

## TELL US WHAT YOU HAVE DONE TO FIGHT CORRUPTION

Wednesday, 05 May 2010 17:43 Jutta Wolf 0

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BERLIN (IDN) – Thirty governments around the world will soon be approached by Transparency International (TI) and members of the Freedom of Information Advocates Network as well as the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) to give information on what they have done to combat bribery.

This is the crux of the 'Tell us what you've done! Initiative' launched by TI and Access Info Europe to mark the World Press Freedom Day on May 3, 2010 – in an attempt to verify whether governments are complying with the UN Convention against Corruption and other anti-corruption conventions.

TI, based in Berlin, is the global civil society organisation leading the fight against corruption, brings people together in a powerful worldwide coalition to end the devastating impact of corruption on men, women and children around the world. TI's mission is to create change towards a world free of corruption.

Access Info Europe, based in Madrid, is a human rights organisation dedicated to promoting and protecting the right of access to information in Europe and globally as a tool for defending civil liberties and human rights, for facilitating public participation in decision-making and for holding governments accountable.

The aim is to see how transparent governments are about their anti-bribery efforts under the anti-corruption treaties they have signed on to. Results will be presented in 2011 at the fourth UNCAC Conference of State Parties in Morocco.

Established by the UN in 1993, World Press Freedom Day 2010 was dedicated to the Right to Know – the right of all citizens to have access to information that is in the possession of public entities. Although there has been a surge in freedom of information legislation, the UN notes that it is often complicated to use, prejudices minorities and not always enforced.

"Access to information is at the heart of the anti-corruption agenda. The number of cases where power is abused for private gain uncovered by enterprising journalists, shows that access to public information is vital," said Gillian Dell, coordinator for the initiative at TI.

"The right to know what the government knows is essential for journalists and civil society watchdogs to identify corruption and hold public officials accountable," said Helen Darbishire, Executive Director of Access Info Europe.

The United Nations Convention against Corruption – adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2003 – is the most comprehensive global legal framework for combating corruption. It is a binding agreement ratified by 143 states on standards and requirements for preventing, detecting, investigating and sanctioning corruption.

Governments are also required under UNCAC to criminalise corruption offences including bribery and money laundering and to work together in cross-border law enforcement. One of the convention's most noteworthy aspects is that it elaborates an asset recovery framework for the first time on a global basis, covering countries in the North and South.

The UNCAC also calls on states to provide technical assistance in the field of anti-corruption to countries needing it.

A provision recommended by UNCAC is the access to information legislation that has been enacted by over 80 countries, although effective implementation varies from country to country.

Countries whose governments will be approached by TI and Access Info Europe for information on the anti-corruption efforts as of May 2, 2010 are: Argentina, Armenia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Chile, Dominican Republic, Egypt, France, Hungary, Ghana, Georgia, Germany, Guatemala, Israel, Italy, Liberia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Spain, Trinidad & Tobago, United Kingdom and Venezuela.

The Right to Know, the right of everyone to access information held by public bodies is an essential part of the right to freedom of expression anchored in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The World Press Freedom Day aims to raise awareness of media freedom issues and to promote the right of journalists to collect and disseminate information without risk to life or liberty. To deny journalists and others the right to request and receive information held by public bodies is now clearly established in international law as a violation of the right to freedom of expression and information.

In 2009 the European Court of Human Rights confirmed that access to information is protected by Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, saying that where governments have an "information monopoly" they should disclose information that is needed for public debate on matters of public importance.

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