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Session II: Enhancing transparency, promoting good governance and the rule of law for preventing and combating corruption

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The phenomenon of corruption, regardless of socio-cultural characteristics as well as economic and political peculiarities of a particular state, has always accompanied the development of state institutions. Punishment and repressive measures are not enough to curb corruption, it is important to eliminate its economic, legal, institutional and social roots.

Uzbekistan in the 2019 Corruption Perception Index reported by Transparency International ranked 153rd out of 180, rising by 5 positions compared to 2018. The country scored 25 on the 100-point index.

Surely, this figure is not a reason to be proud yet. But the country is taking decisive steps to prevent and combat this extremely negative phenomenon and to strengthen legal and institutional frameworks. The state policy envisages a comprehensive study of causes and conditions of occurrence of corruption risks, timely identification and suppression of such offences, ensuring the principle of inevitability of punishment. This is evidenced by the fact that in the first half of 2020, 459 officials who committed such crimes were held criminally responsible.

The legal foundation is also being developed. In January 2017, the Law "On Combating Corruption" came into force. Anti-corruption state programs which included measures to minimize risks were implemented. For example, in the framework of such programs were adopted laws "On public procurement", "On administrative procedures", "On public-private partnership", "On dissemination of legal information and providing access to it", "On public control". The administrative reform, which is being implemented in Uzbekistan, is aimed to ensure economic growth by reducing administrative restrictions in business and strengthening the anti-corruption component.

The Anti-Corruption Agency was established by the decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan on June 29, 2020. It reports directly to the President and is accountable to Parliament. It is a specially authorized state body to develop and implement state policy in the field of prevention and fight against corruption. The Agency will conduct

systematic analysis of the state of corruption in the country, analyze the results of investigation of corruption crimes, primarily those which are detrimental to the national interests and international image of Uzbekistan.

The priorities of the state policy for the near future are strengthening the independence of the judiciary, elimination of conditions for illegal influence on judges in any form, transparency of the public service, gradual introduction of the system of declaring income of public servants and ensuring a sufficient level of their wages, as well as improving the protection of citizens who report extortion and corruption.

As the President noted in his annual address to the Parliament in January of this year, "until all segments of the population and the best specialists are involved in the fight against corruption, until our entire society is, figuratively speaking, vaccinated with a "honesty vaccine", we will not be able to achieve our goals. We must move from eliminating the consequences of corruption to preventing it early". Therefore, it is also envisaged that civil society institutions and mass media will be genuinely free and involved in the fight against corruption.

There are plans to launch a platform for communication with citizens through which they may report corruption so that the agency can take swift action. We will ensure the announcement of all crimes, regardless of their scope, in conformity with the procedural rules. We are interested in listening to public opinion and call for cooperation public organizations and all citizens.

Taking into account foreign experience an electronic platform "E-Anticor.uz" is being developed in Uzbekistan, which will allow to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of activities of government agencies in the fight against corruption, as well as state and other programs in this area. It is envisaged to introduce declaration of income, property and conflict of interests of public servants. Draft laws "On declaration of income, property and conflict of interests of public servants", "On anti-corruption assessment of regulatory documents and their projects" are being developed.

At the same time, in order to reduce the underground economy and prevent corruption, a strategy to reduce the shadow economy with the involvement of experts from international organizations and the system of "Fair Taxpayer", which will be tested by the end of 2020 in Tashkent as well as "road maps" to combat corruption in terms of areas and activities, to prevent corruption in public procurement and investment projects are being developed. It is planned to launch an information portal for public procurement, create a single database on import, customs clearance and sale of imported goods. A compliance-control system is being introduced in ministries and agencies. By the end of 2020, it will be implemented in 14 more organizations and 10 banks with state shares.

Besides, starting from 2021 anti-corruption assessment will be carried out for each project funded from centralized budgets and investments. One of the innovations is the announcement of corruption ratings and shadow economy for state bodies, enterprises and regions.

Cooperation with such international organizations as UNDP, OECD, World Bank, OSCE, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, European Union is being established. They have already expressed their readiness to cooperate and provide full support in organizing the Agency's activities. In particular, assistance was offered to prepare a package of internal documents and regulations of the Agency, to engage national and foreign experts to develop draft laws on anti-corruption assessment of regulatory documents and their drafts, on mandatory declaration of income by public servants, as well as to study the effectiveness of the anti-corruption system of control over the use of public funds, loans of international organizations and foreign states, and disposal of public assets.