

**REGIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION
INITIATIVE**

27th STEERING GROUP MEETING



Summary, Conclusions and Decisions

Zagreb, Croatia

May 28, 2018

27th Regional Anti-corruption Initiative (RAI) Steering Group (SG) Meeting took place in Zagreb, Croatia on May 28, 2018 and it was organized by RAI Secretariat.

Participants

27th RAI Steering Group Meeting was chaired by the Acting Chairperson Mr. Davor Dubravica. It was attended by 9 member states' representatives:

Albania – Ms. Vilma Petro – Deputy Senior Representative, Advisor of the Minister, Ministry of Justice;

Bosnia and Herzegovina – Mr. Adnan Dlakic – Senior Representative, Expert Adviser, Department for Combating Organized Crime and Corruption, Ministry of Security;

Bulgaria – Ms. Dora Zgurovska – Deputy Senior Representative, Head of Internal Security and Police Cooperation at the EU and International Co-operation Directorate, Ministry of Interior;

Croatia – Ms. Maja Baricevic - Senior Representative, Head of Anti-corruption Sector, Ministry of Justice;

Macedonia – Ms. Elena Dimovska – Deputy Senior Representative, Associate, Unit for Coordination of Anti-corruption Activities, Ministry of Justice;

Moldova – Mr. Valeriu Cupcea – Deputy Senior Representative, Head of the Anti-corruption Policies and Programmes Division, National Anti-corruption Center;

Montenegro – Ms. Marina Micunovic – Senior Representative, Head of Department for International Relations and Standards, Agency for Prevention of Corruption;

Romania – Ms. Ruxandra A. Banica – Delegated Representative, legal personnel with the status of judges and prosecutors, Department for Crime Prevention, Ministry of Justice;

Serbia – Ms. Katarina Nikolic, Senior Representative, Advisor on International Co-operation Matters, Ministry of Justice.

Observers were represented by:

Poland – Mr. Paweł Rutkowski, Expert Coordinator for International Cooperation, Central Anti-corruption Bureau

Slovenia – Mr. Jure Skrbec, Senior European and International Relations Officer, Commission for the Prevention of Corruption

RAI Secretariat was represented by:

Mr. Vladan Joksimovic – Head of Secretariat;

Mr. Tomislav Curic – Anti-corruption Expert;

Ms. Aida Bulbul – Finance and Administrative Officer;

Ms. Jasna Panjeta – Programme and Outreach Officer.

Summary of Discussions

Acting Chairperson Mr. Davor Dubravica welcomed and greeted all members of the Steering Group, especially the newly delegated representative of Albania and Slovenia who was attending first time as an observer to RAI.

Following the introductory remarks, Acting Chairperson presented the Agenda which was adopted by the members of the Steering Group.

1. Election of RAI Chairperson

Acting Chairperson introduced the topic with special emphasis on the fact that RAI is growing, and is more visible. RAI is far more active and relevant in the recent period and much more involved in regional processes.

Acting Chairperson proceeded with technical aspects of the process. Five applications for RAI Chairperson were received following the announcement. Three candidates were considered as responsive/ compliant/ acceptable by the Secretariat and were taken forward for conversation. It was noted as a positive signal that for the first time RAI had more than one candidate for the Chairperson position.

Acting Chairperson presented the format of the conversation with the candidates. It was envisaged as an opportunity for candidates to present themselves and their vision and motivation. Following their individual presentations, SG members would have an opportunity to pose questions regarding candidates' presentation and qualifications. The decision on election of the new Chairperson would be reached by consensus or by 2/3 of votes.

After the conversation with potential candidates, discussion took place regarding strengths and weaknesses of all applicants. RAI Secretariat and observers were also given a chance to express their opinion on the candidates. As the decision could not be reached by consensus, SG opted to make decision by secret ballot.

After the first round of secret voting, the decision was made - Mr. Todor Kolarov was elected as the new RAI Chairperson with 2/3 of votes.

It was agreed that Mr. Kolarov mandate shall start as of September 1st, 2018.

2. Exchange of views with the Commission for the Resolution of Conflict of Interest of the Republic of Croatia

The Commission for the Resolution of Conflict of Interest of the Republic of Croatia was represented by newly appointed President, Ms. Natasa Novakovic. Ms. Novakovic used the opportunity to reconfirm Commission's readiness to work and cooperate with RAI, and stressed the importance of the International Treaty on Exchange of Data for the Verification of Asset Declarations produced by RAI. Ms. Novakovic also shared some obstacles that the Commission faces in their everyday work. SG and Secretariat also engaged into discussion and representatives shared their experiences and challenges in this regard.

3. Information from the Secretariat

Mr. Vladan Joksimovic, Head of Secretariat, used the opportunity to thank Mr. Dubravica for his work and commitment in the previous years, as well as for his readiness to be at RAI's disposal in the future period.

Mr. Joksimovic informed the Steering Group on main activities of the Secretariat for past several months and announced activities to take place in the following period. The particular focus was given to the past and future activities related to International Treaty on Exchange of Data for the Verification of Asset Declarations and its adoption, and to activities related to Asset Recovery project implemented in previous quarter by the RAI Secretariat. Mr. Joksimovic highlighted projects that have been submitted to relevant donors and communicated about those that are currently in the pipeline, with the particular focus on cooperation with EU Commission.

Secretariat is continuously investing efforts to make sure that all RAI member states are included and covered by projects, and ensures equal treatment and inclusion, although this has been extremely challenging given the donors' strict rules on funds usage and purpose.

Head of Secretariat announced that the Secretariat, together with human resources expert will work on next package of amendments of internal rules and policies in particular related to: human resources policies including procedures of hiring of core and project staff, redefinition and upgrade of existing Secretariat positions, upgrade of complaint procedures, introduction of whistleblowing policy; and optimization of finance management manual procedures and rules. RAI Secretariat will present the aforementioned improvements at the next SG meeting.

Head of Secretariat also referred to RAI Strategic outlook in the context of upcoming 20 years of RAI. Ambitious plan is already underway to prepare a new Memorandum of Understanding and to have new member countries. RAI2020 will be a milestone year to promote RAI and to register the organisation as an international body. In this context ToR for Chairperson will be reconsidered, including role and responsibilities and contractual basis/obligations.

4. Presentation of the Financial Report for 2017

Ms. Aida Bulbul, Finance and Administrative Officer presented financial report for 2017, highlighting the fact that financial statements were examined by an independent auditor who gave positive opinion that all expenses that occurred in 2017 were prepared in accordance with financial reporting provisions and in compliance with the Steering Group requirements. External independent financial audit was conducted for Austrian Development Agency funded regional Programme as well.

Highlights pointed out included:

- Core budget 2017 utilization was 96.3%, which indicates an overall increase in number and scope of programmatic activities, followed by increase in operational expenses;
- Member countries continue to duly pay their financial contributions;
- 2017 was peak year of Regional Programme implementation, funded by the Austrian Development Agency. This indicates that a number of Work Plan activities has been implemented using additional funds;

- RAI Secretariat continued cooperating with partner organizations in implementation of joint activities. Funds utilized by partnering organizations in implementation of joint activities add-up to the total financial value of activities co-organized by RAI as this contributed to RAI Work Plan implementation as well.

Following a brief Q&A session, Steering Group took note of the Financial Report for 2017.

5. Tour d' Table

All member country representatives and observers shared recent developments and relevant activities in their respective countries.

Senior Representative of Serbia pointed out that there have been developments in the process of ratification of RAI MoU by Serbia and is hopeful that process should be finalized in due course.

6. Any other Business

Reallocation of 2018 RAI Budget

RAI Secretariat has secured funding for covering some of the operational expenses from donor sources in early 2018, which represents significant relief on RAI core budget. Funds initially planned for covering operation expenses would be reallocated into programmatic activities budget. Also, there were some minor changes in terms of distribution of funds in-between programmatic activities items.

Following the presentation by Finance and Administrative Officer, RAI SG approved proposed reallocation.

Memorandum of Understanding with CEPS - College for Business Studies - RAI Secretariat was approached by CEPS - College for Business Studies from Bosnia and Herzegovina with a proposal to sign a Memorandum of Understanding to formally continue cooperation and define potential activities, including establishment of a regional network of academic institutions. SG members are for cooperation but did not see need for signing the Memorandum of Understanding with this particular institution.

Also, SG members were in favour of continuing cooperation with the academia.

SG members suggested RAI to explore the work of the Anti-Corruption Academic Initiative (ACAD), which is being implemented under the umbrella of UNODC, to avoid potential overlapping and explore avenues for cooperation.

Finally, RAI Secretariat reaffirmed its commitment to continue involving all member countries in all RAI activities.

Conclusions and Decisions

- Steering Group elected Mr. Todor Kolarov as new Chairperson of RAI. Formal commencement date to be to be scheduled for 1st of September 2018;
- Steering Group took note of announced amendments to internal documents, as well as amendments to Institutional Mechanism and possible new MoU in the context of 20 years of RAI;
- Steering Group took note of the Financial Report for 2017;

- Steering Group approved proposed reallocation of 2018 RAI core budget;