

Eight leading civil society organisations banned from UN anti-corruption conference due to objections by Turkey

Sharm El-Sheikh - Transparency International, Access Info Europe, The Good Lobby, and the UNCAC Coalition strongly condemn the exclusion of prominent civil society organisations from participating in the 9th session of the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) Conference of the States Parties (CoSP), currently underway in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt. The CoSP plenary on the morning of 15 December 2021 failed to overturn the unfounded objections by the Turkish government.

Many countries from the European Union and broader Europe, Canada, the US and other regions spoke out in support of the affected NGOs.

The barred organisations include Access Info Europe (Spain), The Good Lobby (Italy) and Transparency International Georgia. In total, the Turkish government opposed the participation of eight civil society organisations from seven countries – none from Turkey. Despite calls to reverse the decision, the plenary failed to reject the obscure objections.

Helen Darbshire, Chair of the UNCAC Coalition and Executive Director of Access Info Europe, one of the excluded organisations, said:

“As the global anti-corruption community meets in Sharm El-Sheikh, it is unacceptable that there is a veto on the participation of some organisations based on opaque allegations by just one government. This hugely reduces space for civil society in UNCAC processes and undermines the effectiveness of an event crucial to advancing action on anti-corruption.”

Delia Ferreira Rubio, Chair of Transparency International said:

“Both the objections and the outcomes are of profound concern and should set off alarm bells. We see here yet another sign of shrinking civic space worldwide, a very dangerous trend that does not bode well for international anti-corruption efforts. We call on States to urgently develop appropriate guidelines for the objection process to prevent the same arbitrary exclusions at the next CoSP.”

Federico Anghel , Director of The Good Lobby Italy, said:

“We civil society organizations that fight for transparency and the rule of law cannot silently tolerate such serious intrusion by a single country. The exclusion of 8 organizations from the UN Anti-Corruption Summit is a symptom of the still-fragile safeguards for civic space and how necessary it is to unite at international level to defend civil society, which too often comes under attack.”

Several weeks ago, the chairs of Transparency International and the UNCAC Coalition wrote to the President of the CoSP, Egypt’s Hassan Abdel-Shafi. They asked for the objections to be overturned, explaining that the arbitrary objection process used to exclude eight civil society organisations from the UNCAC CoSP is inconsistent with the UN Convention against Corruption and with UN values and standards. They also called on governments to revise

the objection procedures for future CoSPs and to bring them in line with applicable international standards and principles of due process.

Notes to editors

The COSP is the main decision-making body of the UNCAC – or UN Convention against Corruption, the only legally binding global anti-corruption treaty.

The affected organisations, to the knowledge of the UNCAC Coalition and Transparency International, include:

- Access Info Europe, Spain
- Alliance on Civic Initiatives Promotion, Kyrgyzstan
- Central Asia Research Institute on Corruption and Money Laundering, Kyrgyzstan
- Expert Forum (EFOR), Romania
- Integrity Initiatives International, USA
- The Good Lobby, Italy
- Transparency International Georgia

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