

Report of Special Representative on Fighting Corruption

Mrs Irene Charalambides

Since the last time I reported on my activities, in Vancouver I have completed the following missions:

12 to 14 June -Visit to Malta

During my visit to Malta, I held discussions with Hon. Emeritus Justice Lawrence Quintano, Head of the Permanent Commission Against Corruption; Johan Galea, Permanent Secretary, Ministry for Justice, Equality and Governance; and Attorney General Victoria Buttigieg. I also met with representatives of Civil Society Organisations, including Occupy Justice and Repubblika. I also met with Members of the Maltese Delegation to the OSCE PA, Amanda Spiteri Grech and Alex Muscat, and representatives of Maltese institutions and civil society organizations dedicated to combating corruption.

The primary objectives of my visit were to understand ongoing reforms within relevant Maltese institutions, develop partnerships with local stakeholders, and promote greater awareness of the security and democratic threats posed by corruption.

In these meetings, I highlighted the role of the OSCE PA and my work as Special Representative in preventing and fighting corruption. I emphasized the OSCE PA's focus on the interconnections between corruption, stability, security, and democracy. I also discussed ongoing reforms in Malta, both in legislation and within independent institutions.

I underscored the importance of international co-operation in combating corruption, particularly with small countries facing similar challenges to Malta and in this regard, we discussed the possibility of organising a conference to look into these issues.

20 May 2024-OSCE PA Conference on "Security in the Age of Artificial Intelligence", Lisbon

I addressed the OSCE PA Conference on "Security in the Age of Artificial Intelligence" organized and hosted by the Parliament of Portugal.

In my speech at the thematic session on "Protecting Democracy and Promoting Development through Artificial Intelligence", I emphasized that despite the significant advances achieved due to the development of artificial intelligence, their exploitation by criminal elements can nevertheless pose a threat to justice and, in particular, to corruption.

I underlined that through artificial intelligence tools, algorithms can be influenced to achieve biased decision-making. In addition, I pointed out that, the complex nature of many AI systems can make accountability difficult, as complex algorithms can significantly limit control. I also warned that there is a risk that the development of artificial intelligence will intensify the existing

inequalities, because AI systems use historical data, they are likely to reproduce biases.

However, I stressed that we have the tools and knowledge to harness the potential of AI, but this requires a concerted effort by all stakeholders – governments, businesses, civil society and scientists – to prioritize ethics and integrity in the development of artificial intelligence technologies. I emphasized that transparency should be the main guiding principle in order to ensure accountability and that a strong regulatory framework must be put in place to manage the use of artificial intelligence.

22 April 2024 – OSCE/ODIHR webinar

I addressed a webinar of the OSCE and the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). The subject of the seminar was Britain's system of parliamentary integrity and the lessons learned through its operation.

I underlined that Parliaments have or can have a key role in promoting transparency and fighting corruption, as well as that commitment to the fundamental principles of transparency and accountability are of key importance.

I emphasized that Parliaments should be able to exercise parliamentary control and operate in a strong system of checks and balances and I pointed out that without strong mechanisms of integrity within the Parliaments, citizens' trust can easily be eroded, undermining the foundations of democracy and the rule of law.

26-27 March 2024 – OECD Global Anti-Corruption and Integrity Forum

I participated in the Global Anti-Corruption and Integrity Forum, Organized by the OECD at its headquarters in Paris.

The Global Forum included sessions on the launch of the OECD Anti-Corruption and Integrity Outlook, combatting illicit financial flows and tax crimes through effective strategies, and harnessing innovations in AI and Analytics to enhance accountability in lobbying, as well as enhancing and adapting the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention for global integrity.

In addition, on the sidelines of the Global Forum, I had separate meetings with Mr. Daniel Eriksson (CEO of "Transparency International"), Mr. Roby Senderowitsch (Practice Manager for Public Administration, Governance Global Practice, World Bank, Governance), Mr. Jeroen Blomsma (European Commission-Head of the Integrity and Anti-Corruption Sector) and Mr. Viktor Pavlushchyk (Head of the National Anti-Corruption Authority of Ukraine). In the context of these meetings, I pointed out the threats to democracy, the rule of law and security and stability, which result from the insufficient fight against

corruption. I referred to the efforts of OSCE PA for the promotion of transparency and accountability, while reaffirming the importance the Assembly attaches to building cooperative relationships with international organizations and civil society organizations active in the field of combating corruption.

23 February 2024 Meeting with Central-Asian delegations

I chaired a meeting of delegations from Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan) at the margins of our Winter Meeting. We exchanged views of the efforts needed to strengthen preventing and fighting corruption. In this context, I proposed the organization of a seminar in the region in which the members of the OSCE PA delegations from Central Asian countries, representatives of the OSCE Field Missions in these countries, representatives of international organizations and representatives of domestic anti-corruption authorities could participate. The delegations of the Central Asian countries expressed their support for the organization of such a seminar.

17-18 January 2024 - Mission to Brussels

I completed a mission in Brussels where I held meetings with representatives of European Union institutions whose main objective is the fight against corruption.

I held meetings with the Director General of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), Ville Itälä; European delegated Prosecutor of the EU Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), Pascale Vanderweyer; the Cabinet Expert at Directorate General for Justice, Luc de Lobel; Member of Cabinet of the Commissioner for Values and Transparency, Alvaro de Elera; and Jeroen Blomsma, Head of the Anti-Corruption Sector at the EU's Directorate-General for Home Affairs.

In these meetings I referred to the role of the OSCE PA and to my responsibilities as a Special Representative in the field of preventing and fighting corruption. I explained that the OSCE PA, as an organization in which security challenges are at the center of its work, focuses on the interconnection between corruption with stability, security and democracy, as well as the correlation of corruption with money laundering issues and the financing of terrorism.

I also underlined the significance of co-operation between international organizations active in the field of combating corruption and in particular the need to strengthen the synergies between the OSCE PA with EU institutions. In this context, all her interlocutors expressed the desire to strengthen co-operation and underscored its added value.

I also focused on the report on the rule of law issued by the European Commission, noting it is a powerful tool for promoting reforms that enhance transparency and accountability of state institutions.

In addition, views were exchanged on a range of other issues such as the risks of corruption in the green transition and in the defence industry, the significance of asset recovery and the challenges presented by the use of cryptocurrencies and advances in artificial intelligence. Broader issues that threaten the rule of law were also discussed, such as interference of electoral processes through the circulation of fake news mainly on social media.

1 December 2023 - Signing Ceremony of the Joint Declaration on the fight against corruption in Southeast Europe

I attended an event for the Signing Ceremony of the Joint Declaration on the fight against corruption in Southeast Europe through asset recovery and the use of digitalisation. The event took place on the sidelines of the 30th OSCE Ministerial Council in Skopje.

The OSCE Chairman-in-Office, Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia, Mr. Bujar Osmani, the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, attended the meeting and signed the Joint Declaration. Elmedin Konaković, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro, Mr. Filip Ivanović and the Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania, Mr. Igli Hasani. The rationale for the Joint Declaration was presented by the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairmanship for the Fight against Corruption, Ms. Anita Ramasastry.

I expressed my satisfaction for the signing of the Joint Declaration and for the prospect of achieving progress in the critical field of fighting corruption through digitization and asset recovery.

19 November 2023 - OSCE PA Autumn Meeting

I Chaired the Second Session of the Autumn Meeting of the OSCE PA. The session was called "Corruption as a Fundamental Threat to Peace and Security", and the key speakers were; Ms. Alexandra Habershon from the World Bank, Ms. Mariam Galstyan from the Armenian Government and Mr. Konstantine Vardzelashvili from the OSCE ODIHR.

In my intervention I underlined that: Corruption also undermines state capacity. It is diverting resources to serve the private interests of the few, at the expense of the many. It is hampering, in reality, the resilience and the potential of our economies. I stressed that grand corruption is particularly dangerous as it can lead to state capture. I underlined that as parliamentarians we must not weaken our accountability standards when we fear they will harm political friends or allies, just to score cheap political points.

1 November 2023 ODIHR Transparency International event

I participated at online event organized by ODIHR- Transparency International on the topic: “Parliamentary oversight in times of democratic stagnation”. As the Special Representative on Fighting Corruption of the OSCE PA, I served as a key speaker on the panel named “Parliamentary oversight in times of democratic stagnation”. During my address, I emphasized the importance of promoting reforms in the ongoing battle against corruption. This involves not only legislative reforms but also a shift in attitudes towards how parliamentary oversight is conducted. Members of National Parliaments frequently encounter substantial political costs when challenging the prevailing system that inherently protects itself. Despite these challenges, we must persist in our efforts for the benefit of the people who have placed their trust in us through their votes.

30 September 2023 - Cyprus Forum

I participated as a keynote speaker at the Cyprus Forum, a conference in Cyprus which gathers international and local experts. In my speech in the session on transparency and the rule of law, I underlined that citizens expect politicians to strengthen the rule of law in Cyprus, noting the fundamental importance of the existence of sufficient institutional checks and balances.

I highlighted, among other issues, the importance of the declaration of assets of the members of the Judiciary and politically exposed persons and the significance of regulating conflicts of interest.

14-15 September 2023 - OSCE Economic and Environmental Dimension in Prague

I participated in the Forum on the Economic and Environmental Dimension of the OSCE, held in Prague, Czech Republic. In my address, I highlighted the OSCE PA's role as a platform for policy convergence, emphasizing the importance of good governance and public trust. I encouraged participants to explore the resolutions of the Vancouver Declaration, addressing challenges such as climate change and corruption. In addition, I underscored the vital role of national parliaments in preventing corruption and advocated for robust institutions with accountability measures. I stressed that political will, when coupled with advancements in technology, is essential to combat corruption effectively, while promoting the use of open data for transparency and citizen engagement. In addition, I emphasized that it is imperative that we exert our utmost efforts to guarantee the effective utilization of the opportunities presented by these new tools and advancements for the promotion of good governance.