

monitor

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Third Conference of States Parties (CoSP) to the
United Nations Convention against Corruption

The world is watching: 351/93

Speaking on behalf of millions of citizens worldwide, 351 organizations from 93 countries are calling on the 3rd Conference of States Parties meeting in Doha, from 9 to 13 November, to take action and adopt an effective, open, transparent, inclusive and accountable review mechanism. Monitor reproduces the full statement below. Spanish, French, Arabic and Chinese versions of the statement are available from UNCAC Coalition members as well as copies of the full list of signatories. The two documents can also be found at:



http://bit.ly/Full_List and www.uncaccoalition.org

UNCAC COALITION STATEMENT

1. Corruption undermines democracy, the rule of law, human rights, civil liberties and sustainable development. The UNCAC Coalition (the Coalition) believes that the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), with its worldwide membership and comprehensive anti-corruption framework, is key to dealing effectively with global corruption. In its many provisions on transparency and accountability, the UNCAC includes measures that, if implemented, will contribute to preventing a recurrence of the current global financial crisis.

2. The Coalition is convinced that UNCAC's success in reducing corruption on-the-ground will depend greatly on the adoption of an effective and participatory review mechanism at the Third Conference of the States Parties (CoSP) in Doha, in November 2009. Such a review mechanism is also vital for the success of UNCAC's landmark provisions on asset recovery and the assessment of countries' technical assistance needs, as well as for strengthening international cooperation and enhancing the responsiveness of governments to their citizens.

3. The Coalition considers that the review mechanism

should be comprehensive, covering both mandatory and non-mandatory articles, and including the following features:

- supported by a well-resourced secretariat;
- assisted by a group of independent experts;
- based on tested review methods, including peer review and country visits;
- participatory, involving civil society organisations and

other stakeholders;

- transparent, resulting in published country reports with recommendations;
- carried out in coordination with regional review mechanisms;
- funded from the regular UN budget or assessed contributions, supplemented as needed by voluntary contributions.

4. The Coalition is convinced that the effectiveness of any UNCAC review mechanism depends on involvement of civil society and its access to information about the process and its outputs. The Coalition reminds States Parties that they have committed to supporting civil society participation in anti-corruption efforts and to receiving civil society inputs to their deliberations. (UNCAC, Article 13; Rules of Procedure, Rule 17). The Coalition urges them to draw on international best practice in this area, as demonstrated by the review processes of other anti-corruption conventions (notably of the Council of Europe, the OAS and the OECD), all of which provide for civil society inputs and publish evaluation reports.

5. The Coalition calls on Governments to ensure that draft terms of reference for an effective review mechanism are ready for adoption in Doha, in November 2009.

6. Without a robust review mechanism, the effectiveness of UNCAC will be severely compromised, with serious consequences for the lives and livelihoods of citizens around the world and for the credibility of signatory Governments and the United Nations.

Governments block civil society groups from Conference of States Parties

The Algerian and Russian governments have blocked two Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) from attending the Conference of States Parties (CoSP) to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) in Doha this week. These moves are part of a growing pattern of obstruction to civil society participation in the UN Convention against Corruption.

Although the terms of UNCAC explicitly encourage the participation of civil society in Article 13, the rules of procedure for the CoSPs allow governments to veto the participation of CSOs unless they are already accredited by the UN system.

The UNCAC Coalition believes that governments and international organisations, including the UN, that are committed to civil society participation should ensure that such arbitrary exclusions cannot take place.

The Russian government has also blocked the attendance of the Transnational Crime and Corruption Centre, Caucasus Office although it was accredited to attend the two previous CoSPs in Jordan and in Bali.

The Algerian government's veto of the Association Algérienne de Lutte Contre la Corruption was reportedly received two weeks after the deadline for such objections had passed. The group was first invited and accredited for the upcoming Doha meeting and then disinvited after the Algerian government's late objection.

However, members of both organisations will attend the CoSP as part of another CSO delegation. Such developments are deeply disappointing in the context of the upcoming decision-making at the CoSP, including on the scope and means of non-governmental participation in the monitoring of the implementation of the Convention.

Faith leaders lend their support to call for review mechanism

Over 100 faith leaders have signed onto a letter to Ban Ki-moon calling on States Parties to agree a review mechanism that is participatory and transparent. The initiative, spearheaded by faith-based development organisations in the UK and Australia, has received enthusiastic support from religious leaders in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe.

Corruption is condemned by all religions. Christian archbishops, Islamic scholars and Buddhist teachers have united behind the call for a participatory and transparent review mechanism, reminding State Parties that the power and responsibility entrusted to them must be underpinned with honesty and integrity.

Corruption hits the poorest hardest. In their letter, religious leaders state that corruption is a major cause of poverty in developing countries. 'Put simply corruption is at the heart of people's experience of poverty. For poor communities, corrupt practices constitute an insurmountable barrier to quality education, affordable health-care and decent livelihoods. Corruption steals opportunity and hope.'

The rationale behind the letter was to provide a vehicle for leaders from different faith traditions to speak up for a review mechanism based on the common values enshrined in their religious teachings. The letter has been a tool to raise awareness within religious communities about corruption and has brought the voice of an influential constituency to the advocacy efforts of broader civil society.

The religious leaders send an unequivocal message to States Parties that transparency and a commitment to participation are the hallmarks of political leadership that is mature and accountable. Corruption cannot be tackled successfully in secret or without the inclusion of civil society. 'Transparency is vital' say faith leaders 'to ensure a review process is fair and effective.' Civil society organisations, including faith groups, can make a positive contribution to the implementation of the Convention. The review mechanism must make room for the voices of people living in poverty. 'If the most affected by corruption are not accorded space to feed in to the review, it will be impossible to accurately measure UNCAC's effectiveness.'

CSO Press Briefing

Daily briefings for members of the press will be offered by UNCAC Coalition members.

Meet us at the Press Centre at 13.00.

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