



PRINCIPALS IN TAJIKISTAN

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This press release is issued by the ‘Principals’, grouping Ambassadors and Representatives of donors, embassies and International Financial Institutions which participate in regular coordination meetings with a rotating chairperson. Those represented by this joint press release include AKDN, ADB, Canada, China, EBRD, EC, France, Germany, India, Iran, Japan, Kazakhshan, OSCE, Russia, Sweden, Turkey, UK, and USA. The current chairman of the group is Fernand Pillonel, EBRD.

PRESS RELEASE

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Tajikistan’s Fight against Corruption¹

Corruption has a range of negative effects on Tajikistan’s development. Corruption inhibits economic growth, undermines the effectiveness of international assistance, weakens the population’s faith in the transition process, and exacerbates poverty. As Fernand Pillonel stated in the Principals’ Meeting on April 27: “*Corruption affects all elements of society, especially the poor; it starts at schools and universities, discourages the young, and the entrepreneurs, and thus significantly hampers business activity and economic development.*”

The Principals have much appreciated the recent statements of President Emomali Rahmonov and other senior members of the Tajik government highlighting the extensive nature of corruption and the need to act against it more vigorously. The President’s stated commitment to take ‘tough measures’ to combat corruption provides a positive indication that this deep-rooted problem can be significantly reduced.

During the meeting, Mr Sukhrob Sharipov, Director of the Strategic Research Center presented the recent study on corruption, “Corruption in Tajikistan: Public Opinion” (supported by SIDA/UNDP) which provides a good analytical foundation based on group discussions and individual interviews across the country. It assesses the nature and extent of day-to-day corruption; the strengths and weaknesses of various government institutions charged with fighting graft; and proposes concrete solutions to overcome the problems. The frank critiques of this study, emanating from a Governmental institution, should be utilized in designing new instruments to combat corruption.

¹ The presentation held on the topic during the Principals Meeting on 27 April can be found at http://www.untj.org/donors/minutes/Tajikistan_s_efforts_against_corruption.ppt#256,1,Slide 1 and http://www.untj.org/donors/minutes/Open_Government_Presentation_for_April_Principals_Group.ppt

The second presentation from UNDP described a project which will provide the foundation for a complaint mechanism through a website <www.tajtag.net> managed by the Ministry of Economy and Trade. When fully operational, this will allow ordinary people to report instances of corruption as well as being a communication tool to raise the population's awareness on the negative effects of corruption. The website provides independent monitoring of the governance situation in Tajikistan and includes details of legislation as well as reports, statistics and articles.

Thirdly, USAID presented the new draft Administrative law, which would reduce arbitrary behavior and harassment from the administration, as well as the 'ADLIA' a legal database which will include all legal texts impacting on private business activity, thus clarifying the legal basis for entrepreneurs and introducing much needed predictability for private investors.

The Principals recommend certain measures that Tajikistan could adopt to make the government more transparent and accountable to its citizens:

- International standards: The government should enforce international conventions related to corruption, such as Anti-Money Laundering agreements and International Arbitrage conventions.
- Laws: Introduction of binding mechanisms to allow the Tajik government to implement domestic laws on combating corruption which could supersede existing legislation. All new laws which have an impact on business activities should be widely publicized and supported by the authorities.
- Capacity-building: Specific seminars for Parliament officials and judges should be conducted to allow the Parliament to more effectively exercise its financial oversight functions and to encourage more transparency in the judicial system
- Education: Young people in schools and universities should be introduced to concepts of honesty, ethics and clean governance through creative and practical activities. Additional studies on corruption that cast light on the problem, raise awareness and propose concrete solutions should be developed in the administration and the business community and publicized.
- Anti-corruption monitoring: Leading government officials and international actors should regularly assess the situation on corruption and the progress of anti-corruption measures. These regular meetings would further demonstrate the cooperation between authorities and donors in the battle against corruption and support the authorities (Parliament, Prosecutor's office, Ministries of Justice, Interior, Security and Presidential administration) in their own efforts.