

Ghana Integrity Initiative statement to the IRG

Vienna, 5 June 2014

Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates,

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. My name is Vitus Adaboo Azeem and I am the Executive Director of Ghana Integrity Initiative or GII – the Ghanaian national chapter of Transparency International.

I would like to talk to you today about the GII's contributions to the UNCAC review process in Ghana and our efforts to support government implementation of UNCAC.

With regard to the UNCAC review process in Ghana, GII was fortunate because the Government of Ghana has chosen to be very inclusive in its UNCAC review.

- The Ghanaian government made public the contact details of the country focal point and consulted with civil society organisations in the preparation of the self-assessment, which we hope will be published shortly.
- The government also agreed to a country visit of an external assessment team and when that visit took place, the government invited Ghana Integrity Initiative and other civil society organisations to share their expertise with the official reviewers.

This enabled us to support the review process by contributing our analysis and recommendations. We also prepared a parallel review report as a reference document reflecting our inputs.

We noted in our report that we were encouraged to see that many of the provisions of the UNCAC are reflected – at least in part - in various Ghanaian statutory and regulatory instruments.

But we expressed concerns that enforcement is very weak due to noticeable institutional and structural deficits in the country's anti-corruption enforcement agencies. We also noted that there remain many constitutional, regulatory and statutory obstacles to the realization of the broad objectives of the UNCAC.

We further identified the following areas of concern namely: 1) Lack of access to information legislation and measures; 2) Weak punitive measures against anti-corruption offences; 3) A weak asset declaration regime; 4) An inadequate definition of bribery; and 5) Weak whistleblower protection laws.

We have been active and will continue to be active in efforts to assist the government to address these problem areas.

For example, in the area of access to information, we and other CSOs have worked very hard alongside the government to get the 2003 Bill passed, but our joint efforts have so far failed. The Right to Information Coalition, of which we are co-Chair, has met with Members

of Parliament several times and we believe that further constructive dialogue will eventually lead to the bill being passed into law. The President has promised to sign it immediately it reaches his desk.

Regarding ***another area of concern, Asset declarations***, and the constitutional provision requiring asset declarations by public officials has not been operationalized by the accompanying Regulations, which would more effectively check illicit enrichment. This means that the asset declaration regime is poorly policed, opaque and ineffective. GII has worked with the CHRAJ (the Ghanaian anti-corruption agency), the Auditor General and other stakeholders to operationalise the law but Parliament has thus far failed to approve the necessary Regulations to ensure this.

Finally, ***in the area of Whistleblower Protection***, there is much still to be done and we will continue to work with government on this. GII was very instrumental in the advocacy leading to the passage of the existing legislation. It has also undertaken public education about the legislation and has set up a unit (an Advocacy and Legal Advice Centre) to handle complaints from victims and witnesses of corruption. However, more work still needs to be done because the law does not provide adequate protection and the Fund required by law to compensate whistleblowers has not yet been created.

Ghana Integrity Initiative has been pleased to work with the Ghanaian government in these areas and we look forward to furthering our constructive dialogue in the future to assist the government in improving UNCAC implementation in the country.

Thank you for your attention.