For Immediate Release

GOPAC-IPU Joint Workshop:
"International Cooperation to Prosecute Corruption and Recover Stolen Assets"

Bali, Indonesia - On 22 March 2022, GOPAC held a joint event with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) discussing the International Cooperation to Prosecute Corruption and Recover Stolen Assets during the 144th IPU Assembly and Related Meetings in Bali, Indonesia. As an observer of the IPU, GOPAC and its members have been actively involved in various IPU activities promoting good governance and the important role of parliamentarians in combating corruption.

The panel discussed the current and future initiatives to support international prosecution of corruption, the current issues and challenges of asset recovery mechanisms, and explored ways for the global parliamentary community to keep tabs on the international anti-corruption commitments.

Mr. John Hyde, GOPAC Secretary and former parliamentarian of West Australia moderated the event. He stressed that it is momentum for parliamentarians and all related stakeholders to gather knowledge and promote more concrete action by creating a cross-border law enforcement hub to track, investigate, and prosecute corruption.

H.E. Dr. Ali bin Fetais Al-Marri opened the session through a video message emphasizing parliamentarians' role in finding new transparency and legal mechanism for the recovery of the stolen assets and that parliament has an obligation to ensure that authorities adopt clear policies for asset recovery. H.E. Al-Marri hopes that the GOPAC-IPU joint workshop could be an open opportunity to identify all international initiatives on combating corruption.

As the first speaker, Hon. Dr. Fadli Zon, GOPAC Vice-President and the Chair of Inter-Parliamentary Committee of the Indonesian House of Representatives pointed out that parliamentarians should introduce new measures or legislative reform to support asset recovery measures, provide a sound legal basis for MLA, enhance political will and commitment to recover stolen assets, and develop national monitoring systems in the recovery process.

Hon. Louisa Wall, Chairperson of the Inter-Parliamentary Union New Zealand Group and Vice-Chair of GOPAC Oceania added that it is a member of parliament's job to ensure that parliament designs proper and effective legislation. Parliamentarians should also take an active role in implementing the programs and in the scrutiny process since they are the ones who hold the government to account.
Joining from Vienna, Ms. Rositsa Zaharieva, Coordinator of GlobE Network UNODC, stated that only by exchanging information, evidence, intelligence, and practices at the global level, we can be successful in combating transnational corruption. The last speaker of the workshop, Dr. Laode M. Syarif, the Asia Pacific Sub-Committee, Integrity Initiatives International, described that the current legal framework is not designed to fight fast-moving corruption cases. Thus, there is an urgent need to introduce new legal frameworks to fight these fast-moving crimes.

During the discussion, members of parliaments from Australia, Sri Lanka, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), Timor-Leste, Malawi, Tanzania, shared their thoughts, experience, and questions to address the issue.

Sen. Deborah O'Neill from Australia pointed out the different jurisdictions as a challenge for cross-border asset forfeiture. She also raised cryptocurrencies as new elements for money or asset laundering stressing that the legislation is too slow to adapt to the fast development of corruption offenses.

Hon. Shanakiyan Rasamanickam from Sri Lanka said that there should be a different approach to solving corruption in countries where accountability and the rule of law are not respected. Hon. Amal Al-Shaman from Saudi Arabia expressed the country’s commitment to battle corruption supporting the country’s 2030 agenda.

Hon. Isabel Maria Ximenes from Timor-Leste shared GOPAC Timor-Leste’s efforts to socialize and share information regarding the criminalization of corrupt offenses and promote good governance. She raised a challenge regarding cross-border prosecution, due to the dual nationalities aspect Timor Leste has. Hon. Keny Kandodo from Malawi described that his country has already put in place various anti-corruption legislation and established authorities to fight against corruption. H.E. Tulia Ackson from Tanzania was keen to know more on measures needed to return the cross-border assets so that authorities not only prosecute the person who embezzled the money. Hon. Hoda Al-Helaissi from Saudi Arabia questioned how we, as parliamentarians, can translate the theory into reality.

GOPAC will continue to open collaboration and foster strategic partnerships with all parliamentarians and other related stakeholders in addressing corruption.

To see the full recording video of the GOPAC-IPU joint event: https://bit.ly/GOPAC-IPU144