The 13th International Anti-Corruption Conference is underway!

The 13th International Anti-Corruption Conference (IACC) was opened yesterday in Athens, Greece, at the airy Megaron conference centre with speeches from the IACC Council Chair, Greek parliamentarians and ministers, representatives of Transparency International, and Kostas Karamanlis, the Prime Minister of Greece.

IACC Chair, the Hon. Barry O'Keefe, delivered the opening address, reminding participants that this is the 25th anniversary of the IACC, recalling the very first conference in Washington D.C. in 1983. O'Keefe noted that, with over 1200 delegates from 135 countries, this is largest IACC to-date, reflecting the growing reach and impact of the anticorruption movement.

Costas Bakouris, Chair of TI Greece, reflected on the great philosophers of ancient Greece, in particular Aristotle's axioms on the nature of greed and crime, to draw inspiration in tackling corruption today.

Outlining the corrosive relationship between corruption, resource allocation, the environment and development and human security, TI Chair, Huguette Labelle, emphasised the human cost of corruption, and also spoke of the role of transparency and accountability in the unfolding global financial crisis.

Illustrating the ubiquity of corruption, Sotirios Hatzigakis, Minister of Justice, and Dimitrios Sioufas, President of the Hellenic Parliament, both noted that corruption was already documented thousands of years ago in ancient Mesopotamia.

Both speakers, and the Prime Minister who delivered a powerful, final speech, detailed the progress Greece has made in recent years in addressing the age-old scourge of corruption. They mapped out the laws, procedures, court cases and commissions that have served as the Greek government's anti-bribery arsenal.

Prime Minister Karamanlis reiterated that corruption represents a common enemy, threatening lives and closing doors.

The visiting speakers thanked the people and the Government of Greece for hosting the conference and providing such a spectacular setting, and all speakers recognised HAH Bartholomew, Ecumenical Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church. Karamanlis closed with his wishes for a successful conference, with new momentum for fight corruption and for a sustainable future.
You are a leading force in the European Transparency Initiative. In your opinion, what role does transparency play in the EU’s legitimacy as a public institution?

There is a need for the modern world to be transparent and for information to be made available. If you don’t, then you are lagging behind the modern world. The question is how to handle all the information – it is a natural part of modern administrations that information is open and publicly accessible.

When the EU Commission’s register of lobbyists that seek to influence its policymaking was launched in June, you stated that voluntary registering would become obligatory if few lobbyists signed up. How is registering progressing? Are you optimistic that it can continue as a voluntary initiative?

Yes, I am optimistic. The number is around 480 in our register. It is not satisfactory in the sense that we estimated there to be 1,500 possible entries, so this is one third. While this is not satisfactory you can consider that this number is quite big and be happy as well. It would have been an utter failure if there would have been just tens of entries, but now there are hundreds, and they are still coming. Some very big players have registered so others will follow. We will assess next spring whether there is enough or what should be amended. I am more and more convinced though, that this voluntary approach is the right one as it is clear that if you are part of this that you have nothing to hide and that you are reliable. Therefore, it creates a kind of moral peer pressure which convinces others to also sign up.

I would not have started this operation at all if there had not been a common understanding that something must be done to create an additional level of legitimacy to this field and now it’s there.

Currently the Commission and Parliament have separate lobbyist registers, while the Council has none. Why are plans for one register which will cover all three institutions?

This is perhaps the plan with Parliament and we hope and propose to have a common register for all the institutions. The Council was not very interested in doing this, which I regret and we will try to convince them to go ahead with these ideas. In Parliament they have a completely different approach where registered lobbyists have access to Parliament, but we have a common understanding that if you are a lobbyist then you should not have two different applications – one application to Parliament and one application to the Commission. The information should be interchangeable. They [EU Parliament] have a different logic – they have a registry of people and we of organisations, but of course this can be combined and I believe that in the future we will have a common register with Parliament.

In light of the highly critical reports recently issues by the Commission detailing Bulgaria and Romania’s lagging anti-corruption efforts, and, in Bulgaria’s case, the reported misuse of EU funds, does the Commission have plans to revise its policies/procedures?

This is another part of my portfolio, the fight against fraud, securing and monitoring the proper use of money. It is part of our wider strategy to improve fiscal governance and the Commission has started to be much tougher on member states. This is not only Bulgaria and Romania, we have suspended payments to the UK, to Spain, to Greece, and this will be the case until member states take the necessary measures. Overall, the Commission has no competence in legislating anti-corruption rules in member states, but we, of course, try to be very active and have suggested several actions to fight corruption in member states. While we do not have the competence to legislate directly, there are numerous ideas on what can be done based on all our experiences. For example, we are working actively in Bulgaria, where we have suspended payments, with our anti-fraud office to see improvement.
Plenary 2: Corruption in Natural Resources & Energy Markets (9:00 – 10:30)

Natural Resources and Energy Markets attempts to look at the causes and consequences of the elevated corruption risk that plague natural resources particularly extractive industries and the energy markets.

Mary Robinson, Former President of Ireland and Former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
Patrick Alley, Director & Co Founder, Global Witness
Ngozi Okonjo Iweala, Managing Director, the World Bank
Peter Eigen, Chair, Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
Karin Lissakers, Executive Director, Revenue Watch Institute

Moderated by Michael Peel, Legal Correspondent, Financial Times

In spite of market diversification, we depend on oil. Join us for the second plenary, where we will survey how the lack of governance is robbing poor people of their country’s natural riches; what can be done and how.

Workshop Session 2 (11:00 – 13:00)

2.1 Tackling Corruption in the Defence and Security Sector – The Banqueting Hall / Level -2
2.2 Implementation of Anti-Corruption Strategies in the Balkans: Achievements and Challenges – MC 3 / L -1
2.3 Transparency in the Extractive Industries – Making the Case for a Global Standard – Alexandria Trianti Hall / L:0
2.4 Governance and Corruption in Land and Natural Resource Tenure – MC 2 / L -1
2.5 Making Public Awareness Campaigns Work! A Multi-Media Experience – MC 3.2 / L -1
2.6 Protecting the Whistleblowers – Asian and European Perspectives – Conference 1 / L:1
2.7 Countering Bribery in The Supply Chain: The Missing Link? – Nikos Skalkotas Hall / L -1

Workshop Session 3 (14:00 – 16:00)

3.1 Fragmented Tyrannies: The Nexus of Corruption and Extreme Violence – MC 3 / L -1
3.2 Trade and Customs Partnership to Fight against Corruption and Safeguard Integrity – MC 3.2 / L -1
3.3 Corruption in Energy Services: Finding a Focus to Fight Back – The Banqueting Hall / L -2
3.4 Beating the “Resource Cures”, Where Next for Development Cooperation? – Nikos Skalkotas Hall / L -1
3.5 Improving Health Sector Responsiveness, Transparency and Accountability: the Role of the Medicines Transparency Alliance (MTA) – MC 2 / L -1
3.6 Creating Synergies for Technical Assistance – Alexandria Trianti Hall / L:0
3.7 Combating Corruption through Private Sector “Collective Action” – Conference 1 / L:1

Special Training (14:00 – 16:00 & 17:00 – 19:00)

Combating Corruption in Water Supply and Sanitation – MC 3.4 / L -1

Special Sessions (17:00 – 19:00)

Special Session 1: Prevent rather than regret: UNCAC opens doors to corruption prevention – The Banqueting Hall / L -2
Special Session 2: Confronting Corruption for a Sustainable Future: Is the Private Sector Ready? – Nikos Skalkotas Hall / L -1
Special Session 3: Integrating Human Rights and Anti-Corruption Policies, Challenges and Opportunities – MC 2 / L -1

19:00 – 20:00 Transportation to the Networking Event Venue
20:00 – 24:00 Networking Event
Bringing transparency to the cradle of democracy

Only three years after the founding of Transparency International, when the global anti-corruption movement was still in its infancy, several visionary individuals decided it was time to move Greece into the real sunlight.

Since its founding in 1996, the work of Transparency International Greece has expanded to focus on a broad spectrum of issues. The small but diligent organisation has sought to embody the spirit of the global movement: giving civil society a role in solving the corruption trickling into the lives of all Greeks.

Through the years, TI Greece has been joined by the Ministry of Education, the General Secretariat for Youth and other partners in its struggle to infuse ethical principles in education and participated in an e-government project developed by the Greek Ministry of the Interior.

The chapter has carried out a national opinion survey to measure levels of corruption in the country. Together with the Public Railway Organisation, they embarked on a mission to curb abuse of power in public procurement and its efforts to curb corrupt activity in the private sector was seconded by the Athens Chamber of Commerce & Industry and the country’s leading business associations.

Engaging citizens and power brokers, TI-Greece has targeted both the petty trickery and the grand corruption by forming coalitions and mobilising citizens. This year, the chapter launched the “Open Alliance to Society for Integrity and Transparency”, an initiative involving sound social and political institutions.

Markets in Greece

Looking for an special memento of Athens? Try one of the many markets. From jewellery and ornaments to Greek delicacies and trinkets, you’re bound to find the perfect reminder of your time in Athens.

Top tip:

The largest market in Athens, Varvakeios Agora, offers an outstanding choice of fresh meat, fish, fruit and vegetables from all over Greece. Open daily except Sundays.

Did you know?

The national anthem of Greece has 158 verses

Useful information and important numbers

Business centre in Megaron centre (level -1)

PCs - Internet - Printers - Photocopying

Telephone numbers:
Police emergency: 112
Tourist police: 171
Ambulance: 166
Pharmacies Athens: 107
Greek National Tourist Organisation: 210 327 1300
Taxi: 210 515 2800

How to say

Ναι (nee) Yes
Όχι (oh-kee) No
Γεια σας (yiassas) Hello
Καλημέρα (kalee-maira) Good morning
Καλησπέρα (kalee-spaira) Good evening
Παρακαλώ (parakalo) Please/ You’re welcome
Ευχαριστώ (ef-ha-ree-sto) Thank you

Weather

TODAY: partly clouded
High: 27°  Low: 18°
TOMORROW: partly clouded
High: 26°  Low: 18°

MAIN PARTNERS: