

REGIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION INITIATIVE

38th STEERING GROUP MEETING



Summary and Decisions

*November 21-22, 2022
Bucharest, Romania*

38th Regional Anti-corruption Initiative (RAI) Steering Group (SG) Meeting took place on November 21-22, 2022 in Bucharest, Romania. The meeting was hosted by the Ministry of Justice and organized by the RAI Secretariat.

Participants

38th RAI SG Meeting was chaired by RAI Chairperson, Ms. Laura Stefan. It was attended by seven (7) member countries' representatives:

Albania – Mr. Artens Lazaj, Anti-corruption expert Ministry of Justice (appointed by the Ministry of Justice);

Bosnia and Herzegovina – Mr. Adnan Dlakic - Senior Representative, Expert Adviser, Department for Combating Organized Crime and Corruption, Ministry of Security;

Bulgaria – **Mrs. Teodora Atanasova**, Counsellor, Embassy of the Republic of Bulgaria in Bucharest (appointed by the Ministry of Interior);

Croatia – Mr. Tomislav Matoc, Deputy Senior Representative, Senior Advisor, the Anti-Corruption Sector, Directorate for European Affairs, International and Judicial Cooperation and Prevention of corruption, Ministry of Justice and Administration;

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

Montenegro – Mr. Momcilo Radulovic, President of the Council Agency for Prevention of Corruption (appointed by the Agency for Prevention of Corruption);

Romania – Ms. Roxana Florentina Serbanoiu, Senior Representative, Legal counsellor, Ministry of Justice and Ms. Ruxandra Andreea Lapadat, Deputy Senior Representative, Legal counsellor, Crime Prevention Department, Ministry of Justice;

North Macedonia and **Serbia** excused themselves and sent in comments and positions in writing. SG took note of their interventions attached to this document.

RAI Secretariat was represented by:

Ms. Desislava Gotskova – Head of Secretariat;

Ms. Aneta Arnaudovska – Senior Anti-corruption Advisor;

Ms. Jasna Panjeta – Chief Program and Communications Officer;

Ms. Meliha Capljic – Chief Finance and Operations Officer;

Mr. Denis Grbo – Project Officer.

Summary of Discussions

RAI Chairperson, Ms. Laura Stefan, opened the meeting and welcomed all the participants joining the 38th RAI Steering Group Meeting. The SG members were then greeted by Mr. Mihai Pasca, Secretary of State, Ministry of Justice, the host of the 38th RAI Steering Group Meeting. Mr Pasca highlighted that the communication, dialogue and cooperation in the region are key to launching beneficial initiatives at the bilateral and multilateral levels and to coordinate common anti-corruption activities in Southeastern Europe. Mr. Pasca also emphasized that Romania agreed to lead the process regarding the bid for RAI to obtain the permanent observer status with the United Nations. In his speech, Mr. Pasca also reminded that the Steering Group should explore ways to expand the organization, both in terms of accepting new observers as well as expanding the constituency of full-fledged members. It was concluded that Romania stands ready to support RAI in its endeavors.

1. Adoption of Agenda

The proposed Agenda was adopted unanimously.

2. Information from the Secretariat: Evaluation of the Work Plan 2021-2022 and a new Workplan for 2023-2025

Presentation of the Evaluation report was conducted by Chief Program and Communication officer highlighting the key items that characterized the last two years.

It was followed by the presentation of the Workplan for 2023-2025 by the Senior Anti-corruption Advisor.

Present SG members did not have comments to the presented documents. Chairperson acknowledged the comment received from North Macedonia in writing that will be incorporated into the final version of the Workplan.

The new Workplan for the period 2023 -2025 was adopted.

Evaluation report will be updated to account for the remaining period till the end of the 2022.

3. *Tour de table* - Brief information from Senior Representatives on the most important developments and projects in line with current RAI Work Plan

During the session, SG representatives presented recent anti-corruption developments in their respective countries on the most important developments and projects in line with current RAI Work Plan, as well as the most recent developments pertaining to the UNCAC Review Mechanism and GRECO Evaluation Procedures.

SG Representatives paid particular attention to the International Treaty for Exchange of Data for Verification of Asset Declaration, pointing out the progress made in terms of ratification procedure as well as the activities that would lead to Treaty signing in some countries.

Chairperson raised a point about the need to engage in a dialogue with the European Commission in order to raise awareness about the importance of Treaty and also advocate for support for this important prevention tool. Ms. Stefan announced that she and Head of RAI Secretariat would be visiting Brussels in the first quarter of 2023 with the objective to elevate the discussion about the Treaty and gain understanding and support.

Preparation efforts for the visit are already underway with CPCO and CFOO visiting DG Near and DG Just on the occasion of the EU Project Steering Group Meeting.

4. RAI 2022 Budget Rebalance and RAI Budget for 2023

CFOO presented the Request for 2023 Budget rebalance highlighting the reasons for the amendments.

RAI Budget for 2023 was presented to the SG members by CFOO. The presentation was complemented by HoS who highlighted that there were requests for providing technical assistance to RAI member countries that the Secretariat received but was unable to meet due to limited human and financial resources. Ms. Gotskova highlighted the burning need to grow the core of the organization and asked the countries to consider increasing the annual contributions.

Ms Gotskova also noted that that the annual country contributions for the operational and programmatic budget have not been changed since 2007. Also, the uncertain global situation led to inflation and growing prices so RAI Core Budget for the following year will be also affected by the current economic conditions.

The proposal for 2023 RAI Budget has been adopted.

5. Vacancy procedure for AC Senior Advisor

HoS presented the timeline for conducting the Vacancy Procedure for AC Senior Advisor. Following the discussion, it was determined that the first day in office for the selected person would be May 7th. This entails that the vacancy should be announced on January 16th and should last at least 6 weeks.

Chairperson used the opportunity to thank Ms. Aneta Arnaudovska, RAI's AC Senior Advisor for her hard work and dedication to RAI during her mandate.

6. Prolongation of the Mandate of the Chairperson

HoS presented the item regarding the prolongation of the mandate of the Chairperson for another year. There were no objections by the SG members. Chairperson thanked the SG and stressed that the date for publishing the Vacancy for the next Chairperson should also be set since the next Chairperson needs to be elected prior to expiration of the last year of Mandate.

7. Renewal of the Mandate of the Head of Secretariat

Chairperson presented the agenda item asking the SG members to vote on the renewal of mandate for the HoS. The mandate has been renewed unanimously.

HoS thanked the SG members for the entrusting her with RAI Secretariat for two more years.

Ms. Gotskova used the opportunity to stress that RAI Secretariat's HR rules and procedures need to be examined. This is particularly relevant since the organization is growing. The

changes are needed for the years ahead. She also highlighted that as a future fully-fledged Observer to CoSP we need to modernize the organization and be an example to others.

8. RAI's application for the UNCAC CoSP Observer status

Chairperson reminded the SG members about the RAI's efforts to obtain the Observer status at the Conference of State Parties to UNCAC. The application process is lead by Romania as agreed in principle at the last SG Meeting in Sofia, Bulgaria. Ms. Stefan introduced Mr. Andrei Furdui, Director of the Directorate for Crime Prevention at the Ministry of Justice of Romania who is facilitating the overall process on behalf of RAI and its member countries.

Mr. Furdui made an introductory presentation about the application process for Observer status to CoSP.

9. Any other Business

AC Senior Advisor presented the proposed MOU with MARRI (Migration, Asylum, Refugees Regional Initiative). Ms. Arnaudovska highlighted that the cooperation with MARRI is will be very valuable in the context of RAI Secretariat's new objective on security and anti-corruption. SG members unanimously approved the MoU and agreed for Secretariat to commence the signing process with MARRI.

HoS informed the SG Members of its visit to Greece and discussions held with the National Transparency Authority. Greece is interested in cooperation with RAI Secretariat and would also be willing to participate in the work of the Organization as an Observer. The process for NTA to join in any way might require time. SG approves the Secretariat to proceed with Secretariat will update the SG if there are any developments regarding this point.

There were no other points raised under any other business.

10. Cooperation with partners – exchange of views session

The session was opened by the Chairperson highlighting the importance of cooperation with the partners at the regional and global level. 38th SG Meeting welcomed four partners, as follows:

NATIONAL AGENCY ON CORRUPTION PREVENTION UKRAINE – ONLINE

Mr. Serhiy Derkach, Head of Corruption Prevention and Detection Department presented the Agency portfolio, its mission and mandate as well as its regional offices across Ukraine. He focused on the work of the Agency highlighting the number of prevention IT tools in use at the moment. He thanked the participants for the opportunity given and highlighted the importance of anti-corruption work in Ukraine even during the war. Chairperson thanked Mr. Derkach and praised their efforts on retaining such a high level of operativity despite adverse circumstances. Ms. Stefan proceed to state that the cooperation with and support to NACP Ukraine are of high importance to RAI.

KONRAD-ADENAUER-STIFTUNG (KAS) - ROMANIA

Mr. Pavel Usvatov, Director of the Rule of Law Programme for SEE and Ms. Theodora Stoica Project Coordinator joined the SG and presented the work of the Foundation and its links to RAI Secretariat. Chairperson thanked KAS for the continued support to RAI and conveyed the hopes of this successful cooperation continuing in the future.

UNITED NATIONS OFFICE ON DRUGS AND CRIME (UNODC)

Mr. Constantine Palicarsky, Regional Adviser (Anti-Corruption) / Head of the Programme Office in Serbia presented the achievements of the ACIF Roadmap to date and highlighted the key upcoming actions. He also reflected on the excellent cooperation and coordination with RAI Secretariat as a Project Partner. Chairperson thanked Mr. Palicarsky for UNODC's efforts in the Region and reaffirmed the commitment of RAI to the ACIF Roadmap agenda and actions.

NATIONAL INTEGRITY AGENCY (NIA) - ROMANIA

Mr. Ionut Pândaru, Head of Service, Analysis and Prevention Service held a presentiaon on NIA, its competences and mandate. SG members also learned about the impressive statistical information on the results of NIA's efforts in the field.

Conclusions and Decisions

1. Agenda of the 38th Steering Group Meeting was adopted.
2. Evaluation report for the Work Plan 2021-2022 was presented and adopted (pending end of the year inputs).
3. Work-plan for the 2023 – 2025 period was presented and adopted.
4. SG authorizes the Secretariat to undertake all necessary legal acts, including coordinating with the Ministry of Justice of Albania, in order to clarify all remaining questions with regard to the missing part of Albania's contribution to RAI and report back to the Steering Group.
5. The proposal for RAI 2022 Budget rebalance was adopted.
6. The proposal for RAI 2023 Budget was presented and adopted.
7. SG took note of the upcoming vacancy for the Senior Anti-corruption Advisor.
8. The mandate of RAI Chairperson was prolonged for one year.
9. The mandate of the Head of RAI Secretariat was renewed for two years.
10. MOU with MARRI was presented and approved in entirety.

11. SG takes note of the Romanian update regarding RAI application for CoSP Observer status and the reiteration of the need to revisit the RAI internal rules to ensure that they comply with the standards of international organizations.
12. SG authorizes the Secretariat to take the necessary steps to invite Greece NTA to become the Observer to RAI.

END

Attachments:

- Positions of Serbia: Letter dated 21/11/2022
- Positions of North Macedonia: Letter dated 08/11/2022