

Statement by Mr. Alexander Yakovenko,  
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Fighting Corruption in Russia

*Rome, 21 November 2007*

*Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,*

The problem of corruption is relevant to most countries of the world and Russia in this context is no exception. This phenomenon not only impedes economic development of the countries, but also destroys democratic institutions, the fundamentals of the rule of law and the citizens' trust in the fairness of public administration system.

Russia as well as other countries has been taking resolute measures in recent years to strengthen and consolidate the national anti-corruption legislation based on, inter alia, best international practices and standards. Thus, 2001 saw the adoption of the Federal Law "On Countering Legalization (Laundering) of Proceeds Acquired by Criminal Means". In 2002, the President of the Russian Federation issued the Decree approving "The General Principles of Official Conduct for State Officials". A comprehensive law "On Countering Corruption" drafted by the State Duma is now in the process of conciliation by the relevant agencies. In February 2007, the President of the Russian Federation by his Decree approved the creation of the Interdepartmental Working Group on Fight against Corruption. The main task of this body is to elaborate proposals aimed at introducing amendments to the Russian legislation resulting from our participation in the UN and Council of Europe anti-corruption conventions, including the creation of a special body authorized to coordinate activities to fight corruption nationwide.

In September 2007, the Russian Prime Minister Victor Zubkov emphasized once again that fighting against corruption is one of the most important priorities set by the Government and noted that the Russian authorities are committed to accelerate the adoption of the relevant law and the establishment of a national anti-corruption agency. At the same time, it is planned to significantly boost the capacity of other law-enforcement agencies and supervisory bodies engaged in the fight against corruption, including the Prosecutor's Office, the Ministry of the Internal Affairs, the Federal Security Service, the Customs and Tax Services, the Audit Chamber, as well as other ministries and agencies.

An important role in combating corruption is played by the State Duma Anti-Corruption Commission, as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), many of which actively counter corruption, inter alia, by interactive means - supporting relevant Internet resources.

In January – October 2007 the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation initiated criminal proceedings on more than 37 000 cases related to corruption, including over 10 000 cases of bribery and 1700 cases of bribery in business transactions. Over 8500 persons were convicted for these crimes.

Our anti-corruption approaches are based on the belief that public support is crucial for eliminating corruption. Other essential elements include elimination of bureaucracy in registration procedures and business environment (in particular, for small and medium enterprises), reducing the excessive regulatory role of the state, implementation of various initiatives to ensure transparency of civil service, establishment of effective public control over federal and municipal authorities, improvement of judicial and tax anti-corruption mechanisms, as well as ensuring transparency of party funding.

Meanwhile, we are convinced that all these efforts would not be efficient enough without understanding and support from our foreign partners. The trans-border nature of corruption requires enhanced international cooperation in this field and we are prepared for it.

Our interest in anti-corruption cooperation is confirmed by Russia's active participation in relevant efforts made by the UN, G8, Council of Europe, APEC, CIS, as well as other global and regional organizations and fora.

The year 2006 was particularly productive for us in this respect with Russia ratifying the UN Convention against Corruption (in March) and the Council of Europe Criminal Law Convention on Corruption (in July). Under these fundamental international anti-corruption instruments, Russia undertook to ensure an early development and implementation of an efficient and coordinated anti-corruption policy promoting public engagement in monitoring compliance with relevant laws, as well as to take effective steps to criminalize corruption in the Russian legislation. We take into consideration that all these tasks will be successfully accomplished.

By joining the Criminal Law Convention on Corruption, Russia automatically became a member of the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO). As part of our work within GRECO, we are currently preparing detailed national reports (mutual evaluations) regarding the implementation of the UN and the Council of Europe anti-corruption conventions, inter alia, the Twenty Guiding Principles for the Fight against Corruption. Information about Russian experts selected as potential members of GRECO evaluation teams was forwarded to the Council of Europe. Topics for the third evaluation round are being considered.

Russia has taken active part in the community of national financial intelligence services - the Egmont Group and Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering (FATF). At the moment our country is undergoing its first comprehensive FATF assessment.

After the decision taken by the OECD Council this May to invite Russia to launch official talks on joining the Organization, we have been focusing our anti-corruption efforts on acceding to the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions and joining the relevant Working Group. Keeping that in mind we have to improve and substantially update, including in the view of new realities, everything that has already been done in this field and first of all our national report on legal and institutional framework for combating corruption that was prepared several years ago. We are ready to do that job.

In conclusion I would like to point out that Russia strives to expand and strengthen to the maximum extent the multilateral cooperation in combating corruption. We confirm once again that we are prepared to take the most active part in implementing specific measures to eradicate this evil, and fully support the principles consecrated in fundamental international instruments in this field.

*Thank you for your attention.*