Kuala Lumpur Statement on Anti-Corruption Strategies

Kuala Lumpur, 21-22 October 2013

On 21-22 October 2013, high level representatives of anti-corruption authorities as well as national planning authorities from the South, East and Southeast Asia and anti-corruption experts from around the world gathered in Kuala Lumpur at the invitation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in partnership with the Government of Malaysia, to discuss a set of Guidelines for Anti-Corruption Strategies, that could instruct the process of developing, designing and implementing sustainable anti-corruption strategies.

The participants included several officials of anti-corruption authorities, other anti-corruption practitioners, and representatives from national planning authorities, and executive, legislative and judiciary branches. Representatives of UNDP, UNODC, the World Bank, the ADB/OECD Anti-Corruption Initiative for Asia and the Pacific, Transparency International and U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre also took part in the proceedings.

The participants reviewed and discussed country experiences from around the world, with a particular focus on South, East and Southeast Asia, relating to the process of developing anti-corruption strategies, the design and content of anti-corruption strategies and the monitoring and evaluation of anti-corruption strategies.

Recalling the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC),[1] which in its Articles 5 and 6 obliges States Parties, in accordance with the fundamental principles of their legal systems, to develop and implement or maintain effective, coordinated anti-corruption policies that promote the participation of society and reflect the principles of the rule of law, proper management of public affairs and public property, integrity, transparency and accountability,

Recognizing that anti-corruption strategies can provide a comprehensive policy framework for actions to be taken by States in combating and preventing corruption, a useful tool for mobilising and coordinating efforts and resources by governments and other stakeholders, for policy development and implementation, and for ensuring monitoring of policy implementation,

Considering that a number of countries in South, East and Southeast Asia have implemented anti-corruption strategies or are in the process of drafting new strategies and revising old ones,

Recognizing that there are a large variety of models and approaches to the development of anti-corruption policies and strategies and common lessons to be learned from experiences in developing these strategies in the region,

The participants:

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[1] General Assembly resolution 58/4, annex.

1. *Recommend* the following:

Anti-Corruption Strategy Development Process

- **POLITICAL, SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL CONTEXT:** States must take into account their particular political, social, economic and cultural context when designing anti-corruption strategies.

- **POLITICAL WILL:** Committed political leadership, ideally from the highest levels of the State, and broader political support to steer the overall process and mobilise necessary resources, is a necessary condition of an effective anti-corruption strategy development process.

- **STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT (INCLUSIVE PROCESS) AND OWNERSHIP:** Broad engagement of stakeholders builds ownership and helps to ensure acceptability and effectiveness of strategies adopted. State institutions (executive, legislative and judiciary) at national and sub-national levels, civil society organizations, private sector, media, professional societies, trade and industry associations and labor unions, academic institutions, youth and cultural organizations, can serve as important allies and partners in the development of anti-corruption strategies and can reduce the vulnerability of the reform efforts to changes in political leadership.

- **CLEAR AND TRANSPARENT PROCESS:** The process of developing strategies needs to be clear and transparent from the outset.

- **COMMON VISION**: A consensus should be built around a common vision and intended objectives of strategies.

- **STRENGTHENING COORDINATION***:* Anti-corruption strategies should focus on enhancing inter- and intra-agency coordination during the development process as well as implementation and monitoring phases.

- **SOUND KNOWLEDGE BASE:** Development, implementation and monitoring of strategies should be informed by sound diagnostics, needs and evidence of risk and vulnerability areas and gaps in anti-corruption policies and institutions.

- **SUSTAINABILITY AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE PROCESS**: Development of strategies should be institutionalized to ensure continued relevance and timely modification of the anti-corruption strategies.

- **ALLOCATING AND MOBILISING RESOURCES**: Necessary resources should be mobilised at the time of development of strategies to ensure effective implementation and monitoring of strategies.

- **PUBLIC COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT**: Anti-Corruption and National Planning Authorities shall communicate and engage with the public regularly in order to ensure public confidence and channel feedback for the effective implementation of anti-corruption strategies.

Anti-Corruption Design & Content

- **RATIONALE CORE OBJECTIVES AND REALISTIC GOALS:** Core objectives and goals, and rationale for interventions should be defined based on national priorities, and identified gaps and needs.

- **NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY/PRIORITIES AND BROADER CONTEXT:** Anti-corruption strategies should be incorporated within broader national development initiatives currently in focus and should take into account international/regional obligations.

- **INTEGRATION WITH OTHER RELEVANT NATIONAL PROGRAMMES/REFORM AGENDAS:** Anti-corruption strategies should take into account and establish links with other relevant national strategies (e.g., judicial sector, public administration reform, open government, etc.) and should seek to form synergies with other agencies.

- **COMPREHENSIVE AND COORDINATED APPROACH:** Anti-corruption strategies should be organized under an overarching/holistic approach while taking into account sector specific needs.

- **CLEAR AND UNDERSTANDABLE DOCUMENT:** Strategies have to be clear, concise and easily understood.

- **STRUCTURE AND DESIGN:** While there is no simple formula for the proper design, content or implementation of anti-corruption strategies, UNCAC can be used as a framework for anti-corruption strategies, taking into account relevant data, particular needs, and national capacities.

- **PRIORITIZATION AND SEQUENCING:** Strategies need to be realistic on what is achievable in the short, medium and long term, set clear priorities and sequence actions based on priorities. Strategies could be designed with the aim of enhancing the credibility of leadership and ensuring quick tangible results to strengthen the national commitment to reform.

- **IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISM:** It is imperative that strategies provide for an implementation mechanism in the form of an action plan with clearly identified responsibilities and timelines for implementation with focus on results. The agency designated to coordinate implementation of strategies should be within high level government agencies.

- **SUB-NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION:** Where applicable, particular attention should be paid to strategies' implementation at sub-national and local levels.

- **INSTITUTIONAL & FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY (NEEDS & CAPACITIES):** Strategies should provide for their institutional and financial sustainability and should take into account capacity for implementation.

Anti-Corruption Strategy Monitoring & Evaluation

- **INTEGRAL PART OF STRATEGY DESIGN:** Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are an integral part of national anti-corruption strategies. Elements of evaluation and data collection systems should be built into strategies from the design phase.

- **INDICATORS WITH CLEAR BASELINES AND TARGETS:** Measurable indicators, with established baselines and tracking mechanisms, are needed to determine whether targets are being achieved.

- **NEED FOR DATA GENERATION TOOLS**: Effective monitoring and evaluation requires reliable data that is generated based on multiple sources.

- **REGULAR REPORTING:** Regular monitoring and reporting allows authorities to gauge progress in implementation and achieving results in curbing corruption.

- **EVALUATION V. PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT:** It is important to distinguish between programme management monitoring (activities/outputs) as opposed to evaluation (outcomes/impact) and between implementation responsibilities as opposed to monitoring and oversight responsibilities.

- **RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY:** National body/bodies should be entrusted with the responsibility for monitoring, implementation and regular reporting and be provided with sustainable institutional and financial support. An independent evaluation should ensure accurate monitoring and reporting at regular intervals.

2. *Encourage* Anti-Corruption and National Planning Authorities to promote these recommendations within their respective agencies, countries and regional/international networks in a time-bound manner.

3. *Call upon* Anti-Corruption and National Planning Authorities to promote these recommendations in order to assist members of the executive and the legislature and the judiciary, and the public in general, to better understand and support anti-corruption strategies in their development, design, and implementation and monitoring.

4. *Welcome* the commitment of the host country to raise these recommendations at the 5th Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the UNCAC and *encourage* other participating countries to support this initiative.

5. *Express* appreciation and gratitude to the Government of Malaysia for hosting the Asia Regional Meeting on Anti-Corruption Strategies organized by UNDP and UNODC to reflect on and promote these recommendations for anti-corruption strategies.