

Civil society role crucial to success of global anti-corruption convention

Measures on stolen assets and technical assistance can help Libya, Tunisia and Egypt rebuild

Marrakesh, 24 October 2011 – The 154 countries that have ratified the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) must honour their commitment to a civil society voice in the Convention enforcement process, said the UNCAC Coalition, a global network of over 310 civil society organisations, at the start of a United Nations meeting on the Convention in Marrakesh, Morocco.

With the revolution in Libya and elections in Tunisia, the Convention has perhaps never been more relevant and a meeting in North Africa more fitting, said Slagjana Taseva, Chair of the UNCAC Coalition, speaking from Marrakesh. At the same time, the far-flung assets of the Qaddafi, Mubarak and Ben Ali family show why fighting corruption must be a cross-border, globalised undertaking.

The Convention provides a blueprint for national anti-corruption measures, but also serves as a platform for cooperation on fighting money laundering and returning illicitly obtained assets – vital resources for Libya, Egypt and other countries emerging from kleptocratic regimes. The global community must send a message that the international financial system can no longer be abused for laundering the proceeds of corruption and that there can be no impunity for the corrupt.

Civil society role at UN convention in doubt

The events of the Arab Spring make clear that an effective fight against corruption requires citizen participation at all levels and that governments ignore civil society at their own risk. That is why we are calling for governments to honour their commitment to include civil society in the Convention review process, a role guaranteed by the Convention itself, said Christiaan Poortman, a Senior Advisor for Transparency International.

The Rev. Lawrence Temfwe, Director of the Jubilee Centre, Zambia, noted, Although there are some promising signs in the review process, full civil society participation remains under threat as the anti-corruption summit opens today. This is an issue that needs to be addressed globally and on a local level.

Online publication of reports is step in right direction

The review process is off to a promising start with six country reviews completed and with most including country visits. However, the reports themselves show a number of shortcomings in Convention enforcement and underscore the need for a transparent, inclusive and well-funded review process.

There was good news for civil society organisations ahead of the conference when the United Nations published summaries of thirteen civil society reports and an overview report, prepared by the UNCAC Coalition and Transparency International, on progress in Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Lithuania, Mongolia, Morocco, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Ukraine, the United States and Vietnam) in implementing the Convention. The bad news was that the review process at country level too often remains opaque with civil society shut out from making inputs.

The executive summaries of these and other Convention documents are available on the website of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime at: <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/CAC/CAC-COSP-session4.html>

They are also available on the website of the UNCAC Coalition at <http://www.uncaccoalition.org/en/uncac-review/cso-review-reports.html>

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Note to Editors: The [United Nations Convention against Corruption \(UNCAC\)](#) is the most comprehensive global legal framework for combating corruption. It is a binding agreement [by 154 states parties](#) on standards and requirements for preventing, detecting, investigating and sanctioning corruption.

The UNCAC Coalition, formed in 2006, is composed of more than 300 civil society organisations in over 60 countries. Its goal is to promote ratification, implementation and monitoring of the UN Convention against Corruption. More information can be found at <http://www.uncaccoalition.org/>

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