

Toward Accountability and Oversight

WBI helps parliamentarians take action for better governance

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November 13, 2002—A broad strategy to fight corruption was recently adopted by nearly 300 parliamentarians from around the world. Participants at the inaugural conference of the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC) established eight regional chapters and endorsed initiatives to enhance government accountability and transparency.

Designed after a model conceived at a regional seminar in Africa, GOPAC is a means of sharing best practice and lessons learned. Additionally, GOPAC serves as a vehicle for international agencies and bilateral donors to support parliamentary oversight.

The new strategy calls for programs to improve parliamentary oversight and accountability—especially in areas related to financial management, fiscal reporting, transparency, and budgets. Direct anti-corruption initiatives such as the enactment of legislation, increased surveillance, and effective jurisprudence are also featured. Tying both these strands together is the need for greater public engagement in these activities.

"It is clear that parliament has a crucial role to play in fighting corruption, both as a law-making body and as a bridge between the state and civil society. Again, while the role of parliament in curbing corruption will vary from country to country, a broad mix of successful strategies is beginning to emerge," said Frannie Léautier,



Frannie Léautier, WBI's Vice President, addresses parliamentarians at the inaugural GOPAC conference



Parliamentarians during the conference

WBI's Vice President.

At the conference, WBI pledged to support the strategy by facilitating knowledge networks and communities of practice; providing technology inputs through the use of videoconferencing and the Global Distance Learning Network; and sharing best practice examples.

Augustine Ruzindana, former Chair of the African Parliamentarians Network Against Corruption, sees GOPAC's value as a vehicle for information exchange. "Every country does at least one thing right. The trick is to share this with colleagues from other parliaments and not re-invent the wheel."

Many parliamentarians were in favor of a code of ethics for parliamentarians, an area where WBI is working with the GOPAC Secretariat on a Discussion Paper on Parliamentary Ethics and Codes of Conduct.

The past three years have seen a significant shift in WBI's parliamentary program, away from training individual parliamentarians toward a focus on strengthening parliament as a key institution of governance, with a special emphasis on the role that parliament plays in promoting accountability.

Central to WBI's program is the promotion of financial accountability within the government and the importance of external financial oversight—with a particular emphasis on the various ways parliaments can contribute to these efforts.

GOPAC is the brainchild of John Williams, Chair of Canada's Public Accounts Committee. Inspired while participating as an expert at a Delhi workshop for parliamentarians, Williams has since worked to form this network of committed public servants into an effective organization in the fight against corruption.

WBI

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