

## **In Paraguay, UNODC strengthens capacities on whistleblower protection to about 90 government officials**

Asunción, 7 and 8 October 2021 - The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) organized the "National Workshop on Whistleblower Protection in Paraguay", with the support of the National Anti-Corruption Secretariat, the National Directorate of Public Procurement and the National Team of Integrity and Transparency of Paraguay.

In South America, UNODC prioritized Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Paraguay to support the governments in timely technical assistance to respond to the challenges imposed by the pandemic in the development of public procurement.

Thanks to the support of the United States Government and the United Kingdom, the virtual meeting was held on October 7 and 8 within the framework of the project "Transparent public procurement systems to respond to and recover from the COVID19 crisis and possible future crises" and the UNCAC Regional Acceleration Platform for South America and Mexico, a regional process supported by the United Kingdom.

During the double day UNODC experts from several countries shared with about 90 Paraguayan officials related to the matter.

"This project seeks to establish and strengthen coordination mechanisms and create transparent public procurement processes, not only to respond and assist in the recovery from the crisis, but also to ensure that the measures adopted are in line with the commitments of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC)" explained the UNODC Representative for Peru and Ecuador, responsible for the coordination of operations in Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Paraguay at the opening of the workshop. The UNCAC is the only universal and legally binding instrument against corruption, of which UNODC is the custodian.

For his part, Minister René Fernández Bobadilla, head of the National Anti-Corruption Secretariat (SENAC), described the experience as a "brilliant opportunity" to focus the analysis on the current Paraguayan law and on the possible improvements of the regulation, and thanked UNODC for the possibility of having experts to share their experiences and good practices. "Paraguay is currently undergoing a peer review process in compliance with UNCAC provisions. This space is very necessary", he said.

Finally, Pablo Seitz Ortiz, National Director of Public Procurement (DNCP) commented on the experience of this Paraguayan institution that manages the public procurement system through which between 20% and 25% of Paraguay's expenditure budget is invested. "The important thing is not who made the complaint, what matters is what is being denounced. We cannot stop at the formalities of cases" he said, while highlighting the importance of having the mechanisms to protect the whistleblower as an adequate infrastructure to receive complaints. "Judicial delay is barely tolerable. The administrative delay is not tolerable for the citizenship", he concluded.