

23rd Steering Group Meeting of the Anti-Corruption Initiative for Asia-Pacific

Hosted by the Government of Viet Nam in cooperation with the Government Inspectorate of Viet Nam

Hanoi, Viet Nam
5 December 2019

Minutes of the Meeting

1. Participants

More than 65 participants attended the meeting, including 30 participants from 16 out of the 31 members and jurisdictions, development partners, the Anticorruption Initiative for Asia-Pacific (Initiative) Secretariat, observer countries, and other organizations.

Member countries and jurisdictions:

Present: Bangladesh; Bhutan; Cambodia; People's Republic of China; Cook Islands; Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea; Kyrgyz Republic; Mongolia; Nepal; Philippines; Singapore; Solomon Islands, Thailand; Vanuatu; and Viet Nam.

Absent: Afghanistan; Australia; Fiji; Hong Kong, China; India; Indonesia; Japan; Macao, China; Malaysia; Pakistan; Palau; Papua New Guinea; Samoa; Sri Lanka; and Timor-Leste.

Development Partners:

American Bar Association-Rule of Law Initiative (ABA-ROLI); Transparency International (TI); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); and United Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

Secretariat: Asian Development Bank (ADB); and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Co-organizer and Partner: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Observers: Azerbaijan; Brunei Darussalam; Georgia; and Myanmar.

2. Summary of the Discussions

1. Welcoming and Opening of the Meeting

Participants were welcomed by Mr. Nguyen Van Thanh, Deputy Inspector General of the Government Inspectorate of Vietnam (GIV) and the meeting was opened by Mr. Jeffrey Schlagenhauf, Deputy Secretary General of OECD. Mr. Thanh and Mr. Schlagenhauf also chaired the meeting.

Mr. Thanh strongly affirmed the Government of Vietnam's cooperation to the Initiative and stand by the Steering Group and member countries and territories in the implementation of the future work

plan of the Initiative, contribute to the success of anti-corruption in the region, and to successfully implement the UN Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Mr. Schlagenhauf highlighted the relevance of the Initiative to drive the anti-corruption agenda in the Asia-Pacific region, and expressed the commitment of the OECD to share its expertise, benchmarks and convening power. Mr. Schlagenhauf also invited the members of the Steering Group to express ownership of the Initiative by actively engaging in the discussions, considering funding options, and exploring synergies with domestic anti-corruption activities.

2. External Evaluation of the Anti-Corruption Initiative for Asia-Pacific

Ms. Cholpon Mambetova, Senior Integrity Specialist of the Office of Anticorruption and Integrity (OAI) of ADB presented the background, findings and recommendations of the external evaluation of the Initiative conducted in 2018. Ms. Mambetova also discussed the main objectives, scope of the evaluation, and the methodology.

In summary, the evaluation's main findings are:

- a) The Initiative is **relevant**, as its activities and outputs are helpful to member countries in their implementation of the UNCAC;
- b) The Initiative is **highly valued**, as it is the only peer-learning network in Asia-Pacific;
- c) The Initiative **complements** rather than duplicates other anticorruption initiatives and networks; and
- d) The Initiative was **effective** in strengthening member countries' anticorruption knowledge and capacity.

The full report of the evaluation containing recommendations was disseminated to all members before the steering group meeting.

3. Implementation status of the Work Program 2018-2020 and preparation of the next Work Program

Ms. Mathilde Mesnard, Deputy Director, Directorate for Financial and Enterprise Affairs, OECD, presented the implementation status of the Work Programme of the Initiative for 2018-2020, and the proposal for 2020 activities, as summarized in the Discussion Paper prepared by the Secretariat (see Annex). She called members' attention to the need to identify a host country for the 2020 Initiative's annual event.

The Steering Group adopted the proposal for 2020 activities as presented in the Discussion Paper.

Ms. Mesnard then introduced the Secretariat's proposal for revising the Strategic Principles and adopting a new Work Programme, as described in the Discussion Paper.

The Steering Group approved the approach proposed in the Discussion Paper. The objective is to adopt a new Work Programme and a revised Strategic Principles document in 2020, and to simplify both documents. The procedure will include a consultation of members by written procedure.

The OECD highlighted the need for identifying more sustainable sources of funding for the Initiative.

Ms. Mesnard proposed that the governance be adjusted under the current Work Programme to clarify the role of the Advisory Group. Following the Steering Group's decision in 2017 to merge the Advisory and Steering Groups to simplify the Initiative's governance, former members of the Advisory Group would now be invited to participate in Steering Group's meetings as "partners", with an advisory role, with governments retaining member status and the exclusive competence to make decisions.

The Steering Group adopted this new governance arrangement.

4. Integrity Review of Thailand

The Office of the Public Sector Development Commission in Thailand reported on the OECD Integrity Review of Thailand, which started in 2016 as a country-scoping project under the Anti-Corruption Initiative for Asia-Pacific and is the first of its kind in the Asia-Pacific region. The cooperation with the Government of Thailand is driving public integrity reforms in Thailand and has led to the following results:

- 1) The [Review report](#) was launched in Bangkok, and in Paris at the OECD Global Anti-Corruption & Integrity Forum, in March 2018 by Deputy Prime Minister Wissanu Krea-ngam of Thailand.
- 2) With various recommendations emerging from the Review still under implementation, the Integrity Review already resulted in improved coordination on integrity policies among the designated institutions in Thailand, including the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC), the Public Sector Anti-Corruption Commission (PACC), and the Office of the Civil Service Commission (OCSC), which exemplifies the whole-of-government approach on anti-corruption that Thailand is championing.
- 3) The Review gave impetus to a new set of good governance projects in the framework of the OECD Thailand Country Programme, including a second phase of the Review and a number of capacity development activities.
- 4) Various members of the Anti-Corruption Network for Asia-Pacific participated in a two-day capacity-building workshop on public ethics on 26-27 June 2019 in Bangkok. More than 70 public officials from Indonesia, Malaysia, Bangladesh, the Cook Islands, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines and Thailand gathered at OPDC headquarters in Bangkok to exchange experiences on how to manage conflicts of interest, resolve ethical dilemmas and nurture an open organisational culture. This is an example of how the Initiative can directly benefit from in-country projects.

5. Report on Business Integrity Meeting

The OECD and UNDP reported on the inaugural business integrity meeting of the Anti-Corruption Initiative for Asia Pacific, which took place on 3 December. They thanked the UK and Viet Nam for their support for the organisation of the meeting, which brought together 60 participants from 15 countries, with representatives from the public sector, the business sector, NGOs and international organisations. Participants discussed the existing initiatives to promote business integrity in the region, as well as challenges and best practices. The main findings and messages were as follows: business integrity should rely on strong, harmonised legislation, supported by enforcement; companies can play an active role in promoting business integrity; market incentives are essential to change behaviours; solutions should involve and ensure dialogue between all stakeholders, public institutions, the private sector and civil society; and linkages between business integrity and responsible business conduct are essential. Noting the active discussions and the positive feedback from participants, the OECD, with support from UNDP, proposed that the Steering Group establish a formal business integrity network under the Initiative, to collect and share information, connect stakeholders and facilitate collective actions.

The proposal to establish a permanent Business Integrity Network under the Initiative was adopted by the Steering Group.

6. Report on Public Integrity Network Meeting

The OECD reported on the Public Integrity Network meeting, which took place from 4-6 December 2020, as part of its 10th Regional Conference in Hanoi, Viet Nam. The meeting was supported by the Korea Policy Centre. The meeting focused on corruption prevention in infrastructure projects, and advanced the debate on topics such as undue influence, policy capture, risk management, audit, data analytics and SDGs. Various country examples and cases from Australia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Cook Islands, Georgia, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, Thailand and Viet Nam further enriched the discussions and exchange of good practices. Through 6 thematic and interactive sessions, the meeting brought together over 100 participants from 25 countries – experts and leaders from government institutions, anti-corruption bodies, private sector, civil society organisations, and international organisations.

7. Accession of the New Member Countries

There are currently 31 countries and jurisdictions that are formal members of the Initiative. For the past years, several countries of the region have been participating as observers and have expressed interest or are exploring an opportunity to join the Initiative.

The membership mechanism is such that once the Secretariat receives a formal request from a candidate country to join the Initiative, the request is forwarded to members for their endorsement. Once membership has been approved by members, the Secretariat will advise the candidate country on the Initiative members' acceptance and request to designate a national contact person with sufficient authority and capacity to oversee the implementation of its country's anticorruption reforms and represent its country in the Initiative's events and activities. The new member will be announced and welcomed at the next Steering Group meeting.

8. Group Discussions on Members Capacity Development Needs

The Initiative recognizes the need to strengthen the capacity of its member countries in anti-corruption and integrity.

Steering Group members were grouped to discuss their capacity needs and to come up with three priority themes. The country grouping and list of potential areas for capacity development activities are below:

Country Groupings:

Group 1: Bangladesh; Bhutan; Nepal; Korea

Group 2: Cambodia; Viet Nam; Thailand; Philippines; Malaysia; PR China

Group 3: Kazakhstan; Kyrgyz Republic; Mongolia; Azerbaijan; Georgia

Group 4: Cook Islands; Solomon Islands; Vanuatu; Singapore

Potential areas for capacity development activities, including seminars and trainings:

- Asset recovery
- Asset declaration
- Beneficial ownership
- Conflict of interest

- Political corruption
- Financial disclosure
- Investigation capacity building
- Integrity in customs and trade facilitation
- Audit for integrity
- Whistleblower protection policy
- Integrity in education, health, natural resources management
- Integrity at the subnational level
- Integrity in civil services, code of conduct and ethics training
- Engaging civil society, media, youth in fight against corruption
- Anticorruption public awareness raising and education
- Big data and Artificial Intelligence for Anticorruption

As a result of the group discussions, the list of three priority themes of the four groups are below:

Group 1 - Three themes prioritized:

1. Asset Declaration and Recovery
2. Big Data and Artificial Intelligence for Anti-Corruption
3. Investigative Capacity Building

Group 2 - Three themes prioritized:

1. Investigation capacity building
2. New Technologies
3. Asset Recovery

Group 3 - Three themes prioritized:

1. Integrity of the subnational level
2. Engaging civil society
3. Artificial intelligence

Group 4 - Three themes prioritized:

1. Investigation and Prosecution capacity building
2. Anti-corruption public awareness raising
3. Concept/Country approach outline for drafting of laws as appropriate

9. Closing and Short Briefing on the High-Level Meeting

The meeting was closed by H.E. Mr. Le Minh Khai, Inspector General of Government Inspectorate of Viet Nam. Mr. Khai also presented a short briefing on the High-Level segment to be held the next day, 6 December 2019. He encouraged the delegates to actively participate in the High-Level segment, with the expectation that senior representatives from state management agencies in the public investment sector as well as senior representatives from the anti-corruption agencies and international organizations can work out the strategic orientations for strengthening the anti-corruption effectiveness in infrastructure projects in the region.

Mr. Khai also presented a small gift, symbolizing the Vietnamese culture, to all the Heads of Delegations from member countries and territories and representatives of ADB, OECD, Secretariat of Initiative, and sponsors and advisory organizations, as a way of thanking the delegates for coming to Viet Nam and actively participating in the 10th regional conference.