

Report to the Standing Committee

Vienna, 24 February 2021

Ms. Irene Charalambides (Cyprus), Special Representative on Fighting Corruption

DRAFT TALKING POINTS

- Dear Colleagues, I very much appreciate the opportunity to shortly address today's **Standing Committee meeting**. I wish to commend the **President and SG** for organizing this **Winter Meeting** despite the challenging circumstances.
- I would also like to thank the **International Secretariat** for their tremendous support in facilitating the **Web Dialogue “Parliamentarians & Journalists: Partners Against Corruption”** – exploring the critical contribution of journalists and parliamentarians in the global fight against corruption - held on 14 October 2020.
- **Allow me to highlight key takeaways** from this important event - the first ever with the active contribution of the media – which **I will attempt to transpose into a Supplementary Item for the next Annual Session**:
 - The **roles of journalists and parliamentarians in the fight against corruption** are, albeit different, **mutually reinforcing**, with parliamentarians responsible for creating pertinent anti-corruption legislation and empowering independent institutions, and journalists playing a vital role in fostering transparency and accountability by uncovering malpractices and fighting impunity.
 - Strong legal frameworks are essential to provide **effective safeguards for freedom of expression and safe working conditions for the media**. **Ultimate beneficial ownership laws** should be adopted throughout the region. **Justice systems** should be sheltered from undue influence aimed at “silencing” investigative journalism through restrictive court orders.
 - Journalists should be encouraged to **pursue their investigations independently**, responsibly, and exclusively in the interest of the public.

- **International organizations, such as the OSCE**, should provide a privileged forum for **promoting strategic partnerships** among key actors in this field.
- I would also like to underscore the excellent co-operation with the OSCE Executive Structures, as exemplified by my **keynote address** at the Webinar organized by the OSCE Secretariat, entitled “Open Data in Action: Beneficial Ownership and Public Procurement”, **marking the International Anti-Corruption Day** on 9 December 2020.
- In this view, I warmly welcome the **recently adopted Ministerial Council Decision “Preventing and Combating Corruption through Digitalization and Increased Transparency”**, which **recognizes the vital role played by parliamentarians** in fighting corruption, as well as the concrete contribution of our Assembly in this domain!
- **I look forward to continuing synergizing with the OSCE Secretariat and the Swedish Chairpersonship**, including by actively contributing to the Economic and Environmental Dimension Implementation Meeting (EEDIM) later this year, which will focus on combating corruption and promoting good governance, as well as by joining forces with the new SR on Combating Corruption, whom I am eager to meet soon.
- Before concluding, let me reiterate that **without political will**, anti-corruption laws remain **empty shells** and anti-corruption authorities feel **abandoned**. **Political will is therefore the Alpha and the Omega of any effective anti-corruption strategy**.
- **Against this background, I wish to encourage the Assembly, and ALL its members, to continue to lead by example in this critical field**, which greatly undermines both states’ and citizens’ security.
- **Thank you** very much for your attention!