



Recommendations

Expert Group Meeting on Strengthening Accountability & Transparency and Fighting Corruption in the Arab Region

Beirut, 23 –24 October 2003

On the Political Front

1. The discussions resulted in a consensus among the participants on the importance of giving significant consideration to the principles of democracy, freedom and prudent governance with respect to fighting corruption. These principles, which should be embraced, reinforce the culture of accountability, guarantee its existence, and create a climate of transparency that contributes to the exposure and prosecution of corruption.
2. The participants also pointed out the importance of freedom of the media, freedom of access to information, and the creation of the necessary legal framework therefor, as well as the importance of involving civil society institutions in the fight against corruption. Furthermore, in the discussions, the point was raised on the dialectic of politics and administration, and the results to which was attributed the phenomenon of politicization of administration with respect to fighting corruption. Moreover, some of the participants suggested considering free “elections” as a means of control and political accountability, which should be given the necessary importance in that they represent a form of political accountability vis-à-vis corruption.
3. The importance of good administration, and all that that entails by giving civil service councils in the Arab states the necessary competence to exercise their authority, which, as a result, would lead to a better choice of leaders and officials.

4. To urge the Arab states to join the United Nations' Convention on Fighting Corruption, to put into effect the international strategy for fighting corruption, and to call for the issuance of an Arab declaration on fighting corruption within an Arab regional framework.
5. The importance of involving both the public and private sectors within the context of a commitment to the requisites of prudent administration, with a view to the role played by the private sector in the development process.
6. To put in place a prudent and accurate system for election campaign financing, as a way to guarantee the integrity of elections and subject them to control.
7. The importance of announcing the general budget of the State in a clear and transparent manner, in order to ensure its being under the watchful eye of public opinion.
8. To look into the matter of establishing a non-governmental Arab organization for fighting corruption, which would be responsible for coordinating and reinforcing the different efforts and initiatives in this regard.

On the Legal Front

1. The importance of criminalizing all the different forms of corruption, whether it takes place in the public and private sectors, including corruption that occurs in the context of international trade activities, and the importance of articulating a specific and precise conception of corruption.
2. The importance of developing the legal structure that would contribute to the improvement of people's living conditions, and social and health conditions, and the ensuing need for paying fair wages to the different workers in the public sector.
3. To put into effect a system of prosecuting crimes of corruption, in such a manner that would extend the period of prosecution, by having the statute of limitations (prescription) for crimes of corruption not commence until the date of leaving the position, and to consider the flight of a perpetrator of a crime of corruption a cause to suspend the statute of limitations (prescription) with regard to the crime.
4. To reinforce punitive policy with respect to crimes of corruption, in such a manner that would allow for making the distinction between general

crimes of corruption and major crimes of corruption, including those that cause damage to Arab funds and all funds deposited in banks.

5. To give attention to compliance with legal principles concerning the protection of constitutional rights and liberties with respect to criminalizing corruption and the punishment therefor, and in particular, maintaining the confidentiality of investigations.
6. To affirm the principle of non conflict-of-interest with respect to the competence and authority given to employees and political officials to enter into contracts.
7. To affirm the principle of judicial independence, and as a result thereof, to provide for constitutional and legal guarantees which protect this independence.
8. To affirm the freedom of national (non-governmental) associations, and to establish and develop the legal system that would guarantee them such freedom.
9. To study the phenomenon of inflated and conflicting legislations in the area of fighting corruption on the one hand; and why justice is slow on the other hand. This is for the purpose of preparing and developing the necessary legislative and judicial structure, which is indispensable in fighting corruption.

On the Administrative Front

1. To affirm objective standards concerning competence and aptitude with regard to the appointment and promotion of employees separate from any other considerations.
2. To be bound by standards of transparency and rules of competition in the area of purchases and public procurements.
3. To standardize the use of modern technology tools (Information Technology) in all types of administrative activities, as a safeguard for the principle of transparency and for consideration in carrying out administrative transactions for citizens.
4. The judicious use of capacities and public resources within the context of the philosophy of prudent spending.

5. The importance of passing laws that lay the foundation of freedom of access to, and circulation of, information, and developing the existing legal systems in that regard.

On the Social Front

1. The importance of developing and mobilizing the effort to fight corruption on the national, regional and global fronts. On the national front: first, to set up national committees to fight corruption; secondly, on the regional front, by means of strengthening cooperation with Arab organizations and associations which do work in this field, particularly the Arab Organization for Administrative Development; and lastly, on the global front, through supporting the different efforts and initiatives presented by the United Nations organization and other specialized international and regional institutions.
2. The importance of the call for improving economic conditions within the context of fighting poverty and unemployment, for the purpose of eliminating the factors that pave the way for corruption, as well as enhancing the role of economic and technical assistance that is necessary for modernizing the institution of justice and developing the performance of those organizations that work in the field of fighting corruption, through the sharing of knowledge and expertise and training personnel who work for those organizations.
3. To affirm the fight against the manifestations of corruption which have to do with people's livelihood, by approval of, and compliance with, the necessary standards and specifications for goods, products and services placed on the market, and to fight all manifestations of any violation thereof.
4. To spread and reinforce the people's awareness of the fight against corruption and the culture of accountability, by all means available, e.g. educational (in schools and universities) and media (from various forms of media).