



Report of Activities on Fighting Corruption

Special Representative on Fighting Corruption of the OSCE PA,

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Period: September 2023 - February 2024

23rd OSCE PA Winter Meeting: 22-23 February 2024

Activities:

On September 14-15, 2024-As the Vice-President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and Special Representative on Fighting Corruption, along with Artur Gerasymov , Vice-Chair of the PA's economic and environmental committee, I participated in the Forum on the Economic and Environmental Dimension of the OSCE, held in Prague, Czech Republic, from 14 to 15 September.

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 we should not assume that new digital technologies will automatically resolve our 'human' problems, including corruption. 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. My key message centered around the notion that "parliaments and governments can truly make a difference."

On 1 November 2023- I participate 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.

On 19 November 2023- 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. Over 20 MPs were involved in the discussion in 2.5 hours session.

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.

-Health, education and infrastructure can suffer, by less-than-optimal decisions taken by corrupt officials. The security and defence sectors are no exception either. There are examples where the influence of private interests over public policy is so disproportionate that it completely derails action in critical areas.

-Corruption is also exacerbating inequalities among different groups in society, especially the poor and marginalised. And this is exactly the kind of situation that provides fertile ground for foreign actors to interfere to promote their own agenda, or for terrorist groups to recruit supporters.

-My own country's shortcomings because this is a recipe for failure. The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists has unveiled some new information: That very few private legal and accounting offices in Cyprus might have helped Russian oligarchs evade sanctions. So the Cypriot citizen was paying high economic and diplomatic costs as a result of the sanctions, while some extremely rich lawyers and accountants were helping oligarchs evade them. This was a telling example of how corruption undercuts state aims, even foreign policy.

-Grand corruption is particularly dangerous as it leads to state capture. This is when high-level officials are able to use their control over the legislative and regulatory powers to legalise their activities. Or to weaken oversight and enforcement. They can, at times, interfere directly with the justice system and with National Parliaments as well. They use their influence to evade political accountability and to evade prosecution, to even evade exposure from the Media.

-Democratic institutions and processes must provide checks and balances on the power that public officials hold and on how they are using that power. Parliaments are an integral part

of the system of checks and balances and must ensure accountability. As parliamentarians we can be faced with dilemmas. Sometimes corruption may seem to be coming from friendly political spaces. We must be able to navigate this process. We can't put party discipline above transparency. We can't weaken our accountability standards if we fear they will harm political friends or allies, just to score cheap political points. Because this too, is unethical.

And as representatives of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly I called on parliamentarians, to unite in our commitment to eliminating corruption and building a future where justice, equality, and peace prevail.

On 17-18 January 2024- As the Vice-President and Special Representative on Fighting Corruption I visited Brussels, where I met with representatives of European Union institutions whose main objective is the fight against corruption.

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

In the meetings, I referred to the role of the OSCE PA but also 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 cooperation 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 my interlocutors expressed the desire to strengthen cooperation and its added value. As the Special Representative on Fighting Corruption, 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. The EU interlocutors emphasized that the report on the rule of law has significant contribution in reversing trends of democratic backsliding. In addition, we exchanged our views on a range of other issues such as the risks of corruption in the green transition and in the defense 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.