GOPAC REPORT
144TH IPU GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS

GOPAC-IPU joint event
“International Cooperation to Prosecute Corruption and Recover the Stolen Assets”
Tuesday 22 March 2022, 14:30-16:00, Nusantara 2 & 3

Session Report:
GOPAC-IPU joint event entitled “International Cooperation to Prosecute Corruption and Recover the Stolen Assets” was held on 22 March 2022 during the 144th. The event provided impetus for lawmakers and GOPAC members to gather information and support more tangible action and collaboration in the fight against corruption and the recovery of stolen assets.

Mr. John Hyde, GOPAC Secretary and former member parliamentarians of West Australia moderated the event and explained that the panel will discuss three essential questions which are: (1) Current and potential future initiatives that effectively support the international prosecution of corruption and its challenges, (2) current state of asset recovery mechanisms and parliament role to promote fair and effective asset recovery and ensure the repatriated assets are being used effectively for the benefit of the public, and (3) explore ways for the global parliamentary community to keep tabs on the international anti-corruption commitments.

H.E. Dr. Ali bin Fetais Al-Marri, GOPAC Chair and the Chair of the Internal, Foreign, & Defense Committee Shura Council of the State of Qatar opened the session with a video message. His excellency during his speech emphasized parliamentarians' role in finding new transparency and legal mechanisms for the recovery of stolen assets as well as ensuring that authorities follow clear rules. H.E. Al-Marri hoped that the GOPAC-IPU joint workshop could be an open opportunity to identify all international initiatives on combating corruption.

The first speaker, Hon. Dr. Fadli Zon, GOPAC Vice-President and the Chair of the Inter-Parliamentary Committee of the Indonesian House of Representatives pointed out that transnational corruption is a complex, systemic, and severe form of criminal activity that hinders the development of the country. He also stressed that these corrupt activities potentially could fuel conflict and pose threats to global security. GOPAC's efforts in advocating for the international community to be firmly committed to confronting corrupt activities, such as the GOPAC Global campaign to capture, prosecute, and sentence perpetrators of cross-border grand corruption, "Prevent, Prosecute, Paralyze," and the call to
appoint a UN Special Rapporteur on Anti-Corruption, were elaborated. Dr. Zon called parliamentarians to discuss and 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 for the recovery process.

Hon. Louisa Wall, Chairperson of the Inter-Parliamentary Union New Zealand Group and Vice-Chair of GOPAC Oceania was the second speaker. She explained New Zealand's anti-corruption efforts such as ratifying UNCAC in 2005 and passing the organized crime and anti-corruption bill in 2004. Parliamentarians, according to Hon. Wall, have a responsibility to monitor and hold the government accountable for its anti-corruption work program. Hon. Wall went on to say that it is a member of parliament’s responsibility to ensure that legislation is fit for purpose and effective, and that they play an active part not just in program implementation but also as auditors, since legislators are the one who keep the government accountable.

The third speaker of the panel Ms. Rositsa Zaharieva, Coordinator of GlobE Network, UNODC, joined from Vienna through interprefy. Ms. Zaharieva introduced Globe Network as a tool or platform mechanism to help combat corruption. The platform was launched in June 2021 and introduced by strong political commitment during G20 in Riyadh and UNGAS 2021. She explained that to combat cross-border corruption offenses, GlobE Network will consist of 3 components: (1) independent anti-corruption authorities, (2) a one-stop-hub; an online platform as well as a communication platform, and (3) a center for the development of knowledge and capacity building. Ms. Zaharieva concluded her presentation by emphasizing that exchanging information, evidence, intelligence, and practices at the global level is necessary to successfully combat 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. Dr. Syarif explained that in reality, cross-border corruption involves multi-countries and numerous heads of governments as well as high stakes individuals. To combat these fast-moving crimes, new legal frameworks are urgently required. Dr. Syarif concluded that on the way forward, parliamentarians should initiate real cooperation and action to combat transboundary corruption, it is also hoped that many countries will support the establishment of the International Anti-Corruption Court. Up until now, only two countries (Canada and Netherland) have expressed their commitment to support the Court.

During the discussion and questions sessions, members of parliaments from Australia, Sri Lanka, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), Timor-Leste, Malawi, and Tanzania, shared their thoughts, experience, and questions to address the issue of corruption.
Sen. Deborah O'Neill from Australia pointed out the challenge of non-conviction-based asset forfeiture due to the profound differences of laws across jurisdictions and the fact that corruption techniques are evolving at a rapid pace while legislation is difficult to keep up with. Methods to deal with the problem of record-keeping and deal with views of laws in different jurisdictions need to be introduced.

Hon. Shanakiyan Rasamanickam of Sri Lanka stated his concern that former politicians' corrupt conduct led his country plunged in national debt, which the current politicians must solve. He also stated that a different approach to fighting corruption should be taken 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. It is important that the government initiatives can be supported by the citizens and in the end could safeguard the country from corruption and save the country’s money.

Hon. Leste’s Isabel Maria Ximenes from Timor-Leste spoke on GOPAC Timor-Leste initiatives to socialize and exchange information about issues of criminalized corruption and good governance. She also understands the challenges of transferring international processes, as some corrupt individuals in Timor-Leste have fled to another country due to their dual citizenship. These factors create a challenge that the Timor-Leste’s government and parliaments must address promptly.

Hon. Keny Kandodo of Malawi stated that Malawi has already put in place different anti-corruption legislation and authorities to combat corruption, but that the recovery of stolen assets remains a challenge.

H.E. Tulia Ackson of Tanzania inquired about an asset being transferred across the border, and what can be done to prosecute not only the person who embezzled the money, but also to proposedly recover the assets the country can benefits from the activities.

Saudi Arabia's Hon. Hoda Al-Helaissi questioned how we, as lawmakers, can transfer theory into reality. Culture is another factor to consider while determining why some countries are more prone to corruption than others.

The session concludes with the closing statement of all panelists to encourage all parliamentarians to talk to each other, learn from each other, and cooperate to create and implement anti-corruption initiatives. GOPAC will continue to open collaboration and foster strategic partnership with all parliamentarians, and other related stakeholders in addressing corruption.
GALLERIES