

## **Statement on Anti-Corruption by Ambassadors and Heads of Intergovernmental Organizations in Yerevan**

Ambassadors representing OSCE Participating States and the heads of intergovernmental organizations participating in the International Working Group on Anti-Corruption<sup>1</sup> met on June 8, 2006 and exchanged information about Armenia's progress in implementation of the anti-corruption strategy and Action Plan for 2003-2006.

They noted that the coming months would be particularly important for Armenia's anti-corruption efforts in light of the fact that the Government's current anti-corruption strategy is scheduled to end in 2006 and a new strategy and action plan is being developed by the authorities.

Having received numerous indications from the Government of Armenia that advice from the international community would be welcomed the participants in the meeting indicated their willingness to provide appropriate assistance. The international community has many reasons to seek a constructive role in the area of anti-corruption. Corruption inhibits Armenian economic development. It has a negative impact on the relationship between the people and their government. In addition, since corrupt structures do not recognize national boundaries, efforts to reduce corruption in one country have a positive effect on the security and economic well being of the others.

One important step is for the Government to evaluate the impact of its present strategy, and this evaluation should involve civil society in Armenia. Such an evaluation was also recommended by the Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO), whose recommendations the Working Group fully endorses. Another useful step, also recommended by the GRECO study, would be to acquire a better understanding of the actual effects of corruption through the conduct of surveys and other forms of research.

Representatives of the international community present in Armenia recognize that the Government of Armenia has taken some initial steps to reduce corruption over the past two and half years and they welcome these steps. However, this task is far from complete and corruption in Armenia is still a very large concern. The preparation of an effective Anti-corruption strategy and attendant Action Plan that includes a focus on enforcement and prosecution will be critical for Armenia to make real progress in combating corruption.

Members of the international community are in the process of reviewing the new draft strategy and would welcome opportunities to present their views both collectively and individually. The Working Group hopes that the Armenian authorities will avail themselves of the assistance of the international community in evaluating the effectiveness of the strategy in light of world-wide experience. The IWG looks forward to having a dialogue with the Government of Armenia regarding the draft strategy. The IWG believes it is essential that the Government also involve civil society in the process of commenting and amending the draft strategy and action plan.

Once the strategy and action plan are developed, effective monitoring, incentives for improvement, and appropriate enforcement mechanisms, including disciplinary measures, will obviously be key to its successful implementation. The participants agreed that using the mechanism of the International Working Group, as well as bilateral contacts, they will continue building on the experience and commitment they have already made, helping with monitoring, and with analytical and operational tools in this area.

In concluding, the participants reiterated the importance of a collective commitment and actions to fight corruption, where the government, the private sector, the public, civil society, and the international community all have roles to play.

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<sup>1</sup> The International Working Group (IWG) on anti-corruption was established in 2001 to provide coordination of activities of international organizations and Embassies in Armenia that have been involved in anti-corruption assistance. The group meets regularly and is chaired by the OSCE Office in Yerevan.