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Fight against corruption passive and inefficient

Transparency International Bosnia and Herzegovina marked the International Anti-Corruption Day by organizing a Conference where it was concluded that the legal and political system of BiH enables corruption instead of fighting against it

Sarajevo, 09 December 2009th - Transparency International Bosnia and Herzegovina (TI BiH) held its sixth annual conference on the occasion of 9th December, International Anti- Corruption Day, which was an opportunity to summarize the status of corruption and results in its suppression through open dialogue of representatives of governmental institutions, civil society and experts.

This year's conference theme was, above all, status and level of corruption in BiH, then the level of implementation of anti-corruption reforms and prosecution of corruption in the courts and prosecutors' offices. Participants of the Conference were representatives of state institutions, international organizations, embassies, civil society organizations and the media. The conference was opened by Emir Djikic, TI BiH Chair of the Board of Directors, H. E. Jan Braathu, Ambassador of Norway and Beriz Belkic, the second deputy chairman of the House of Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH.

The attendees were then addressed by H. E. Dimitris Kourkoulas Head of the Delegation of the European Commission in BiH, Raffi Gregorian, Principal Deputy High Representative. H.E. Kourkoulas commented on the last European Commission BiH Progress Report, where he characterized the progress of BiH in the field of fight against corruption as very small or insignificant, emphasizing the importance of anti-corruption reforms for the accession of BiH to the European Union, assessing the current implementation of these reforms as very inefficient. H.E. Raffi Gregorian also spoke of the latest competitiveness report, according to which Bosnia and Herzegovina fell to the 109th place, finding itself between Uganda and Cambodia, and drew a parallel between the presence of corruption in BiH and its business competitiveness. Mr. Gregorian has emphasized the importance of the stay of international judges and prosecutors in BiH, claiming that, given the political pressures suffered by the domestic courts and prosecutor's office, they are the only way that high-ranking politicians in BiH could be held accountable.

TI BiH has again warned of the dramatic level of corruption in BiH, which was also confirmed by the latest findings of the Corruption Perception Index, according to which BiH is the most corrupt country in the region and is located at the bottom of the scale of European countries. Norwegian Ambassador, H.E. Jan Braathu, said this index as a very important sign that citizens are dissatisfied and unhappy with the situation in the country.

Some of the blame for this situation, as outlined, is on law enforcement agencies and the judiciary who are not effective in the prosecution of corruption cases and who are visibly exposed to political pressures. It was also pointed out to the fact that the fight against corruption only has a declarative character because there is no will

on behalf of relevant institutions to be actively involved in the fight against this disease of Bosnian-Herzegovinian society. As noted at the Conference, the main reason for the lack of will to fight corruption is the fact that precisely those institutions that are supposed to combat corruption are themselves involved in corruptive activities.

The second panel of the Conference was dedicated to the prosecution of corruption cases before the courts and prosecutors' offices in BiH, where the speakers were Mr. Mirko Lujic, director of SIPA BiH and Milorad Barasin, Chief Prosecutor of BiH Prosecutor's Office, who in addition to speaking about the obstacles that investigative authorities and prosecutors face in investigating corruption at higher levels, where the problem is particularly pronounced, spoke also of the lack of will of citizens to report corruption and to testify about the corruption cases. Mr. Srdjan Blagovcanin, executive director of TI BiH, commented on the lack of capacity of investigative bodies and prosecutor's offices, and the worrying low number of verdicts in cases of corruption compared to the total number of cases.

At the Conference the findings of the latest Quarterly Corruption Perceptions Research in BiH were also presented, according to which corruption is, at least from the perspective of citizens, the most and equally present in the privatization process and the cantonal administration, followed by political parties. SIPA was again singled out as an area or institution for which respondents estimated as the least corrupt. The largest number of respondents would, if they were asked, give bribe to a doctor or other medical personnel, who were also listed as persons who most often request bribe. In this way the image of the state of corruption in BiH was presented, both from the perspective of the legal system and institutions, and from the perspective of citizens themselves, because they are precisely those who most suffer the consequences of corruption.