

REGIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION INITIATIVE

21st STEERING GROUP MEETING



Summary, Conclusions and Decisions

*Chisinau, Moldova
September 29, 2015*

21st Regional Anti-corruption Initiative (RAI) Steering Group (SG) Meeting took place in Chisinau, Republic of Moldova, on September 29, 2015. It was organized by RAI Secretariat.

Participants

21st RAI Steering Group Meeting was chaired by the RAI Chairperson Mr. Davor Dubravica. It was attended by 9 member states' representatives:

- **Albania** – Ms. Erisa Proko – Acting Chief of Cabinet, Ministry of State on Local Issues;
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina** – Mr. Tomislav Curic – Expert Adviser, Department for Combating Organized Crime and Corruption, Ministry of Security (without right to participate in the agenda item 5 - *Selection of Anti-corruption expert*, in accordance with Institutional Mechanism of RAI and Decision at the 18th Steering Group Meeting)*
- **Bulgaria** – Mr. Rosen Kukushev – Expert in EU and International Cooperation Directorate, Ministry of Interior;
- **Croatia** – Ms. Maja Baricevic (via video link) – Head of Anti-corruption Sector, Ministry of Justice;
- **Macedonia** – Ms. Elena Dimovska – Associate, Unit for Coordination of Anti-corruption Activities, Ministry of Justice;
- **Moldova** – Mr. Valeriu Cupcea – Head of Anti-corruption Policies and Programmes Division, National Anti-Corruption Center;
- **Montenegro** – Ms. Grozdana Lakovic – Advisor, Directorate for Anti-corruption Initiative (DACI);
- **Romania** – Mr. Cornel-Virgiliu Calinescu – Head of National Office for Crime Prevention and Asset Recovery, Ministry of Justice;
- **Serbia** – Mr. Radomir Ilic – State Secretary, Ministry of Justice.

The Central Anti-corruption Bureau of Poland, as an observer to RAI, was represented by Mr. Paweł Rutkowski, Expert Coordinator for International Cooperation.

RAI Secretariat was represented by:

- Mr. Radu Cotici – Head of Secretariat;
- Ms. Aida Bulbul – Finance and Administrative Officer;
- Ms. Jasna Panjeta – Program and Outreach Officer;

The meeting was also attended by Mr. Pedro Gomes Pereira, Senior Specialist from Basel Institute for Governance, Switzerland, at the invitation of the Head of Secretariat.

* At the 18th Steering Group Meeting in Munich, it was decided that a Senior Representative who is also a candidate for the position at the RAI Secretariat cannot participate/vote in the selection process.

Summary of Discussions

21st RAI SG Meeting was opened by Chairperson Mr. Davor Dubravica who welcomed the participants and presented the agenda items. The Steering Group adopted the agenda.

Exchange of views with Basel Institute for Governance was the first agenda item. Mr. Pedro Gomes Pereira, Senior Specialist from Basel Institute on Governance took the floor and presented the work of the Institute. Mr. Pereira thanked the SG for the opportunity to present the work of the Institute.

Basel Institute is an organisation affiliated to Basel University. It is mainly funded by DFID, Liechtenstein and Swiss Government. There are several fields of interest, key ones being money laundering, asset recovery, public governance and corporate governance. The International Centre for Asset Recovery of the Institute provides wide range of technical assistance to governments on variety of anti-corruption issues. Technical assistance the Institute provides comprises of customized trainings, direct case work, legal and policy analysis, the development of integrated IT tools etc. Until the day, Institute worked in the region with Romania and Moldova in providing technical assistance with policy advice and laws assessment. Institute is also involved in corruption cases in some 12 countries.

Country representatives were interested in how to establish cooperation with the Institute. Mr. Pereira highlighted that there are different avenues that can be explored such as individual approach, bids for projects, but sometimes communication is donor driven. Mr. Pereira ended his presentation by expressing readiness to start and deepen the cooperation with the countries from the region and hope that there will be opportunities to cooperate and work together in the future.

Next item on the agenda was the Evaluation Report on Work Plan implementation for 2014 – 2015.

Head of Secretariat elaborated the Evaluation Report. Its purpose was to share the information with partners and donors, as well as member countries. Head of Secretariat elaborated on the next agenda item (Work Plan 2016 – 2017) simultaneously since the two documents are strongly connected.

One of the questions previously raised via email was about the reason behind not representing national progress reports in the Evaluation Report. Head of the Secretariat explained that not all countries supplied the requested information and partial representation could be misinterpreted as if the countries that supplied information made progress, while those whose information is missing made no progress.

Head of Secretariat raised question of national inputs - should the inputs be part of the report or not. Romania representative stated that RAI is not a monitoring body and that individual countries can provide the information to the Secretariat to upload the information on its web-page. Further on, it was stated that the evaluation report referred to lack of expertise and lack of resources in several locations; on the other hand, the new Work

Plan reflects the abilities correctly. The report needs to be adjusted not to sound overly critical.

Montenegro representative proposed to include the information from national progress reports in the RAI Evaluation Report because it would show how regional level actions translate into national level actions, whilst Macedonia agreed with the position of Romania. The final decision was that Secretariat would upload the submitted national progress reports on the web-page as a supplement to the RAI Evaluation Report.

Macedonia also raised a question regarding the Objective 5 and proposed to delete the sentence about capacity building not being the objective. Its representative also mentioned that this objective is a key measure foreseen by the South East Europe 2020 Strategy.

Head of Secretariat elaborated the reasons for excluding the capacity building as a single objective. Namely, as a result of strategic analysis, Secretariat found that Capacity Building should rather be seen as a part of mission of RAI and not as a specific objective and all proposed objectives were to lead to capacity building. Romania stated that Secretariat could do more if there were more resources and that smart prioritizing is essential. Following this exchange of views it was determined that the capacity building would remain as a part of the mission of RAI.

As for the South East Europe 2020 Strategy, all Work Plan objectives are covered by it. The other key measures under SEE 2020 Strategy cannot be included in the RAI Work Plan as there are no sufficient resources available for their achievement. Secretariat will continue its collaboration with the Regional Cooperation Council in order to implement the SEE 2020 Strategy.

Comments regarding Evaluation Report were noted and were addressed in the final paper.

The next Agenda item was the Work Plan for 2016-2017. Head of Secretariat informed the participants that the Work Plan is a reflection of the presented Evaluation Report, as well as of the three year Regional Programme on Building Capacities of Anti-corruption Agencies. Secretariat presented the process of developing the Regional Programme and the Programme itself. More information on the paper had to be shared with the Senior Representatives.

Head of Secretariat stressed that the team focused on three objectives that were compatible with the Programme, and that the Secretariat would also continue working on other objectives, but to a different extent. Secretariat also contemplated the idea of having another Anti-corruption Expert. Head of Secretariat proceeded by stating that there were possibilities to do more, but the team did not have enough internal capacities.

Romania proposed to look into secondment as an option for expanding the team. Legal status could be developed through the existing provisions of the Institutional Mechanism. Romania also touched upon communication and fundraising and concluded that both of these segments need to be better reflected in the Evaluation report and Work

Plan. Mr. Calinescu also suggested that financial indicators, such as contributions from other donor/partner organizations, as well as RAI funds utilized in implementation of RAI Programmatic activities should be reflected in the Evaluation Report. Secretariat took the comments of Romania on board.

Head of Secretariat proceeded with elaborating the objectives of the Work Plan.

Macedonia welcomed the first and the second objectives. Regarding the third objective Macedonia was not sure what data would be addressed and what “exchange” really meant. Mr. Calinescu recalled the Conference of the Justice and Home Affairs Ministers organized under Romanian Chairmanship-in-office of the South East Europe Cooperation Process (SEECF), where the need of exchanging operational data was raised and the idea of having a regional mechanism in place was endorsed. It was also mentioned that the exchange could be in respect of best practices, resources etc.

Head of Secretariat responded that the oversight bodies should decide what data needs to be exchanged and that was why RAI Secretariat planned to organize, in cooperation with the Regional Cooperation Council, an integrity experts meeting.

Chairperson fully supported the cooperation of oversight bodies; however reestablishing of the integrity experts network was not acceptable, as network’s meetings were organized in the past without any knowledge of the Steering Group. The Statute and other related documents were never adopted by the countries’ representatives. It was agreed that RAI should still make use of existing networks, and that the integrity experts’ network will serve as an informal network to further develop the regional cooperation on asset disclosure and conflict of interest.

Albania representative took the floor and welcomed the process of prioritization of the objectives.. Albania is especially interested in taking forward the corruption proofing of legislation, as the country has made steps in the direction of introducing corruption proofing of legislation and is interested to further develop this practice. Another important objective for Albania is Public awareness on Whistleblowing. Albania was working on new legislation related to protection of whistleblowers. In the field of data exchange, Albania made significant progress that the country could build on.

Head of Secretariat stated that all activities under the Work Plan 2016 – 2017 would be carried out with participation of all members. This particular statement was linked to the fact that the Donor would not fund all countries and RAI would cover the cost for the countries that were not eligible from its own budget.

Chairperson invited the representative of Poland to share their views on the Work Plan and how could they get involved. Mr. Rutkowski stated that the Central Anti-corruption Bureau (CAB) was looking at options for cooperation and involvement in the work of RAI. CAB has a team of experts, professionals that can be utilized for sharing knowledge, based on identified needs. Mr. Rutkowski pointed out that if Secretariat identifies gaps in the implementation of the Work Plan, CAB would try to assist. On

December 9th, 2015, CAB will organize an International Conference and RAI will be invited to participate.

According to the approved agenda, Finance and Administration Officer presented the Budget Proposal for 2016. Budget is lower than the one for 2015 and it reflects the actual budget available as a sum of previous savings and future countries' contributions. Having some clarification questions answered, Budget for 2016 was adopted.

Chairperson opened the afternoon session with the topic of selection of the new Anti-corruption Expert at the Secretariat. The shortlisted candidates were interviewed and following three rounds of voting Mr. Tomislav Curic was selected as the new Anti-corruption Expert at the RAI Secretariat.

As other business, two more items were discussed by the SG.

First was the issue of annual country contributions. Countries were urged to honor their commitments. Macedonia promised that an effort to have its contributions paid would be made. In the same line, countries were informed about the issue with the bank charges in case of contributions. Some countries do not cover the bank charges and the amount received by RAI is less than the one foreseen by the MoU. Countries agreed to take actions in this regard and deliver the minimum amount as prescribed.

Second raised item was the need of ratification of the MoU by Serbia. Serbia promised to address this matter shortly.

Conclusions and Decisions

The RAI Steering Group:

- Adopted the Evaluation Report on Implementation of the Work Plan for 2014 – 2015;
- Adopted the Work Plan for 2016-2017;
- Adopted the Budget for 2016;
- Selected Mr. Tomislav Curic for the position of Anti-corruption Expert in RAI Secretariat;
- Decided to have the contributions to RAI delivered in the minimum amount prescribed by the Memorandum of Understanding concerning Cooperation within RAI.