

REGIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION INITIATIVE

31th STEERING GROUP MEETING



Summary, Conclusions and Decisions

June, 23rd 2020 (Teleconference, via Zoom)

31th Regional Anti-corruption Initiative (RAI) Steering Group (SG) Meeting due to the COVID19 outbreak took place on June 23, 2020 in a format of Teleconference - via Zoom. The meeting was organized by the RAI Secretariat.

Participants

31th RAI Steering Group Meeting was co-chaired by the RAI Chairperson, Ms Laura Stefan and Head of RAI Secretariat, Mr. Vladan Joksimovic. It was attended by 9 member countries' representatives:

Albania – Ms. Fjoralba Caka, Deputy Minister of Justice of Albania Ms. Rovena Pregja – Head of the Anticorruption Programs Unit in the Anticorruption Directorate, in the Ministry of Justice of Albania;

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 International Legal Affairs Unit, EU and International Co-operation Directorate, Ministry of Interior;

Croatia – Mr. Ivan Odeljan, Representative, Head of Anti-Corruption Sector, Ministry of Justice;

Moldova – Mr. Valeriu Cupcea, Deputy Senior Representative, Head of the International Cooperation Directorate, National Anti-corruption Centre;

Montenegro – Ms. Marina Micunovic, Senior Representative, Head of Section, Department for International Cooperation, Agency for Prevention of Corruption;

North Macedonia – Ms. Elena Dimovska, Deputy Senior Representative, Advisor, Unit for Coordination of the Activities Against Corruption, Ministry of Justice;

Romania – Ms. Anca Luminita Stroe – Senior Representative, Legal Counsellor, Crime Prevention Department, Ministry of Justice;

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

Ms. Laura Stefan, RAI Chairperson

RAI Secretariat was represented by:

Mr. Vladan Joksimovic – Head of Secretariat;

Ms. Aneta Arnaudovska – Senior Anti-corruption Advisor;

Ms. Aida Zukic – Chief Finance and Operations Officer;

Ms. Dejana Grbic-Velagic – Chief Programme and Communications Officer;

Ms. Desislava Gotskova – Project Manager;

Ms. Elmerina Ahmetaj Hrelja - Project Manager;

Ms. Iva Komsic - Programme Officer

Ms. Amra Softic - Project Officer

Summary of Discussions

Head of RAI Secretariat, Mr. Vladan Joksimovic, opened the meeting and welcomed all participants joining the Zoom meeting, introduced Ms. Laura Stefan, the new RAI Chairperson and mentioned that they will co-chair the SG meeting, presented the old and the new members of the SG and welcomed Ms. Fjoralba Caka, the Deputy Minister of Justice of Albania, Ms. Rovena Pregja, Head of the Directorate for Anti-Corruption in the Ministry of Justice of Albania and Mr. Ivan Odeljan from the Ministry of Justice of Croatia, as well the RAI Secretariat core and project staff. Ms. Fjoralba Caka, introduced Mr. Rovena Pregja as the new Senior Representative in the RAI Steering Group on behalf of Albania.

1. Adoption of Agenda

Followed by proposal of the Macedonian representative, Ms. Dimovska, presentation of the Financial Report for 2019 was removed from the Agenda as a separate item and included under the item - Any other business.

The proposed Agenda was adopted with the above-mentioned amendment.

2. News from the Secretariat

Head of Secretariat, Mr. Joksimovic presented the most significant activities since the last SG Meeting and most important prospects for the coming period. He gave a general overview on the consequences of the COVID19 outbreak on the RAI activities. RAI is exploring remote modalities for maintaining regional dialogue and capacity building and in this regard, RAI has applied for additional funds for establishment of an online learning platform.

Due to the pandemic, the Signing Ceremony for the International Treaty on Exchange of Data for the Verification of Asset Decelerations, scheduled for 24th March in Vienna has been postponed. At this time, alternatives for proceeding with this process are being considered. Face-to-face Signing Ceremony will be organized once the conditions in the region permit and under the new - second phase of the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) Regional Programme. RAI will continue to energetically promote the Treaty.

In general, ADA Regional Programme (2015-2020) received positive feedback from the external evaluation which serves as a basis for drafting the new project proposal with the same partners. Head of Secretariat emphasized that that all RAI member states will be included in the new project activities and that Secretariat will continue implementing an all-inclusive approach.

Regional Project on asset recovery implemented in the partnership with the AIRE Centre, funded by the UK Government and supported by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, was presented by Ms. Gotskova, Project Manager. The project is approaching its final phase and the possible extension and the follow up of the project is a subject of discussion with the donor.

Head of Secretariat added that following the WB6 meeting in Sofia under the Berlin Process, consultations with the UNODC were initiated with a view of including RAI in the process of

development and the implementation of the Anti-Corruption and Illicit Finance Roadmap for WB jurisdictions.

Ms. Ahmetaj Hrelja presented the new 3-year EU-funded Regional project on whistleblowing. The project covers WB6 jurisdictions and Moldova. Participation of Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania will be funded by RAI.

Head of Secretariat informed the SG about the new tentative dates of the Summer School (31st August to 3rd September). SG members were invited to share their opinion and views on possible alternative format (webinar) for the Summer School in case the COVID-19 situation does not allow a face-to-face event.

Ms. Arnaudovska, Senior Anti-corruption Advisor notified the participants that the call for Roster for pre-vetted experts in anti-corruption field has been published with a deadline for application - 15th September 2020. She invited the SG members to widely disseminate the Call and assist in identifying the most reputable experts in this area. Members of the SG were invited to submit their personal applications for the Roster as well.

Head of Secretariat kindly requested SG members to officially submit their states' appointment letters, when changes in representation to the RAI SG occur, with the purpose of updating the list of the RAI Steering Group Representatives.

3. Presentation of the Discussion Paper for the new Work Plan 2021-2022

Head of Secretariat presented the current planning process for the new Work Plan and invited the SG members to give their opinion on the Objectives of the new plan, based on the provided Discussion Paper.

Draft Evaluation Report on the current Work Plan 2018 – 2020, together with the Draft Work Plan 2021-2022 will be prepared and submitted to the RAI SG members until 30th of September. Both documents shall be adopted at the next SG meeting during this calendar year.

Special emphasis was put on the future strategic directions – possibility of a new Memorandum of Understanding to reaffirm the status of RAI as a regional intergovernmental organisation and exploring the possibilities for new countries to join RAI as full members.

RAI core staff presented the Discussion Paper focusing on the primary objectives and strategic outlines. The primary objectives are planned to be implemented through the ongoing and follow-on projects. Other objectives will be defined in line with the available budget, resources and needs of member states.

Ms. Stefan, RAI Chairperson, thanked the Secretariat for substantial presentations and efforts to adapt the working activities to the current challenges and difficulties that seem to be unpredictable. She agreed with the main strategic and programmatic objectives and directions and invited the SG members to present their opinion and ideas on all issues, in particular on the format of the Summer School, to think creatively on how to proceed with the signing of the Treaty and with boosting the profile of RAI. She also added that bilateral discussions would be very welcome to discuss the priorities

for the next work plan. She called for a more consistent, constant and consolidated dialogue with all members and their active contribution to the next Work Plan.

4. *Tour de Table*

SG members presented recent anti-corruption developments in their respective countries. They presented the most recent legislative changes as well the implementation of the current, and development of new anti-corruption strategies and policies. Most of them underlined the importance of UNCAC Review Mechanism and GRECO Evaluation Procedures and presented the current status of evaluation and implementation of the recommendations imposed by the monitoring mechanisms. They also presented the most relevant project activities in the field of prevention and fight against corruption, current surveys and researches in the targeted anti-corruption areas that are of crucial importance for directing RAI in its future activities and enhancing the cooperation with the international partners in order to avoid the overlapping of their project goals. It is important to mention that most of the countries have put all their efforts in promoting the legislative framework, but as well on the implementation of the anti-corruption measures and policies, impact assessments, developing statistics, track records, electronic systems for asset declarations and other anti-corruption tools and enhanced their capacities for developing internal guidelines, dedicated trainings, handbooks, raising awareness campaigns, including materials for education of children on anti-corruption.

All SG members greeted the Secretariat for the professional approach in the preparation phase of the planning process for the following period. The Discussion Paper serves as a good basis for developing the new Work Plan 2021-2022. The SG Members were also eager to see the draft Evaluation Report for the current Work Plan, as a basis prior to discussing priorities for developing the new Work Plan during the summer.

They also agreed with the provisional Time-table for preparation of the planning documents.

5. *Any Other Business*

Ms. Zukic, Chief Finance and Operations Officer, briefly presented the most important elements of the 2019 Financial Report. It was emphasised that the Secretariat undertook external financial audits in line with RAI internal rules and donor requirements. Auditor reports had no negative comments. Ms Zukic highlighted the fact that the funds managed by the RAI Secretariat have an upward trend due to successful fundraising activities.

Conclusions and Decisions

- The Steering Group took a note that due to the COVID19 pandemic, the Signing Ceremony for the International Treaty on Exchange of Data for the Verification of Asset Declarations scheduled for 24th March in Vienna has been postponed. SG supports Secretariat's work in promoting the Treaty and looking for alternative solutions for the signing ceremony;

- The Steering Group supports RAI Secretariat to continue with the regular project activities and programs and in parallel to look for options of online trainings;
- The Steering Group agrees with the following Secretariat's reporting and drafting processes:
 - *Steering Group took a note of the verbal Financial Report 2019; Secretariat to produce and disseminate Narrative Financial Report (2019) by August 31, 2020;*
 - *Secretariat to produce and disseminate draft Evaluation Report (2018-2020) by August 31, 2020;*
 - *SG members to provide comments to the Evaluation Report (2018-2020) by September 18, 2020;*
 - *Secretariat to produce and disseminate the draft Work Plan (2021-2022) by September 30, 2020;*
 - *SG members to provide comments to the draft Work Plan (2021-2022) by October 19, 2020;*
 - *Secretariat to disseminate the updated drafts of Evaluation report (2018-2020) and Work Plan (2021-2022) by October 30, 2020;*
 - *Discuss the Evaluation Report (2018-2020) and the Work Plan (2021-2022) at the 32nd Steering Group Meeting by the end of November, 2020.*