

South Asia Regional Meeting
Hotel Cinnamon Grand
Colombo, Sri Lanka
31 May - 2 June 2007



Regional Meeting Overall Goals:

1. To **increase exchange** between Chapters and with TI-S
2. To cooperatively **develop regional programmes**
3. To further **develop technical knowledge and understanding** of anti-corruption activities, tools and corruption related thematic issues
4. To **support professional development** (e.g. advocacy strategies, fundraising, programme development, public speaking, monitoring and evaluation)
5. To **debate issues relevant to the TI movement** (e.g. TI-2010, impact measurement, consultancy, regional expert groups, etc.)
6. To **strengthen national and regional advocacy** (in their relevant forums)
7. To **engage with external stakeholders** (media, Government, other CSOs, private sector, etc.)

Meeting Declaration



Transparency International
South Asia Regional Meeting
Colombo
Sri Lanka
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1. The 7th meeting of the South Asian Chapters of Transparency International was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, during May 31-June 2, 2007. Representatives of TI Chapters of Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka; a delegation of the Maldives civil society and officials of the TI Secretariat. External resource persons and invited Sri Lankan guests representing various stakeholder groups in anti-corruption movement participated in some thematic sessions.

Institutional and Policy Reform and Citizens Engagement

2. The participants shared with each other the experiences, good practices, challenges and learning from the myriad of activities implemented by the TI Chapters throughout the year 2006, and reviewed their plan of work for 2007-8. The meeting noted that in spite of many challenges faced in the anti-corruption work in the region, the Chapters continued their efforts relentlessly, and with considerable success in many cases.

3. Special emphasis of work was clearly on institutional, legal and policy reform. Equally important was citizens engagement, especially awareness, education and participation of the youth and new generation, which the participants recognized as indispensable for preventing corruption. Chapters decided to maintain this focus in their work ahead.

UN Convention against Corruption

4. The meeting called upon all South Asian Governments who have not yet ratified the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) to do so without any further delay. The South Asian Chapters decided to further strengthen advocacy work, not only for ratification by countries who have not yet done so, but also for proper implementation, follow-up and monitoring of UNCAC commitments in countries who have, or will have ratified the Convention.

Integrity in Judiciary

5. Participants agreed to make special efforts to catalyze reform for strengthening the pillars of the national integrity system. After threadbare discussion of the key findings and recommendation of the Global Corruption Report 2007 on Judiciary released on 24 May 2007, the Chapters emphasized the need to engage in advocacy work for the independence, integrity, accountability and capacity building of the Judiciary.

Ethics and Integrity in Public Service

6. Participants recognized the importance of ethics and integrity in police and other vital public service institutions.

Right to Information Law

7. The meeting urged upon South Asian Governments, who have not yet done so, to enact the Right to Information Law which participants considered indispensable for transparency and accountability in

governance as well as for effectively controlling and preventing corruption. The Chapters decided to intensify efforts in this regard including specific initiatives for enforcement.

Role of Media & Partnership

8. Recognizing the importance of the role and integrity of media in fighting corruption, the South Asia TI Chapters called upon the South Asian Governments to create conditions which media can function independently and objectively without fear or favour.

9. The participants emphasized the need to further strengthen professional relationship with the print as well as electronic media as co-stakeholders. The Chapters decided to explore the possibility of undertaking a training programme for capacity-building in the field of investigative journalism to expose corruption in the region. Resource persons may be drawn from within and outside the region.

Widening Anti-Corruption Constituency

10. The meeting resolved that the TI Chapters shall make best efforts during 2007-8 to expand the anti-corruption constituency through issue-based partnerships with various co-stakeholders including the Government, non-governmental organizations, media as well as private sector and development partners.

Advocacy and Legal Advice Centres

11. The participants were briefed about the successes achieved through Advocacy and Legal Advice Centres (ALAC) in a number of Central European Chapters. The meeting was also informed that similar initiatives have already been going on for several years in Bangladesh. All Chapters recognized the value of such tools and agreed to explore the possibility of introducing ALACs in the region subject to local adaptation. In this connection the Secretariat would provide necessary technical and other support to the extent possible.

Integrity in Defence

12. The participants recognized the importance of work in the field of integrity in defence, particularly transparency in procurement process. It was agreed that in addition to transactions in defence purchases by developing countries, problems of integrity in both public and private sector transactions related to defence in developed countries should also be addressed.

Integrity in Water

13. The meeting was informed about a forthcoming workshop to be held in Dhaka in the first week of November 2007 on Integrity in Water, an issue of great importance to all South Asian Chapters. It was expected that all Chapters would be represented in the workshop.

Regional Collaborative Project

14. The Chapters decided to explore the possibility of undertaking regional collaborative project(s) on issue-areas of shared interest, for which efforts would be made to develop specific project proposals for raising the necessary funds. It was decided that before the Dhaka meeting in November 2007 on Integrity in Water all Chapters will draw up a checklist of priority areas such as political corruption as the basis for proceeding further regarding such collaborative project.

Anti-Corruption Initiative by SAARC

15. The meeting expressed satisfaction that at the Delhi Summit of SAARC held in April 2007 the South Asian Governments recognised that corruption was an issue of serious concern and agreed to exchange information on national experience in combating corruption to effectively address this problem. The Chapters urged upon the South Asian Governments to follow up this important decision by adopting specific result-oriented and time-bound measures of cooperation for controlling and preventing corruption in the region. Since all members of SAARC have signed the UNCAC, the participants urged upon South Asian Governments to commence work with top priority towards a) seeking accession of SAARC to the UNCAC; and b) adopting a regional anti-corruption strategy to make South Asia as a Corruption-free Zone.

Challenges and threats to anti-corruption movement in South Asia

16. The participants were deeply concerned that anti-corruption movement in South Asia continued to face many undue challenges and threats. Now that all South Asian countries have already signed the UNCAC, in accord with its relevant provision the role of civil society organizations like TI Chapters in fighting corruption should be duly acknowledged, and conducive and secure space be created for their work.

Appreciation

17. The meeting commended the contributions of the delegates from the Secretariat towards successful conclusion of the proceedings. Participants also appreciated the contribution of other resource persons and invited guests. Visiting participants were grateful to the TI-Sri Lanka team for the extraordinary commitment, sincerity and efficiency with which they arranged the meeting and for the warm hospitality.

Chapter Priorities:

A. Constituent Assembly Elections and Drafting of a Democratic Constitution

Human Rights, Fundamental Rights, including the Right to Information, are essential to transparency. In the interest of increasing accountability, banishing corruption and impunity, as well as striving to achieve good governance, some countries, would therefore like to launch a country-wide awareness programme for free, fair and transparent Constituent Assembly elections with all events of democracy and freedom.

B. Expansion of Outreach Program

Limiting Transparency International's programs (in terms and space and participation) is contrary to the very spirit of the transparency movement. Therefore, chapters envision a strong outreach program through increased support to existing groups and the establishment of new ones. This will strengthen the transparency movement by providing increased credibility and ensuring greater participation of communities and people.

C. Ratification of UNCAC

Lobby Government for the ratification of the UNCAC; ensure its effective implementation, proper monitoring and follow-up with the involvement of other civil society organizations.

Regional Priorities:

D. Preventing political corruption

To address the pressing issue of political corruption in the region, a multi-faceted approach is required. More work is needed to ensure that fair and transparent elections are properly managed. For those politicians already in office, policies must be put in place to ensure strong repercussions for those who commit crimes in office. Ensuring the exclusion of corrupt and criminal politicians from further participation in politics is central to such policy. At the same time, a directed effort is needed to improve the ethical conduct of legislators.

E. Reforming the Criminal Justice System

Ensuring that the criminal justice system operates efficiently and free of corruption requires a systemic reassessment that may include a review of all aspects of the system, including the police, prosecution processes, the courts, lawyers, the operation of detention centres and the like. Furthermore, efforts must be made to strengthen the rehabilitation and the probation services to ensure that the likelihood of becoming a repeat offender is reduced to the greatest degree possible.

F. Fighting Corruption in Public Services & Procurement

As a result of the large scale often involved in the procurement of public goods and services, room may be left for corruption to take place. To resolve this, improvements must be made to the procurement systems in order to emphasise transparency and accountability in public provision. The adoption of the Integrity Pact, alongside other related developments, would bring about greater probability in the public procurement process.

G. Strengthening anti-corruption watchdogs

By increasing the scope and powers of anti-corruption watchdogs, additional layers of protection are added to national anti-corruption strategies. Such improvements serve to ensure that those who attempt to take part in corruption have a much a harder time committing their crimes. As well, these bodies initiate a significant number of investigations of alleged cases of corruption, serving to identify a higher number of criminals. More generally, watchdogs serve as sources of anti-corruption education, and act as effective deterrents to further criminal behaviour.