



REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

SEVENTY-FIFTH REGULAR SESSION

SIXTH COMMITTEE

AGENDA ITEM:

STATEMENT

by

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Counsellor

Permanent Mission of the Republic of Serbia

to the United Nations

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Mr. Chairman,

My delegation has aligned itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union. I shall, therefore, make some additional comments from our national perspective. For the interest of time, I shall make my remarks brief, while full version of my intervention will be uploaded electronically.

Corruption is prevented most effectively if opportunities for it to arise are reduced, if transparency is strong and if all social actors invest their best efforts in eliminating it. Fight against corruption will not be successful if we do not cooperate with all the actors, national or international, and with citizens, in particular. Their trust in institutions and the integrity of public servants should be continually built upon for, one way or another, they stand to suffer the consequences of corruptive behavior and the lack of personal and institutional integrity of public servants and public officials alike.

Identification of situations and phenomena which make it possible for corruptive behavior to occur is very much part of corruption prevention. The prevention includes the creation of mechanisms designed to stop corruption in the starting blocks, just as it includes the oversight and control of the exercise of public authority by public officials entrusted to protect public interest, as well as the raising of citizens' awareness of the damage caused by corruption. Its suppression helps create a business-friendly environment conducive to economic development which attracts new investment and, in the case of my country, pushes it further forward in the negotiation process for its full membership to the European Union.

Serbia's legislature has been very actively engaged in addressing corruption in the past period. The new Corruption Prevention Law was adopted last year and entered into force on 1 September 2020. The Law is harmonized with the Council of Europe's GRECO recommendations and is the country's roof anti-corruption legislation. It is primarily designed to protect public interest, lower the risk of corruption and strengthen the integrity and responsibility of government agencies and public officials. Numerous new provisions regulate the conflict of interest, accumulation of powers, declaration of assets etc.

The Law on lobbying entered into force in August 2019. It provides for the conditions and manner of lobbying, its rules and regulations and other relevant issues. It creates a lobbyists' register which includes other, legal persons engaged in lobbying activities. By this Law, Serbia adheres to the relevant anti-corruption European standards, provided for by the GRECO recommendations, and belongs in the choice category of the few European countries that have normative stipulations for lobbying activities.

The Whistleblower Protection Law has been in force since June 2019. Characterized as the 'gold standard' by the international community, it has been commended by international experts

worldwide. Its implementation has had a positive trend and the rate of decisions brought in disputes litigated under the Law has been very stable indeed.

In its anti-corruption activities, the Government has strengthened both the preventive mechanism and the repressive part of the system, tapping thus the synergy of the two convergent methods of approach. Accordingly, the Law on the organization and powers of government agencies in suppressing organized crime, terrorism and corruption, strengthening and reforming the repressive mechanism through a new organization in public prosecution, the judiciary and police, entered into force in March 2018. It made the establishment of multi-disciplinary task forces headed by the Public Prosecutor possible, while the Financial Forensics Service was introduced in Serbia for the first time.

Currently, the most important strategic document in the field is the Action Plan for Chapter 23, revised and submitted for opinion to the European Commission last July.

One of the key institutions in the anti-corruption efforts is the Corruption Prevention Agency; an independent organ, established 11 years ago, it has made considerable efforts to carry through its prevention, control and oversight powers. It is tasked, among others, with initiating and conducting proceedings to decide the violations of the Law; addressing conflicts of interest; carrying out assignments provided for by the Law on lobbying and the financing of political parties; checking on public revenue reports submitted by public officials; investigating the state of corruption; assessing corruption risks; and drafting risk elimination recommendations. It is also in charge of international cooperation in this area.

Having in mind that corruption has long been a transnational phenomenon, international cooperation and the building of sustainable partnerships are essential preconditions for a successful implementation of the prevention mechanism and a fight against corruption. The international dimension of the fight contributes in great measure to the success of the national efforts and reform processes as well.

At the international level, Serbia's Ministry of Justice has been participating actively in the work of many international and regional partner organizations and initiatives. They include, among others, the Council of Europe's GRECO and the Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative aimed at ensuring the implementation of international standards in the field of corruption prevention. Serbia has been actively engaged in the Berlin Process within which it has taken up anti-corruption obligations. Last September, the Ministry nominated a focal point to participate in the UNODC project *Fostering sustainable development by supporting the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) in countries along the Silk Road Economy Belt*.

Recognizing the importance of international cooperation, the Corruption Prevention Agency has continually exchanged experiences and knowledge with kindred institutions. In doing so, it has always been guided by the fact that European integrations are Serbia's strategic priorities and that all forms of cooperation are subservient to this context. The representatives of the Agency take part in the GRECO delegation of the Council of Europe and are included in the activities of UNODC and the Intergovernmental Working Group on Prevention of Corruption, as well as the Conference of the UNCAC States Parties. The Agency is the country's focal point for the OECD's

Anti-Corruption Network and has also been elected a Vice-Chair of the Network of Corruption Prevention Authorities, an anti-corruption association of 29 countries.

Last year, the Agency hosted an International Conference to mark International Anti-Corruption Day and 10 years since the beginning of its work; the representatives of anti-corruption bodies and civil sectors from 15 countries took part in the work of the Conference. Recognized as an example of good practices in the field of corruption prevention in 2019, it presented, at the invitation of the organizer, its experiences and results at the meetings of the UNODC, UNCAC and CEI Working Groups.

Thank you.