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Nigeria's Anti-graft War Weak, Says TI

By Samuel Famakinwa, 04.19.2007

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Transparency International (TI), the global civil society organisation leading the fight against corruption across the world, has listed Nigeria and eight other African countries among states that are yet to fully implement international anti-corruption conventions. According to a detailed country studies issued yesterday in Berlin, Germany by TI, Algeria, Burundi, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Togo, and Uganda have legal gaps with regards to the provisions of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and the African Union (AU) Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption and Related Offences.

The anti-corruption organisation said in the report that its chapters across the world have monitored implementation since the AU Convention came into force on August 5, 2006.

The report noted that the studies analyse anti-corruption measures and highlight the main shortcomings of the reform process.

According to TI, "a common feature in most countries is the absence of comprehensive national strategies to combat corruption, as well as a lack of real political will to implement reforms."

The report stated that Nigeria has an impressive array of structures, institutions and laws aimed at combating corruption but still falls short of the standards and requirements of an effective anti-corruption regime.

"Nigeria has an impressive array of structures, institutions and laws aimed at combating corruption, as well as a successful track record of recovering stolen assets. "Nigeria's programme, however, still falls short of the standards and requirements of an effective anti-corruption regime as demanded by the anti-corruption conventions", said Lilian Ekeanyanwu, researcher on the Nigerian study and an expert on international anti-corruption conventions.

Akere Muna, Vice Chair of TI's board of directors, also said "Implementation now must be the top priority. The AU Convention provides a very useful template to guide such a process".

He added that "in concert with civil society, TI will continue to lobby governments and legislators on how best to cope with the obvious challenges posed by this process. These legal studies provide useful guidance at the county level as a blueprint for reform."

TI also said in the report that its goal in both processes has been to create effective review mechanisms.

"Progress will only happen when governments are required to report publicly. As long as governments slow down the process of creating review mechanisms, as in Algeria, we strongly doubt their real commitment," stated Djilali Hadjadj, spokesperson for TI's chapter in Algeria.

Governments are required to report back on progress by completing a questionnaire for the next UN Conference of States Parties in February 2008.

TI encourages civil society organisations to use the findings of the nine country studies in order to complete the same questionnaire.

"Coordination and harmonisation of reporting requirements for regional and international anti-corruption conventions will minimise the burden for governments by creating synergies, as stated in the final declaration of the Global Forum V on 2-5 April 2007", the report stated.

The TI report also stated that, "a modest 16 of 53 African countries have ratified the AU Convention. The record for UNCAC is slightly better, with 29 ratifications. However, a low turn-out of African countries at the first Conference of States Parties to the UN Convention in December 2006 raises doubts about African commitment to the convention".

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