

The Statement of Transparency International Anticorruption Center on International Anticorruption Day 2016

Today, on December 9, the International Anticorruption Day is marked for the 13th time in the whole world. For all the people and organizations who comprehend the extent of the evil, who are not indifferent, and who fight against corruption, this day has its special significance; it is also a good occasion to sum up the work done during the year and understand how to move forward.

Transparency International Anticorruption Center (TIAC) also assesses the achievements and failures in Armenia in the passing year in surmounting corruption, and plans its upcoming commitments in this regard.

Since 2008, TIAC has come up with statements on the occasion of that day—however, the state of corruption in Armenia remains the same every year. Moreover, the situation is concerning and has characteristics typical of systemic corruption. The organization's call to government institutions and the public to more actively fight against corruption remains unchanged. Thus, we face a situation of stagnation. On the one hand, no qualitative progress is made in fighting corruption as shown in surveys of the prestigious international organizations, and on the other hand, said surveys also indicate no serious decline in the progress made.

No positive development was made in 2016 either, therefore the details on the state of corruption in the country, its roots, and calls to eradicate corruption will repeat the same things said in the previous years. Pursuant to TI's Global Corruption Barometer (GCB) 2016 regional survey, the steps taken by the Armenian government to handle the fight against corruption are rated as "badly" by 65% of the respondents. Moreover, the respondents think that the most number of representatives involved in corruption are the governmental officials, President and his staff, and tax officials. However, similar to 2013, this time also the most alarming numbers for Armenia are those pertaining to people's willingness to get involved in the fight against corruption and their perception of their role in that fight. In particular, 63% of the Armenian respondents think that ordinary people do not make a difference in the fight against corruption. Finally, 67% of the Armenian respondents do not feel obliged to report corruption, even if he/she will witness the act of corruption (this is also the worst result among all surveyed countries of the Europe and Central Asia region). This speaks of apathy and indifference among the public.

Furthermore, the 4-day war in April made the devastating effect of corruption on the security system of Armenia still more evident. The events of the Patrol-Guard Service Regiment of RA Police, located in the Erebuni district of Yerevan, uncovered public distrust of and accumulated rage against the government. Nevertheless, the change of the government in September and new appointments, following it as well as the statements on assessments of the situation and the need to wage a systemic fight against corruption in various formats, speak to the fact that authorities perceive the seriousness of the situation of anticorruption struggle. Thus, public expectations regarding drastic, not cosmetic, changes have increased.

Against this backdrop, it is best to present the Armenian public on a conceptual level using the key ingredients of the best practices of how to make progress in the fight against corruption by mentioning that each country can make progress by the effective use of other ingredients. On March 10, 2016 Transparency International, the global movement against corruption—the official representative of which in Armenia is TIAC—posted these ingredients on its website, accessible at http://www.transparency.org/news/feature/how_to_stop_corruption_5_key_ingredients.

They are:

1. End impunity

Effective law enforcement is essential to ensure the corrupt are punished and break the cycle of impunity, or freedom from punishment or loss. Successful enforcement approaches are supported by a strong legal framework, law enforcement branches and an independent and effective court system.

2. Reform public administration and finance management

Reforms focusing on improving financial management and strengthening the role of auditing agencies have in many countries achieved greater impact than public sector reforms on curbing corruption.

3. Promote transparency and access to information

Countries successful at curbing corruption have a long tradition of government openness, freedom of the press, transparency and access to information. Access to information increases the responsiveness of government bodies, while simultaneously having a positive effect on the levels of public participation in a country.

4. Empower citizens to hold their government accountable

Strengthening citizens' demand for anti-corruption and empowering them to hold government accountable is a sustainable approach that helps to build mutual trust between citizens and government.

5. Close international loopholes

Without access to the international financial system, corrupt public officials throughout the world would not be able to launder and hide the proceeds of looted state assets. Major financial centers urgently need to put in place ways to stop their banks and cooperating offshore financial centers from absorbing illicit flows of money.

In view of the external and internal challenges the country faces, we call on the newly appointed government of the country to display political will and begin to implement the aforementioned elements. At the same time we call on the public to understand that the authorities will not take up any serious qualitative changes without their participation and oversight and to be actively involved in social political processes.