

PRESS RELEASE

14 December, 2016

Yerevan

Annual Award Ceremony Dedicated to the International Anti-Corruption Day “Government-CSO Cooperation” Anti-Corruption Forum Closing Ceremony of the “Multi-Faceted Anti-Corruption Promotion” Project

On 9 December, 2016, at 09.30AM-18.10PM (venue: Marriott Armenia Hotel, Tigran Mets Hall), the “Armenian Lawyers’ Association” NGO and the CSO Anti-Corruption Coalition of Armenia organised an anti-corruption event in the scope of the “Multi-Faceted Anti-Corruption Promotion” project funded by the European Union and co-funded by the OSCE Office in Yerevan. The event dedicated to the International Anti-Corruption Day comprised 3 parts.

In the 1st part of the event the *Annual Anti-Corruption Ceremony Dedicated to the International Anti-Corruption Day* was held. **Mr. Davit Harutyunyan**, the Minister-Chief of Staff of the Government of the RA, **H.E. Dr. Piotr Antoni Świtalski**, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, the Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Armenia, **Mr. David Gullette**, a Democratisation Officer at the OSCE Office in Yerevan, **Mr. Arthur Davtyan**, the RA Prosecutor General, and **Mr. Karen Zadoyan**, the President of the Armenian Lawyers’ Association and the Coordinator of the Secretariat of the CSO Anti-Corruption Coalition of Armenia, gave opening remarks.

Mr. Zadoyan noted, “We want to change the wheel of our country. We want to have a competitive, legal state whose citizens do not plan on leaving the country as soon as possible but rather strive for staying to create and increasing the good”. Speaking of the remarkable achievements of the passing year, he mentioned the legislative bill on criminalisation of illicit enrichment, “Thank God, this year we are approaching the conclusion of our eight years’ fight which wouldn’t have happened without the Government’s will. We are also close to the establishment of an independent anti-corruption agency. We should not be afraid of small steps so that we do not have any regrets in two years’ time about not creating the agency we needed and so that we don’t have to start everything over again”. Mr. Davtyan attached great importance to the activities of criminal prosecution agencies in the fight against corruption. He noted that in the case of such offences problems that occur are linked to finding information and proving the defendant’s guilt. The support of the public is greatly needed at both stages. Mr. Harutyunyan noted that both words and actual work are important for the progress as one cannot bring success without the other. Words are important in terms of getting ideas across to the public, and the work should be coordinated. Speaking of the work done, he stressed that that was only the framework on which successful fight against corruption would be built. H.E. Dr. Piotr Antoni Świtalski mentioned two big obstacles in the fight against corruption. One is when government officials believe that corruption is not a problem and try to find excuses. And the second one is when the public believes that there is no other way out of this situation. However, according to Mr. Świtalski, the Armenian society and government are ready to combat corruption: “I am so glad that the new government of Armenia has put the fight against corruption so high in its agenda. I am so glad that the Prime Minister is speaking so often, and when you look at the programme of the new government you can see that there are very ambitious and very far-reaching measures envisaged to be implemented. And I can only hope that these measures will be materialised. I am sure that when implemented these measures will bring about a change. So I hope that this year we are celebrating a turning point, that we will remember this day as a new chapter for Armenia and for our common challenges here. As the European Union, we stand ready to support this fight. As you may know, the European Union has allocated EUR15 mln to support different measures in the fight against corruption both through budget support and through financing initiatives, like the one we are participating in today. And we are ready to continue our support. As you know, the recent years were not encouraging. For 2015, the benchmarks for the commitments that were set forth were not fulfilled. Only 50% of what we wanted to allocate was authorised for spending by impartial evaluators. But I hope very much that this year and next year will be the good years. That is, the more the European Union can spend here in Armenia supporting the government and the civil society, the more rewarding this full process is for me personally and for the whole team”.

During the ceremony the award “**Citizen of the Year**” was presented to 21-year-old **Mr. Gevorg Beglaryan** who had succeeded in receiving a birth certificate without getting embroiled in corruption. He had previously been denied that right for 20 years for the reason that he had been born at home. The award was presented by **Mr. Davit Harutyunyan**, the Minister-Chief of Staff of the RA Government. **Ms. Nelly Grigoryan**, a journalist at *Aravot* Daily, was presented the award in the category “**Journalist of the Year**” for her regular coverage of cost-ineffective budget spendings and corruption risks. The award for the “**Mass Media Outlet of the Year**” was presented to **Mr. Babken Tunyan**, the founder of the *b4b.am* website for conducting serious analyses on monopolies in Armenia and opening a new pro-business website where financial indexes of large Armenian companies are collectively presented. The award was handed to Mr. Tunyan by **H.E. Dr. Piotr Antoni Świtalski**, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, the Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Armenia. The anti-corruption award in the category “**Business Organisation of the Year**” was presented to **Mr. Khachik Gevorgyan**, the President of the *ARMACAD* company. His persistent fight had resulted in a change being stipulated in the new law due to which export of low-cost goods from Armenia is not hindered anymore. The award was handed to Mr. Gevorgyan by **H.E. Mr. Petr Mikyska**, the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Czech



The Project is funded by the European Union.

Delegation of the European Union to Armenia
Tel.: +37410 54 64 94
Fax: +37410 54 64 95

The European Commission is the EU’s executive body.

“The European Union is made up of 28 Member States who have decided to gradually link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, during a period of enlargement of 50 years, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders”.



The Project is co-funded by the OSCE Office in Yerevan.
Tel.: +374 10 229610
Fax: +374 10 229615

The OSCE Office in Yerevan has been operating since 1999, and its mission is to support Armenia in developing its democratic institutions and strengthening civil society, acting in the areas of legislative reform; combating corruption and trafficking; environmental activities; raising awareness for human rights; media freedom; gender equality, etc.



Armenian Lawyers’ Association
Address: 7 Nalbandyan Str., Suite 2, Yerevan, Armenian, 0010
Tel.: +37410 54 01 99
Fax: +37410 58 02 99



Freedom of Information Center
Address: 1/3 Buzand Str., Yerevan 0010, Armenia
Tel.: +37410 56 03 60
Fax: +37410 56 03 60

PRESS RELEASE

14 December, 2016

Yerevan

Republic to Armenia, and **Mr. Amias Moores**, the Deputy Head of Mission at the British Embassy to Armenia. The anti-corruption award in the category “**CSO of the Year**” was presented to **Mr. Hakob Avagyan**, the President of the “SME Cooperation Association” for suggesting systemic solutions to corruption-related problems and protection of businessmen’s interests. The final award in the category “**Young Citizen of the Year**” was presented to 19-year-old **Ms. Ofelya Zakaryan**, a student at the Yerevan State University, for having identified in her research corruption risks in customs brokers activities.

K. Zadoyan handed out certificates of appreciation for cooperation and support to the following individuals: **Mr. Davit Harutyunyan**, Minister-Chief of Staff of the Government of the RA; **Ms. Arpine Hovhannisyan**, RA Minister of Justice; **H.E. Dr. Piotr Antoni Świtalski**, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, the Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Armenia; **H.E. Mr. Argo Avakov**, Ambassador, Head of the OSCE Office in Yerevan; **Ms. Satik Badeyan**, Member of the CSO Anti-Corruption Coalition and President of the “Regional Development and Research Centre” NGO; **Mr. Hrayr Khachatryan**, President of the “Law for the Rule of Law” NGO.

In the 2nd part of the event dedicated to the *Government-CSO Cooperation* Anti-Corruption Forum A. Davtyan, D. Harutyunyan and K. Zadoyan, as well as other high-ranking officials and representatives of non-governmental and international organisations, participated. They spoke about the success achieved in the scope of Government-CSO Cooperation and the prospects of developing this cooperation.

As it was presented, the first step taken was drafting the legislative package on criminalisation of illicit enrichment. According to the latter, if a person with an obligation to submit income and asset declarations is not able to justify the legal sources of those assets/income he/she will be charged with illicit enrichment. Secondly, the mechanisms of bypassing the article on criminalisation of illicit enrichment had been studied. According to Mr. Harutyunyan, the studies had shown that there were many given or received loans in the declarations completed. The new bill defines that all transactions exceeding AMD 2 mln should be completed electronically, otherwise the person will be charged under the article of illicit enrichment. The third step was expanding the scope of persons obliged to submit income and asset declarations. Additionally, discussions on drafting a legislative package on an independent anti-corruption agency had been held. Two agency models had been put on the table: the independent preventive agency with educational and preventive functions and the independent universal agency vested with an additional power to initiate criminal cases and carry out preliminary investigations. The fifth important step taken addressed the introduction of a whistle-blower mechanism in the legislation. At that moment, mechanisms of anonymity and protection to be guaranteed to whistle-blowers by law were being discussed.

Prosecutor General A. Davtyan deemed important the public’s trust and support to criminal prosecution agencies. He noted that in the period of September-November 2016 54 criminal cases had been initiated against employees of different state agencies, in 16 of which high-ranking officials had been indicted.

The official closing ceremony of the “Multi-Faceted Anti-Corruption Promotion” project was held in the 3rd part of the event. The work, results and achievements of the past three years were summarised.

The main goal of the “**Multi-Faceted Anti-Corruption Promotion**” project was to increase the role of the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in promoting anti-corruption reforms and their implementation. In the framework of the project the capacity of CSOs and the media to engage in monitoring and watchdog activities has been enhanced. Thus, 100 CSOs and media organisations have strengthened their understanding of corruption issues and freedom of information as well as their ability to monitor and engage in watchdog activities. Small sub-grants were allocated to 20 CSOs and media organisations for raising the effectiveness of public monitoring and the implementation of appropriate monitoring, watchdog and investigative activities. In 2014, the CSO Anti-Corruption Coalition of Armenia was established in the scope of the project. The Coalition now comprises more than 80 CSOs and media organisations and plays a key role in the sustainable CSO-Government dialogue developed in the scope of the project. The joint work of the Government and the Coalition on the issues of the criminalisation of illicit enrichment and the establishment of an independent anti-corruption agency in Armenia has been a particularly remarkable achievement in the scope of the project. The legislative bills on the above-mentioned two reforms are currently on the way of getting enacted.

The project was funded by the European Union and co-funded by the OSCE Office in Yerevan. It was implemented by the “Armenian Lawyers’ Association” NGO – Applicant and “Freedom of Information Center” NGO – Partner. The project duration was 3 years (January 2014 – December 2016) and the budget was EUR650,000, of which EUR585,000 was contributed by the EU and EUR31,117 was contributed by the OSCE Office in Yerevan.

The **Armenian Lawyers’ Association** (ALA) was established in 1995 with a mission to promote to the establishment of the rule of law, democracy and formation of the civil society in Armenia, where the people are aware of their rights and where their rights are protected. Before February 2016, ALA was called Armenian Young Lawyers Association.

The **Freedom of Information Center** (FOI) has been operating for over 10 years. The Mission of FOI is to promote application of the RA Freedom of Information Law, contribute to the transparency and openness of the Armenian government system and to stimulate civic society’s involvement in the governance system.

For more information please contact PR Coordinator Mrs. Narine Karapetyan on business days from 9:00 to 18:00. Tel.: 540199; Fax: 580299; URL: <http://www.armla.am>.



The Project is funded by the European Union.

Delegation of the European Union to Armenia
Tel: +37410 54 64 94
Fax: +37410 54 64 95

The European Commission is the EU’s executive body.

“The European Union is made up of 28 Member States who have decided to gradually link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, during a period of enlargement of 50 years, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders”.



The Project is co-funded by the OSCE Office in Yerevan.
Tel: +374 10 229610
Fax: +374 10 229615

The OSCE Office in Yerevan has been operating since 1999, and its mission is to support Armenia in developing its democratic institutions and strengthening civil society, acting in the areas of legislative reform; combating corruption and trafficking; environmental activities; raising awareness for human rights; media freedom; gender equality, etc.



Armenian Lawyers’ Association
Address: 7 Nalbandyan Str., Suite 2, Yerevan, Armenian, 0010
Tel: +37410 54 01 99
Fax: +37410 58 02 99



Freedom of Information Center
Address: 1/3 Buzand Str., Yerevan 0010, Armenia
Tel: +37410 56 03 60
Fax: +37410 56 03 60