

FORUM: General Assembly Sixth Committee

ISSUE: The question of government transparency

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Introduction

In a case where two objects, one in a clear plastic box and the other placed in a steel box, are presented to an audience, which would be selected by the majority? Most would choose the object in a clear box because they are comfortable with the certainty in identifying the object than the object in a steel box, with no holes to see the interior. However, there may be a few who might prefer the unknown but what if these objects were documents about their government activities? In the question of government transparency, or open government, we discuss the necessity of governments voluntarily providing their people with information about their activities to maintain a sustainable democracy. By doing so, political leaders may face public consequences of their illicit actions if it was to be exposed to the people. Which begs the question of whether political activities should be kept quiet to protect the political leaders and people's faith in them, or expose all their activities with the risk of consequences after a dishonest mistake.

Definition of Key Terms

Government *An idea of the people's right to be informed of their government's activity.*

transparency *This means the government is obliged to provide any information to sustain a functioning democracy*

Campaign finance disclosure *Information of political candidates that informs the people about their connections with any Special Interest Groups (SIGs) before they work in the office*

Proactive disclosure *Political candidates provide information such as financial and vote records to the people*

Democracy *A government system where the people vote for their government leaders*

and/or political members of state

Corruption

A fraud by high authorities that frequently involve financial bribery

Background Information

Government transparency has been a controversial discussion in this society today. This topic has led to multiple causes of problematic cracks in every democratic system, where it is up to the citizens to choose who would lead their country. The people would be blinded and ignorant to the major flaws of their government, whom they trust to work for the sake of their country's well being. Many believe that the people deserve to know their political leaders' activities and financial loggings, however, others believe that "ignorance is bliss". This leads to multiple debates on whether or not governments should be open to the public of their activities with the nation's funds and services.

Firstly, one side of the argument states that the government should remain opaque to their citizens. This is believed to be the only way for political leaders to stay in complete power. They believe that information is power, and to some extent, if the people were to access such information about their leaders, it may deteriorate their opinions of them and lead to another local dilemma. Though the people should have the right to know whether or not where their money (from taxes) are spent, the process of installing government transparency may spark another issue. Presently, there are nations who have started or are in the open to their citizens but regulations that are imposed lead to a negative impact on the political candidates instead. Overall, there is always two sides to a debate, therefore, there will be others who oppose this idea with their own reasoning.

The other side of this argument claims that government transparency would solve more good than create bad. These people strongly believe that the people of the nation have the utmost right to the information of their political leaders that they've chosen to maintain their country. They would rather keep their faith and trust with their leaders since, in a democratic system, they've elected the newly appointed leaders because of their faith in their ability to be honest and fair for the sake of their nation. These leaders would, in turn, understand their citizens' concerns and be more open to the idea of transparency. This would be the first major step in the process of applying transparency to the government system. In a government, it is highly important for the people to keep a positive mindset towards their leaders. As a

consequence of not accomplishing this, protests and riots would result into the country further sinking.

Key Issues

Corruption

This is from the lack of transparency in a government, where taxes and local funds are used for illicit activities by the political leaders. This would create controversies amongst the people who have little faith in their government. Political leaders are still "human" and would be tempted by power and greed from their position. This is a major reason to corruption being such an enormous issue, yet very little has sparked a large movement to demolish it. Because this issue is very well-known, it wouldn't be a surprise to anyone if the people doubted their government with their taxed money since it could be used for personal, illicit reasons by the leaders themselves.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Transparency International (TI)

An independent organization in which they envision a future that is free from corruption. This is included in businesses, government, civil society, and our daily lives. From 1993, a group of believers, standing against corruption in Berlin, Germany, founded this organization and have effectively expanded their ideology internationally. Presently, they've created international anti-corruption conventions, prosecuted corrupt leaders and seized illicit wealth, and held companies due to their suspicious behaviour nationally and internationally.

Timeline of Relevant Resolutions

Date	Description of the Events
<i>October 31, 2003</i>	The United Nations Conventions against Corruption commenced in New York, United States of America (USA)
<i>September 13, 2016</i>	Resolution 70/305 was adopted and welcomed many breakthroughs of transparency and ethics to the people
<i>June, 2018</i>	President Espinosa Garces had started the highest standards of transparency during her Presidency
<i>September 17, 2018</i>	H.E. Ms. Maria Fernanda Espinosa Garces became the third President and swore loyalty to the regulations of the Code of Ethic

for Presidency of the General Assembly

Treaties and Events

- Transparency International
 - Link to organization: <https://www.transparency.org>
- United Nations Convention against Corruption

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

In recent years, there were attempts of making organisations more transparent with past treaties against corruption as the beginning to a more honest future. This was when the number of resolutions were an attempt to promote government transparency was high and relatively popular. Over the years, however, the numbers exponentially decreased. This simple statistical observation already states the loss of these attempts and need reevaluation.

Resolution Activity
As of 11/30/2019

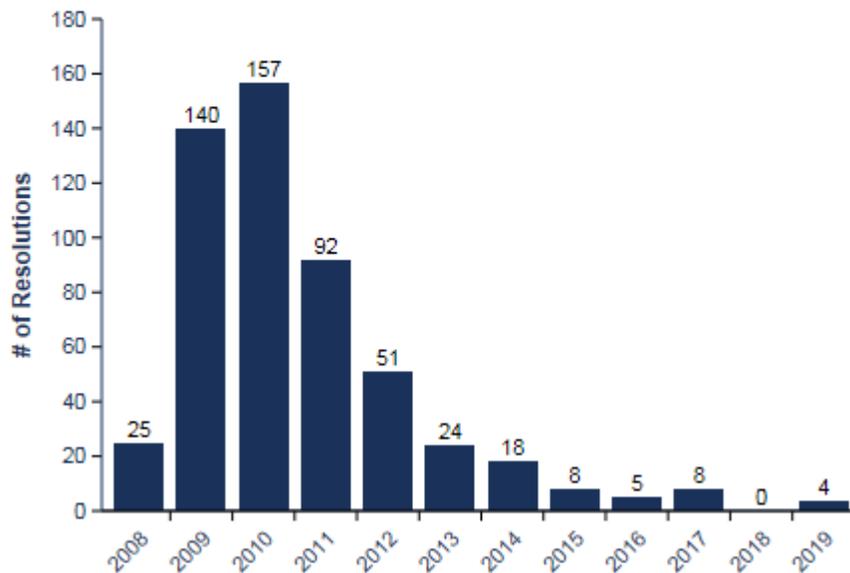


Figure 1: Bar Graph of Number of Resolutions made regarding Government Transparency

An example of a failed attempt would be of late 2019 where the city of Massachusetts, USA had faced a major crisis to their attempt to bring forth transparency. There is a highly acclaimed spending transparency website where the head, State Comptroller Tom Shack, left

the agency. It was later revealed, by the organisation itself, that there were some scandals that had built up overtime. This would have meant he needed to step down either way. This suggests that we shouldn't only focus on the government but everyone in the society we live in today.

Possible Solutions

Delegates should focus on the government side to this question. The House would know that it would be basic human rights to be aware of the government's activities, however, the governments would be the most affected in the end. This means that resolutions should aim to please both parties in ways such as providing sufficient information to the public of the government's funds without the interruption of a major issue that is meant to be kept quiet to protect the citizens. Funding data collections may be open to the public to access but must be reviewed to keep the government from releasing unnecessary data that may cause a panic or disarray.

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