

Strengthening Regional Action against Corruption

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A. Background

1. This document relates to the African Region and the three sub-regions West Africa, East Africa and Southern Africa, as well as any other sub-region that might be identified.
2. Some of the governments, civil society organisations and international organisations in the Africa region have made important contributions towards combating corruption. However, there remains an overwhelming need in the region for more effective steps to be taken. Governments, civil society organisations, and international organisations each have crucial roles to play in achieving this objective. The roles that they play will differ and they each have their distinct responsibilities.
3.
 - (a) National governments have the overall responsibility and duty to combat corruption within their borders, and to support and co-operate in regional and sub-regional anti-corruption initiatives.
 - (b) Civil society organisations (which, for the purpose of this document, include international NGOs) have the responsibility to provide a critical and independent voice that:
 - i. acts in the public interest
 - ii. identifies, researches, and highlights corruption, its nature and its impact
 - iii. makes durable progress toward addressing corruption independently or in strategic cooperation with governments, international organizations and other actors
 - iv. monitors government actions and responses to corruption including the implementation of national, sub-regional and regional anti-corruption instruments.
 - (c) International organisations, such as developmental or donor organisations, have the mandate to complement and assist local, national, and regional anti-corruption role-players with their expertise and resources so as to achieve shared objectives.
4. In order to achieve the shared objective of more effective action against corruption, it is necessary that governments, civil society and international organisations, improve communication and interaction with each other without compromising on their distinct responsibilities and roles.

5. For civil society organisations that operate in West, East and Southern Africa to interact meaningfully with governments and international organisations, they need to develop shared objectives amongst themselves and improve communication and co-ordination within their ranks.
6. Therefore, civil society organisations will have to put their own heads together and consider how to improve communication and links with each other, what their broad priorities, strategic objectives and action plans should be, and how best to interact and co-operate with governments and international organisations, so as to fight corruption more effectively.

B. Enhancing the role of civil society organisations

1. The Africa Regional workshop provides a unique opportunity for civil society organisations from across Africa to take the first modest step towards enhancing their role in their sub-regions and on the continent as a whole.
2. This first step should be modest, realistic, and achievable, and should carry as much support as possible without insisting on unanimity.
3. It should pave the way for civil society organisations to get together within their countries and sub-regions in order to collaborate and build effective coalitions to develop sub-regional strategies and action plans that can in time converge into implementable and effective regional strategies and action plans.
4. The first step should preferably be similar for each of the three sub-regions. This will facilitate co-ordination between the sub-regions from the start. The different conditions that prevail in the three sub-regions can be accommodated in subsequent steps.
5. The fact that most civil society organisations in Africa suffer from severe resource constraints makes it important to take this first and subsequent steps with the active support and involvement of international organisations.

C. Proposal for the way forward

Proposed substantive decisions to be taken at the workshop:

Participants should attempt to reach broad agreement on the following:

1. that within each sub-region a sub-regional consultative meeting will take place at which civil society organisations, with the assistance of international organisations and other relevant role players, formulate achievable and effective

- strategies and action plans for their sub-region and identify their specific role and the action steps that they will take.
2. that international organisations concerned be requested to keep the existing iacc-network in place until sub-regional networks have been established or other options have been agreed upon.
 3. that international organisations be requested to assist with resources and expertise.

Proposed process decisions to be taken at the workshop:

4. The workshop should first seek broad agreement on points 1, 2, and 3 above before pursuing the points below.
5. Participants from each region to meet separately for 15 minutes:
 - (a) to identify three persons/organisations from civil society and/or international organisations that are active within their sub-region who will constitute the Sub-regional Co-ordinating Team that will have the responsibility to organise the sub-regional consultative meeting within six months and that will interact with international organisations and seek financial and other assistance to make the consultative meeting possible;
 - (b) to mandate the Sub-regional Co-ordinating Team to identify its own convenor on the understanding that this will be a rotating position amongst the members of the Team on an annual basis.
 - (c) to identify one person from their sub-region who will serve as a member of the Regional Co-ordination Team for one year for the purpose of facilitating communication and co-ordination within and between the sub-regions via the iacc network;
6. The International organisations present to identify two representatives who will form part of the Regional Co-ordinating Team.
7. The workshop to mandate the five persons that make up the Regional Co-ordination Team:
 - (a) to identify the convenor of the Regional Co-ordination Team from within their ranks on the understanding that this will be a rotating position amongst the members of the Team on an annual basis.
 - (b) to interact with the organisers of already planned regional or sub-regional meetings such as the African Governance Forum (March 2002), Regional Seminar in Gaborone (October 2001) and other upcoming anti-corruption meetings, in order to explore the possibility of using those meetings to

prepare for the sub-regional consultative meeting or to convert an already planned meeting into a sub-regional consultative meeting.

- (b) to prepare the agenda for their consultative meeting in consultation with the Regional Co-ordination Team and to ensure that the agenda amongst others, provides for a critical stocktaking of failures and successes in the sub-region and for discussions that lead to solutions at national, sub-regional, and regional levels.
- (c) to ensure that the consultative meetings are as inclusive of civil society organisations that are involved in anti-corruption work within the sub-region as possible.
- (d) to provide a report to each sub-regional consultative meeting on steps taken to achieve the objectives set out in this document.

D. Proposed Future tasks

1. The sub-regional consultative meetings should, amongst others,
 - (a) consider whether, for the purpose of facilitating communication and co-ordination, the present iacc network should be retained, and if not what the alternative should be.
 - (b) consider adopting strategies and action plans for their sub-region that will enable civil society organizations and/or coalitions to play a more active role in the design, implementation, oversight and monitoring of national/sub-regional/ regional/international anti-corruption conventions and mechanisms.
 - (c) consider how best some of the elements of sub-regional initiatives could be made to converge into a regional strategy and action plan for the African region as a whole.
 - (d) Consider such other action steps and issues that may be placed on the agenda or proposed by participants.

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