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Corruption Perception Index 2009

The Transparency International national chapter in Azerbaijan is pleased to present the TI Corruption Perception Index 2009. This year Azerbaijan was ranked 143 among 180 countries surveyed in 2009 with a score of 2.3 (on a scale from 10 -very clean to 0 -very corrupt),¹ which is a tangible improvement.

Our chapter was very concerned about the persistently low score of Azerbaijan over the past two years: 2.1 in 2007 (and 150th place among 180 countries surveyed) and 1.9 in 2008 (159th among 180) which was explained by inadequate implementation of the newly adopted anti-corruption laws. It also takes time to change perceptions which follow changes in real life with some delay.

It is remarkable that Azerbaijan shows an improved score this year, which might be the outcome of government's commitment to improve the business environment. In 2007-2008 the country was ranked among the top ten reformers in the World Bank's Doing Business survey.

Another prominent factor which might have contributed to improved perceptions is an increasing awareness and participation of citizens in curbing corruption. This has become possible through five Advocacy and Legal Advice Centres (ALACs) operating across the country during the last five years. Since the project's launch in July 2005 TI Azerbaijan has received 21,450 initial calls/contacts and 2,960 formal written complaints submitted by citizens with various problems, of which about 68% have been resolved by various public agencies in cooperation with TI-Az.

Additionally, the government has entered into an open dialogue with civil society through a network of local anti-corruption NGOs, including TI Azerbaijan. The newly launched

¹ See explanation of the ranking and score below in the section Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

State Council of Support to NGOs also assists in maintaining government - NGO cooperation. These are positive strides in the right direction.

The Government is implementing the National Strategy for Increasing Transparency and Combating Corruption for 2007-2011, adopted with considerable inputs from civil society and international organizations and implemented with participation thereof, which makes it more effective than the first National Anti-corruption Program for 2004-2006.

TI-Az sees tangible improvements in the execution of court rulings, recruitment to public service, calculation of pensions and the institutional set-up for handling complaints, especially by the Ministries of Education, Labor and Social Protection, State Social Protection Fund. Also, institutions dealing directly with entrepreneurs have shown a professional attitude with a number of regulatory simplifications and reduction in the costs of doing business.

However, this does not mean that corruption does not pose a problem nor excludes further intense efforts of Azerbaijan in combating corruption. Corruption is still entrenched throughout society and the government needs to improve law enforcement procedures to ensure that anti-corruption legislation works. People wishing to report cases of corruption do not feel secure so far and need protection from the state bound by the law. Furthermore, serious efforts are required to improve transparency in public budget expenditure and public procurement and to protect the rights of consumers, especially in the utilities sector including electricity, gas and water supplied by natural monopolists. The goal is to make citizens to feel changes for the better in their daily lives.

This situation requires holistic research focusing on systematic assessment of the public administration system and implementation of the laws. Transparency International has developed such a methodology – National Integrity Systems Study. This research is needed by the country to better understand the root causes of corruption related problems and to identify and then design required treatment based on this analysis. Findings of the NIS study will allow us to address the causes of corruption, not its symptoms.

There is persistent political will in the country to curb corruption, and we believe the best results will be achieved by joint efforts of all stakeholders: the Government, civil society, business community and citizens.

***PR and Media Department
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