



New global initiative tests access to information on anti corruption efforts

Berlin, Dhaka, 3 May 2010 - A new global access to information initiative, called ***Tell us what you've done***, launched today to mark World Press Freedom Day, will test how easy, or not, it is to obtain information from governments on their anti-corruption efforts.

Initiated by Transparency International (TI) and Access Info Europe, it is an attempt to verify whether governments are complying with the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and other anti-corruption conventions. Simultaneous information requests will be submitted in 27 countries today by TI chapters and members of the Freedom of Information Advocates Network and the UNCAC Coalition.

The aim is to see how transparent governments are about their anti-corruption efforts under the anti-corruption conventions they have signed on to. Results will be presented in 2011 at the 4th UNCAC Conference of States Parties in Morocco.

The enactment of the Right to Information Act by the Government of Bangladesh is a significant step in implementing the provisions of the UNCAC to which Bangladesh is a State Party. As one of the participating organizations in this new initiative Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has submitted a request to the Government to inform what further they have done to comply with the commitments made under the Convention. Information has been sought on five specific areas: self-assessment of the progress made, public sector integrity, procurement, private sector integrity and actions for damages caused by corruption.

"We commend the Government for adopting the Right to Information Act in the very first session of the 9th Parliament, which can prove to be crucial in strengthening the capacity to control corruption in the country. We hope now that by positively responding to the request the Government will once again demonstrate the capacity to deliver on the commitment to promote people's right to information," said Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, Executive Director of TIB.

Other Governments who have received the same request as of April 30, 2010 are: Argentina, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Chile, Dominican Republic, Egypt, France, Hungary, Ghana, Georgia, Germany, Guatemala, Israel, Italy, Liberia, Montenegro, Netherlands, Nicaragua,

Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Spain, Trinidad & Tobago, United Kingdom and Venezuela. More organizations are expected to join.

“Access to information is at the heart of the anti-corruption agenda. The number of cases where power is abused for private gain uncovered by enterprising journalists, shows that access to public information is vital,” said Gillian Dell, coordinator for the initiative at TI.

Established by the UN in 1993, World Press Freedom Day 2010 is dedicated to the “Right to Know” – the right of all citizens to have access to information held by public entities. Although there has been a surge in freedom of information legislation, the UN notes that it is often complicated to use, prejudices minorities and not enforced.

“The right to know what the government knows is essential for journalists and civil society watchdogs to identify corruption and hold public officials accountable,” said Helen Darbshire, Executive Director of Access Info Europe.

The United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) is the most comprehensive global legal framework for combating corruption. It is a binding agreement ratified by 143 states on standards and requirements for preventing, detecting, investigating and sanctioning corruption. Over 80 countries worldwide have access to information legislation, a provision recommended by UNCAC, although effective implementation varies from country to country. Full list of countries and organizations available at www.uncaccoalition.org

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