



Press Release

TIB welcomes SAARC recognition of corruption as a serious issue

Dhaka, 8 April, 2007. Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) welcomes the highest level recognition given to the importance of fighting corruption by the fourteenth Summit of SAARC held in New Delhi on April 3-4, 2007.

TIB has been encouraged that alongside other key challenges like poverty, disease, natural disasters and terrorism, for the first time the “Heads of State or Government of South Asia recognized that corruption was an issue of serious concern and agreed to exchange information on national experience in combating corruption to effectively address this problem” (para 27 of the Declaration).

“We understand that this has happened at the initiative of the Bangladesh delegation, and we commend them, especially in view of the strategic thrust of the Summit on regional connectivity”, said Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, Executive Director of TIB. Because of the growing importance of cross-border dimension of corruption international cooperation has become indispensable for fighting it, he said.

Corruption being the main predicament against development and poverty reduction, TIB urges upon the Government to explore, jointly with other SAARC Governments, specific follow-up measures for strengthening cooperation in the field of anti-corruption. These may include mutual assistance in prevention, repatriation of laundered money, investigation, and prosecution of offenders.

Cooperation can be sought for specific forms of mutual legal assistance in gathering and transferring evidences for judicial use, and to facilitate extradition of offenders. Such cooperation may be explored bilaterally as well as regionally.

SAARC should now seek membership of the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) under its article 67.2. The UNCAC includes ground-breaking mechanisms to facilitate recovery of stolen assets including measures for tracing, freezing, seizure and confiscation of the proceeds of corruption.

Since work has already begun on a draft SAARC Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, TIB demands inclusion in it specific provisions against corruption. This can pave the way to a SAARC Regional Convention against Corruption in line with UNCAC and similar regional anti-corruption conventions already adopted in other regions.

Central American states have recently declared themselves as a corruption-free zone; South Asia can also show the courage and commitment to adopt a time-line in the same direction, TIB urged.
