

South Caucasus must face up to anti-corruption challenge

New reports show Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia need to strengthen governance

Brussels, 6 May, 2010 –Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia must adopt stronger anti-corruption legislation and fully implement it in order to ensure progress is made in fighting the problem, according to three new assessment reports released today by Transparency International (TI), the global anti-corruption organisation.

The reports, which were compiled by TI chapters in each country, focus on reforms in the judiciary and in the public sector. They also assess whether each country is complying with international anti-corruption conventions and implementing recommendations made by the [Group of States against Corruption \(GRECO\)](#), the Council of Europe body that monitors anti-corruption efforts.

The TI reports are issued ahead of the European Commission's Action Plan annual reviews for the three countries, slated for 11 May.

"The European Neighbourhood Policy provides guidelines for advancing anti-corruption, but to ensure countries live up to their commitments requires independent civil society monitoring," said Miklos Marschall, Regional Director Europe and Central Asia for TI. "These reports and future reviews will provide ongoing oversight to hold governments to account and help ease the corruption burden on citizens."

Each *European Neighbourhood Policy: monitoring anti-corruption* report evaluates whether the countries are delivering on commitments made in their 2006 Action Plans signed as part of the European Union's European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The policy is designed to strengthen a shared commitment to common values, including good governance and sustainable practices guaranteeing the rule of law, between the European Union and its neighbouring countries by land and sea.

The TI reports offer a solid, indicator-based framework for benchmarking progress in the ENP area related to anti-corruption policies and practices. TI's approach, which is more detailed and critical than the EC's own review mechanism, highlights the importance of independent input in the long-term move towards greater transparency and accountability in government.

Observations and recommendations highlighted in the reports include:

Armenia: Although Armenia has increased promotion of overall better governance standards, transparency and independence in the judiciary are limited; the sector is perceived as the country's most corrupt. Civil service reforms are progressing but there is a lack of transparency, accountability and integrity. Armenia has also failed to implement fully the recommendations made by the GRECO.

Azerbaijan: The report notes that despite well-crafted legislation in both the judiciary and public sector, the laws are not being implemented. The same is true for the country's anti-corruption legislation: the laws meet international standards, but now need to be used. Azerbaijan has made progress implementing the GRECO recommendations mainly on legislative initiatives, enhancement of cooperation between various agencies, and introducing training programs.

Georgia: The report notes significant progress in reform legislation, particularly in compliance with GRECO recommendations and in terms of judicial reorganisation, but suggests a need for greater independence of the judiciary, which is seen to be influenced by the government. Public sector anti-corruption reforms vary from department to department signalling a need for a cohesive, national reform strategy.

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Transparency International is the civil society organisation leading the fight against corruption

Note to editors: The European Neighbourhood Policy was developed in 2004 and now covers 16 countries that surround the EU, 13 of which have Action Plans in place. (Russia is not part of ENP; it has a strategic partnership with the EU). GRECO, established in 1999 under the Council of Europe, currently has 46 European member states and the United States.

TI will publish all three reports in their respective national languages by the end of May 2010. English versions can be downloaded at www.transparency.org

Interviews can be arranged in Armenian, Azerbaijani, English, Georgian, German and Russian.

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