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## **International Anti-Corruption Day Marked in BiH**

*This year's International Anti-Corruption Day takes place amidst lack of initiative and political will on the part of BiH authorities to curb the widespread corruption*

**Sarajevo, 8 December 2006** --- The International Anti-Corruption Day is marked globally for the third time since it was established. Transparency International Bosnia and Herzegovina (TI BiH) and the Regional Secretariat of the Stability Pact Anti-Corruption Initiative (SPA-IRSLO) have organised a regional conference devoted to anti-corruption efforts with special focus on implementation of the most important global instrument for preventing, curbing and fighting corruption, namely the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), which has recently been ratified by Bosnia and Herzegovina. The main topics are: prevention of corruption, role and significance of the specialised anti-corruption bodies, and seizure of illegal earnings. The conference gathered a large number of representatives from relevant institutions and organisations from the country and the region.

The conference was also used for presentation of the "National Integrity System Study – Bosnia and Herzegovina 2007", the only such study in BiH providing an analysis of anti-corruption institutional capacities and legal framework. The study was made possible by funding from the Open Society Fund. The key findings indicate a contradictory and complex legal framework, weak and politicised law enforcement mechanisms and structures, and a bureaucratic apparatus several times as large as the European average producing an enormous number of administrative procedures, thus creating fertile ground for widespread corruption.

Given that BiH is ahead of key transition challenges and in a situation when a lot of valuable time has already been lost, any further delay in systemic anti-corruption combat may threaten the coming reform processes and lead to far-reaching consequences for the country. Especially worrying are the cases of privatisation of large strategically important companies, which are characterised by lack of transparency and failure to follow the legally prescribed procedures. Not less worrying is the lack of privatisation of some companies, which continue to be run by political structures for their own benefit rather than for the benefit of the state that owns these companies. Such an environment deters much needed foreign investment and makes domestic investment less interesting and profitable.

This year's International Anti-Corruption Day is marked amidst severe lack of initiative and political will on the part of BiH authorities to curb corruption. Unfortunately, no political consensus exists over the main reform priorities either. The formation of government structures following the October General Elections is accompanied by a lot of problems and delays, which only adds to the uncertainty in the period when the domestic institutions are expected to take over the responsibilities from the international community.