

## **Transparency International Anti-Corruption Center Statement on the Occasion of the International Anti-Corruption Day**

Yerevan, December 9, 2013 - Ten years ago on December 9, 2003 a number of countries signed the UN Convention against Corruption at a high-level conference organized specially for that purpose in the Mexican city of Merida. The Convention was adopted by the UN General Assembly on October 31 of the same year and entered into force in December 2005. On the occasion of the adoption of the Convention, UN declared December 9 as the International Anti-Corruption Day.

The greatest achievement of the past decade perhaps is the fact that if before people were talking about the problem of corruption in whisper and the overwhelming majority of the public had only very vague understanding about that evil and its consequences, now this problem is in the focus of attention of all. The mankind now clearly perceive that corruption is one of the main obstacles of the economic development. Its high levels foster poverty, the embezzlement of state funds deprives citizens from getting high quality of education and health services. Finally, the state capture by oligarchic clans and political corruption, especially in electoral processes, deprive people's confidence in their future and by eroding democratic institutions weaken the state, threatening with the very loss of statehood.

With an interesting coincidence, 10 years ago, almost on the same days (on December 20) the first Anti-Corruption Strategy of Armenia with its Action Plan entered into effect. Six years later, on the same days the new, second, national anti-corruption strategy with its action plan entered into effect. Hence, a natural query emerges: what has been changed during those years, what achievements and losses we had and where we are going.

As everywhere in the world, in Armenia public now is much better aware of the phenomenon of corruption, than it was 10 years ago. During the implementation of two anti-corruption action plans (in 2003-2007 and 2009-2012) a number of laws and other legal acts were passed, which contain strong anti-corruption preventive potential. Citizens are more active in exercising their right for information. Different civic initiatives and movements in the country more and more frequently reveal the existence of corruption component in the problems they voice. Due to the greater transparency in declaring assets and property, the public more frequently raise the issue of large-size wealth acquired by a number of high-ranking officials. Finally, in the past few years we witnessed arrests of several high-ranking officials on corruption charges.

However, unfortunately the list of failures and untapped possibilities is much greater. The Transparency International's (TI) Corruption Perception Index (CPI) score for Armenia still remains low. This year it was equal to 36 and Armenia shared 94-101th places in the CPI 2013 ranking table, which includes 177 countries and territories. And though this score is the highest among the Commonwealth of the Independent States (CIS) countries, when comparing it with the CPI scores of EU member states it is

even lower than that of Greece (40), which is the lowest score among EU states. In this context, it is highly unlikely that by preferring Eurasian integration to European integration, Armenia will have serious achievements in overcoming corruption.

Armenia is still behind its neighbor Georgia (CPI 2013 score – 49, sharing 55-56th places in ranking table), whereas 10 years ago in 2003 it was much ahead of Georgia. With its 3.0 CPI score Armenia at that time was sharing 78-82nd places among 133 countries included in the ranking table, and Georgia with 1.8 CPI score was sharing 124-128th places. It should also be mentioned that in 2003-2011 the dynamics of Armenia's CPI score revealed a trend to decrease, fluctuating around 3.0 in 2003-2007 and then slowly decreasing since 2008 getting to its minimal value of 2.6 in 2010-2011.

The findings of TI's another survey, Global Corruption Barometer (GCB), revealed that the perceptions and opinions of ordinary citizens in Armenia about corruption also did not substantially change compared with the previous years. According to 43% of respondents the level of corruption in Armenia increased in the past 2 years, whereas only 19% think that it was decreased. The efforts of the government in curbing corruption were assessed as inefficient by 53% of the respondents and only 21% assessed them as efficient. The courts are perceived as corrupt or extremely corrupt by 69% of Armenian respondents and 66% of them considers police as such. However, the most alarming is the fact that, according to GCB findings, Armenian citizens do not wish to get involved in the fight against corruption or have very little belief that the individual matters in that fight. By these indicators Armenia is among the worst from 107 countries involved in GCB survey. In particular, only 43% of respondents is willing to get involved in some ways in the fight against corruption, which is the worst result among all 107 countries. The studies of other international organizations also did not record serious progress in the fight against corruption in Armenia.

Summarizing the mentioned above considerations, it could be asserted that the past decade did not become a decade of serious achievements for Armenia and no serious positive qualitative changes took place in reducing corruption. This means that the root causes of corruption, which Transparency International Anti-Corruption Center was constantly mentioning in its statements are still not overcome, the government still lacks political will to fight corruption, and the indifference and tolerance of the society towards corruption reached catastrophic scales. In order to get out from this situation, a radical change of the existing political and economic systems is required, which could only be achieved through active struggle of the society.