mandates. SAIs should set themselves up as model institutions, which implies that they must be involved in a process of continuous improvement.

---

Second. That this overwhelming, changing and universal technological environment could be highly beneficial in expanding the frontiers of our traditional audit approaches by incorporating ICT efficiently throughout the process (planning, execution, reporting and follow-up).

Third. Pursuant to principle 11 of the fundamental principles promoted by ISSAI 12, we commit ourselves to share with OLACEFS members and INTOSAI, the experience gained regarding policies and procedures supported by new technologies. The foregoing will contribute to promote the excellence and quality of the service we offer, as well as to improve our interaction with the social organizations of our countries.

Fourth. We are committed to promote the adequacy of the training delivered in our EFS to our auditors, concerning the use of new technologies applied to control, which will facilitate the achievement of the intended results, assuming the need to promote the excellence of the auditor in the twenty-first century.

Fifth. The strategy announced herein will be based on the promotion, professionalization, updating and modernization of our agents and professionals at the service of control, through executive training sessions in digital intelligence skills, in order to ensure the suitability of the contributions our organizations can make to governments.

Sixth. We consider it of great interest to include these objectives in OLACEFS Strategy (2017-2022) by strengthening Goals 4 and 5, fostering tactics that promote the use of new
technologies in government control, while developing new educational resources in the Region, especially taking into account the following strategies:

4.2 Promotion of good practices and tools to improve the performance of the SAIs.

4.4 Promotion of SDGs at regional level and the role of SAIs for the achievement of Agenda 2030.

5.3 Promotion of Technological and Pedagogical Innovation of Training Activities.

**Seventh.** We commit ourselves in an indeclinable and irreversible way to advance in the use of the tools and innovations they provide us. We are convinced that this will bring confidence to citizenship regarding the quality, transparency and opportunity of our work and will help the recipients of our reports in decision-making, pursuant to principle 3 of ISSAI 12, by providing relevant, objective and timely information to stakeholders.

**Eighth.** At the same time, we are committed to strengthening the IT security infrastructure to address the cyber-threats faced by the external and internal systems of the SAIs, which will ensure the basic principle of safeguarding the quality of information received and produced as part of the control functions.

**Ninth.** This commitment extends to the permanent cooperation with INTOSAI working groups on the matter and it will be shared with the international control community as a contribution of OLACEFS to the debate scheduled for the XXIII INCOSAI Congress, to be held from 23 to 29 September 2019 in the Russian Federation.7

---

SIGNATURES:

Signed in the City of Buenos Aires