

Successes and Challenges in Afghan Anti-Corruption Efforts

High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption joined together with the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee to discuss Anti-Corruption in Afghanistan.

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BRASILIA, November, 2012 (HQ ISAF) – During the 15th International Anti-Corruption Convention members of the High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption (HOOAC) and the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (MEC) joined together for a press conference to discuss the successes and challenges they face in fighting corruption in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan faces many challenges in combating corruption due to the abundance of foreign aid entering into Afghanistan. Mohammad Amin Khuramji, Deputy Director General of Afghanistan's High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption, said that since his office was created in 2008 that criminal codes, audit codes, access to information procedures and a prosecution unit all have been set up, and already 150 corruption-related cases have been brought against ministers, mayors and other high ranking government officials. In addition to these successes, the HOOAC continues to focus on four specific areas - they include: asset declaration, corruption prevention, case tracking with law enforcement, and public awareness and education.

Successful progress in Afghanistan was also cited by Dr. Yama Torabi, Head of Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA). He stated that the Ministry of Mines has recently followed through on its promise to publish all mining contracts on the Internet and that only one was missing from the release.

Seema Ghani, Executive Director of the MEC noted that 38% percent of the benchmark measures recommended by the watchdog Monitoring and Evaluation Committee have been fully implemented and 32% are in the process of being adopted, which is further cause for encouragement. Mr. Khuramji followed up with a positive comment stating that retaining the political will to implement and enforce the government accountability and anti-corruption measures will be critical to stability and success in the anti-corruption sector.

In keeping with the conference theme of "Mobilizing People: Connecting Agents of Change", two civil society organizations contributed to the conversation by disclosing that the corruption situation will get no easier with the withdrawal of NATO combat troops in 2014, but that with the help of civil society progress can and will be made.

"Weak state institutions due to corruption are hampering the reduction of corruption and good governance," said Nargis Nehan, Executive Director, Equality for Peace and Democracy. But, the use of the national budget as transparency and accountability tool has been met with great success. The Ministry of Finance has recently provided complete access to the nation's budget. "That's a big achievement because when we have more revenues and less (foreign direct) assistance, the national budget becomes a source of accountability and transparency," she said.

The building blocks are gradually being put into place for citizens to monitor how the government spends the billions of dollars in foreign assistance for post-conflict reconstruction. Achievements in fighting corruption come from efforts not only of the

HOOAC, MEC and Civil Society, but also from Afghan's themselves, when they reject corrupt practices in each of their communities, anti-corruption activists and government representatives said at a news conference on the sidelines of the International Anti-Corruption Conference here.

The true test will come when Afghanistan has elections in 2014, only then will we see whether the political elite, who are suspected of smuggling \$8 billion from the country, support the anti-corruption drive, said Torabi from Integrity Watch Afghanistan.