



REGIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION INITIATIVE (RAI)
RAI SECRETARIAT

I. Establishment and Organizational Development

The Regional Anti-corruption Initiative (RAI) was adopted in Sarajevo in February 2000, as the Stability Pact Anti-corruption Initiative (SPAI), to address corruption – one of the most serious threats to the recovery and development of the South East European countries. Currently the Initiative consists of 9 member countries from the region – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia and one observer - UNMIK, providing all of them with a general framework for co-ordination, optimization of efforts and permanent dialogue with the partner community involved in the fight against corruption.

In September 2003, the SPAI Steering Group agreed to establish a Regional Secretariat Liaison Office (RSLO) in Sarajevo to promote regional ownership of the Initiative and enhance regional capabilities to lead the fight against corruption in SEE. (Initially, SPAI's secretariat functions were performed by the Council of Europe and OECD). Six months later, RSLO became operational. Staffed by experts from the region, RSLO was founded as an executive implementing body of the Initiative. It is currently the only center in SEE devoted solely to fighting corruption at a regional level. RSLO tailors its activities to directly support the member countries to meet the standards and requirements related to the Justice and Home Affairs field in the EU accession process.

2007 was a year of transformation and set forth new challenges for SPAI. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was opened for signature and ratification by the SPAI member countries during the SEECF JHA Meeting in Zagreb on April 13, 2007. By signing the MoU, the signatory countries ensured the financial sustainability of the Sarajevo based Secretariat of the Anti-corruption Initiative by providing certain annual grants and decided for the first time to raise a Chairman of the Initiative from the region. It was the final step towards a full regional ownership and leadership of the Anti-corruption Initiative, thus demonstrating the involvement of the SEE countries in the fight against corruption.

Since October 9, 2007, through a decision of the member countries, approved at the 11th Steering Group Meeting in Podgorica, the Stability Pact Anti-corruption Initiative was renamed as **Regional Anti-corruption Initiative (RAI)**, in line with the transformation of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe into Regional Co-operation Council (RCC), as the Regional Secretariat Liaison Office became simply the **Secretariat**.

II. RAI's Mission, Objectives and Achievements

Since its establishment in 2000, RAI has the ultimate mission to curb corruption in every possible aspect. Corruption is highly detrimental to the stability of all democratic institutions set up after the democratic changes in Eastern Europe. It erodes the rule of law, breaches fundamental human rights and freedoms, undermines the business climate and hampers economic growth. RAI gives an impetus to the fight against corruption in the region by building upon existing actions through better coordination of all efforts and by relying on high-level political commitment. Its precise objective is to help and support SEE countries to



adopt efficient legislation, build up right institutions and develop appropriate practices in the civil society for a sustained fight against corruption.

In May 2005, the Ministers of Justice from all RAI member countries met in Brussels and reinforced their commitment to adopt impact-oriented measures in order to curb corruption phenomena in SEE. As a concrete step in this regard countries of the region set a challenging calendar to implement 10 joint measures to curb corruption. They also committed themselves to provide full support and assistance to the Sarajevo based Secretariat. During its existence RAI Secretariat's anti-corruption message has reached over 4 800 people in more than 130 events. Close relations with partner organizations like ABA ROLI, the Council of Europe, European Commission, OSCE, OECD, UNDP, UNODC, TI and many others, have been established.

During the 7 years of the Anti-corruption Initiative, the member countries undertook consistent and complex reforms of their institutional and legislative framework, aiming to decrease the level of corruption and to ensure the efficiency of their policies.

In this context, National Anti-corruption Strategies were approved together with Action Plans, underlining the political commitment to address the issue of corruption and state capture. Furthermore, the legal framework was mostly harmonized with the European standards set by the international conventions (all 9 RAI countries has already ratified UNCAC) and sensitive areas (conflict of interest, assets disclosure, free access to information, political parties financing, public procurement, money laundering, etc.) are now regulated. In addition, in all member countries, specialized anti-corruption bodies were created or are now under process of being established, reorganized or strengthened. The rhythm of reforms is now stronger as Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU on January 1, 2007. Croatia started the accession negotiations, while the other SEE member countries focus their efforts towards the same goal.

III. The Way Ahead

Since the beginning of 2008, the RAI Secretariat, as an executive body of the Initiative, started the implementation of the new Work Plan for 2008 – 2009. During this period, the Secretariat supported with relevant efforts from the member states, will focus on achieving the following specific programmatic objectives:

- Supporting the process of adoption and implementation of the UNCAC;
- Supporting the process of developing and implementing regional and national anti-corruption programs for raising public awareness;
- Sharing best practices in fighting high-level corruption in SEE countries;
- Assessing of the regional anti-corruption needs and specific requirements;
- Promoting the public – private partnership in reducing the impact of corruption within the business environment.

In pursuit of the above mentioned objectives, the RAI Secretariat has envisaged to organize national and regional events (conferences, workshops and seminars) on topics such as public procurement, asset recovery, financing political parties etc., as well as Twinning type activities to exchange best practices in the area. In this context, the Secretariat will also focus on two ongoing projects: the Annual Summer School for Junior Magistrates, that brings



together junior magistrates and lawyers working in public administration, and the Internship Program, that aims to provide young graduates from the member countries with the opportunity to work within an international environment and to gain knowledge and experience in anti-corruption related-topics.