

monitor

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Speaking Truth to Power

Ordinary people, against all odds, speak truth to power. They blow the whistle, they organise, they campaign - selfless and committed to principle. It was humbling to hear some of our friends share their experiences at the Civil Society Forum yesterday. Voices from the Philippines, Algeria and Nepal, representing tens of thousands of people who face harassment, social exclusion, detention and death for sharing their eyewitness accounts with us. The three (a trade unionist, journalist



Photo: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/dkd/>

and former member of the Executive) are all public servants who dared talk the truth. They deserve protection.

The experiences of whistleblowers, concerned citizens and activists under fire, give urgency to the task of implementing UNCAC and creating an open review process – so as to stop for once and for all, the destruction, and loss, of lives of those who speak out against corruption.

“Success in the fight against corruption depends on those courageous enough to report or denounce corruption at work and in society. We note with grave concern the killings of journalists, anti-corruption activists and those who defend them, as well as the large number of citizens and workers who are sacked, suspended or removed from their jobs, unlawfully prosecuted, imprisoned, subjected to physical attacks and threats or otherwise harassed. We underline that those who report and denounce corruption are exercising a basic human right (i.e., freedom of expression). We call on governments to guarantee the security of whistleblowers and activists and call on this Conference to include Articles 13, 32 and 33 in the self-assessment checklist and to start the process of developing a mechanism for reporting cases of harassment, drawing on the experience of other UN Conventions” *Extract from the Statement of the Coalition of Civil Society Friends of the UNCAC.*

The Coalition of Civil Society Friends of UNCAC has launched a website with news, blogs, forums and much more. Visit us at: www.uncaccoalition.org

Where Has all the Money Gone?

Only 15 of the 58 known onshore and offshore financial jurisdictions have signed and ratified the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC). The absentees include not only traditional financial centres in developed countries but new ones in emerging economies. It is estimated that a large proportion of the assets that leave poor countries through corruption find their way to one of these financial centres, some of which continue to provide a safe haven for looters. According to the African Union estimates, Africa loses up to 148 billion dollars annually through corruption.

This greatly hampers the war against corruption and the success of UNCAC. Those financial centres such as Switzerland, Lichtenstein and Singapore, which have signed but not ratified the Convention, should ratify and implement as quickly as possible. All parties to UNCAC should use all their influence to persuade other offshore financial jurisdictions to join the global community by acceding to UNCAC without delay. We hope that in doing so their accession will coincide with the introduction of an effective review mechanism that can ensure compliance with the Convention. This will have a two fold impact in the war against corruption. Firstly, it will facilitate a more effective recovery of stolen as-

sets. Secondly, it will send a strong message to those who might be tempted to steal that there will be no safe haven for their loot.

Similarly the issue of banking secrecy should be addressed. No country should have a banking system that allows secrecy to be maintained against investigation and prosecution of those who have corruptly acquired and hidden their stolen assets. European legislation might provide a good starting point in replicating best practice examples. This should ensure enhanced transparency in financial systems and prevent the use of secretive offshore structures. For this to happen, an expanded form of review of UNCAC, involving non-mandatory as well as mandatory provisions, will be required.

Despite high expectations, efforts to recover stolen assets might not yield immediate results. However, in the long term, the success of UNCAC in repatriating this money will depend on the determination of all stakeholders to join forces in stemming the criminal transfer of public resources by making safe havens unsafe for the loot and the looters.



Photo: www.flickr.com/photos/matsgull

UPCOMING EVENTS

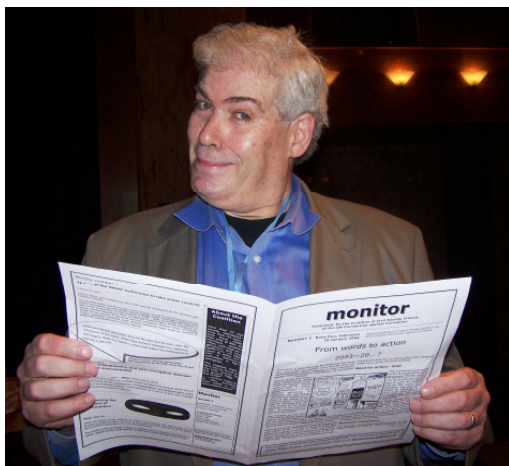


Photo: A. Figari

31.01.2008 9.00 to 18.00

Peer to Peer Media Forum: covering corruption with integrity

CNN anchor man Jim Clancy will host day of discussions involving members of the media to reflect on how corruption is reported.

Venue: Nusantara Room 1

Artists for Integrity

Cesar Lopez and the AK-47 : messengers of peace

An instrument of war becomes an instrument of peace –an AK-47 is now an “escopetarra”, a mix of the Spanish words for gun (escopeta) and guitar (guitarra). This is the symbol of peace, produced as a result of the Orquesta Neutral, an orchestra which plays and produces instruments with weapons handed over in processes of demobilization of illegal groups in Colombia

An interview with *Monitor*

Which other experiences provide inspiration for your work?

“My band and I work with community organizations bringing young people to play music as a way back into peace – for example by teaming up young convicts currently serving time for crimes they committed as part of military, paramilitary or illegal groups. While outside they were enemies, while in jail they learned to put their differences aside and join forces to make music together.”

How did you find your way from social activism promoting peace into anti corruption?

“I write my songs based on what I hear from the people I work with. After writing many songs about the need for peace, as this is what concerns the Colombians, people are starting to mention how corruption is affecting their lives. It is a short way between this and putting some words on paper



Photo: courtesy of UNODC

which later become lyrics.

In conversation with people living in small villages, I realized they have developed a special “language code” to identify money circulating as a result of bribes. New things in town – cars, hospitals, social programs – are paid for from proceeds from “the baker’s dance” an euphemism to describe that there is money in circulation which originally comes from a big bribe. Villagers would say to each other “Where does that come from?” “Haven’t you heard? It was paid for with money from the baker’s dance!”

Cesar is bringing his message of peace around the world by handing over escopetarras to musicians around the world, among them Manu Chao, Bob Geldof. During the special event “Artists for Integrity”, Cesar also gave one

escopetarra to Kenya’s Eric Wainaina. We look forward to hearing more of Cesar’s work as he engages in promoting integrity and anti corruption initiatives.

Monitor welcomes UNODC’s “Artists for Integrity” Initiative – it is a worthwhile effort to bring inspiration through art to the anti corruption fight. For more information on Cesar Lopez visit: www.cesarlopez.org *Monitor* will feature an interview with Eric Wainaina in tomorrow’s issue.

429 Days and Counting

Up close and personal with Annie Geron

Annie Geron is the General Secretary of the Public Services Labour Independent Confederation (PSILink) representing 80,000 state workers in the Philippines and affiliated to Public Services International *PSI, a Global Union Federation representing 20 million public sector workers in 163 countries.

30 years of service in the public sector brought Annie to the Technical Education and Skills Authority (TESDA) as a senior specialist at the TESDA women’s training centre. 429 days ago Annie was dismissed from her job, after she had filed corruption complaints against the Director of TESDA, before the Presidential Anti-graft Commission.

The complaints contained evidence of how the TESDA Director had used the powers entrusted to him to unlawfully



Photo: PSI Link

publish a book at a cost of 9.2 million Pesos without going through a public tendering process and which was completed in just one day. PSLINK had documentary evidence of these matters.

The Director of TESDA reacted by ordering transfer orders to Annie, colleagues and fellow trade union officers to remote areas of the country. This was intended to intimidate and discourage employees from blowing the whistle. After bringing public attention to the media, Annie was sued by her employer for libel and defamation. She and two female colleague are still on bail. After the workers refused to follow transfer orders, the employer charged them with gross insubordination and after demonstrating in public during their lunch breaks, they were charged with grave misconduct. Prior to this, Annie

(Continued on page 4)

429 days and counting (cont)

(Continued from page 3)

and her colleagues in the union had been suspended without pay for 3 months. The employer used the power of his position to intimidate and prevent the employees from pursuing the corruption case. Also, as part of the retaliation, Annie's husband – an official with over 30 years in public sector – was dismissed on false grounds.

Annie received solidarity and support from the community of public servants unions worldwide, who wrote to the Philippines authorities to protest against this case. PSLINK also filed a complaint before the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association for violations of ILO Conventions 87 and 98 concerning harassment and intimidation of trade union leaders.

One might wonder how this is possible in the Philippines where there are 13 anti-graft laws and policies in place? The key lies in the lack of protection mechanisms (such as protection from job termination or transfer, or from defamation suits) and procedures against retaliatory actions for whistle blowing.

The Presidential Anti-graft Commission of the Philippines after a year long investigation has found the TESDA Director General, Syjoco Augusto guilty of grave misconduct and gross neglect of duty and recommended for dismissal, forfeiture of benefits and eli-

gibility and perpetual disqualification from holding public office.

UNCAC Articles 13 and 33 offer opportunities to improve the protection of whistleblowers and anti-corruption activists. We suggest that these articles be included in the self assessment checklist to encourage and support states take concrete actions on protecting whistleblowers.

UNCAC Checklists published

Monitor congratulates those countries which have completed the checklist—with special mention to those who have shared them publicly!

More than 20 Chapters of Transparency International and other civil society organizations have developed alternative versions of the UNODC checklists on behalf of civil society – copies of some of them are available to delegates at the TI information table in front of the Documentation Desk.

Коалиция общественных организаций - друзей Конвенции ООН против коррупции

Основанная в 2006 году, Коалиция общественных организаций - друзей Конвенции ООН против коррупции объединяет более 50 организаций, поддерживающих ратификацию, имплементацию и мониторинг Конвенции против коррупции. В Коалицию входят "Transparency International" (TI), UNICORN, "Christian Aid", CAFOD, "Article 19", "Global Witness", "Tax Reduction Network", "Institute for Security Studies", SAHRIT, "Transparency and Accountability Network" (TAN), TIRI, и многие другие общественные организации.

постоянно растёт.

Цель Коалиции добиться, чтобы поддержка Конвенции со стороны гражданского общества была принята во внимание как во время, так и после конференции. Коалиция информирует о событиях и переговорах во время конференции, участвует в пленарных заседаниях, организывает дополнительные мероприятия и публикует позиции гражданского общества.



Коалиция объединяет множество организаций работающих в областях, связанных с анти-коррупционными инициативами, правами человека, развитием, окружающей средой, доступа к информации, и т.д. Коалиция открыта для новых участников, число её членов

У Коалиция также есть электронная страница (www.uncascoalition.org), которая позволяет всем желающим делиться и обмениваться информацией, новостями, комментариями о последних событиях, а также документами и фотоснимками конференции.

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