Programme of Work for 2012-2013

This document represents ACINET’s programme of work in its third cycle (2012-2013) which was developed based on research and consultations undertaken during the second work cycle (2010-2011) under the chairmanship of the Supreme National Authority for Combating Corruption in the Republic of Yemen. It was adopted by the esteemed members at the conclusion of their third General Meeting that was held in the city of Fes in the Kingdom of Morocco on 21 December 2011. The programme will be implemented under the chairmanship of the Central Authority for Corruption Prevention in the Kingdom of Morocco, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme, and in cooperation with a group of regional and international partners.

برنامج العمل لفترة 2012-2013

Overall aim: reinforce mutual trust between anti-corruption authorities and society.

First component: broaden the participation of active specialized non-governmental actors in the development of anti-corruption policies.

Second component: support the *de facto* implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

Third component: develop law enforcement capacities against serious corruption crimes.

Fourth component: various activities.
Overall aim: reinforce mutual trust between anti-corruption authorities and society

The historic developments that the Arab region is currently witnessing reveal the need to build new governance institutions that are more competent in conducting public affairs and achieving just and fair development. This requires profound reforms at different on more than one level, among which is the need to accelerate the pace of designing and implementing effective preventive and punitive anti-corruption policies in both the public and the private sectors, with the participation of society, and based on related regional and international standards.

The realization of these reforms requires the reinforcement of communication and cooperation between different stakeholders in the area of anti-corruption, which has now become, and more than ever, an area of strategic importance for the region's future and one of the foremost priorities for its citizens.

In this context, it becomes clear that there is need to develop the currently existing relationships between anti-corruption authorities on the one hand, and the other various components of society on the other, through a concerted effort aimed at establishing trust between them, with a view to reinforcing the process of mutual communication and cooperation in support of the desired reforms.

Enhancing trust between the concerned authorities, particularly specialized anti-corruption agencies, where existent, and the various components of society requires, among other things, improving these authorities' performance to reinforce their credibility. It also requires developing societal participation mechanisms to enable citizens and national non-governmental entities such as civil society organizations, business, and independent institutions of media, to participate in the development of regulatory frameworks, promotion of good governance, and combating corruption.

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academia and research, to constructively participate in these efforts. Being the only Arab regional mechanism that brings together governmental and nongovernmental entities in a structured framework for periodic dialogue and technical cooperation in the area of anti-corruption, ACINET sees itself in a position of responsibility that requires it to double its efforts and support both parties in strengthening mutual trust.

As a result, and based on the findings of the consultations that were conducted during its second session, ACINET divided its third programme of work into three main components, that it sees necessary for the reinforcement of mutual trust between societies and anti-corruption authorities in Arab countries, and that are within the confines of its available resources, compatible with its role and conducive to the establishment of new prospects for further action in upcoming years.

Below is a brief explanation of the three components, which are (1) broadening the participation of active specialized non-governmental actors in the development of anti-corruption policies; (2) supporting the de facto implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC); and (3) developing law enforcement capacities against serious corruption crimes, while various ad-hoc activities were added and grouped under a fourth component.

First component: broaden the participation of active non-governmental actors in the development of anti-corruption policies.
Non-governmental actors play an important role in conveying people’s ideas and opinions on reform needs and priorities to decision makers, including anti-corruption reforms. They also play an important role in building a societal culture that rejects corruption. Those actors also form a societal oversight system that enables citizens to regularly hold their governments accountable, in a manner that contributes to ensuring the proper management of public funds and affairs. Nonetheless, non-governmental actors in most Arab countries face various challenges that affect their ability to perform these roles in a constructive manner. These challenges include restrictions on the freedom of association and operation, limited financial and technical resources, the inability to access information that is supposedly available to the public, and its failure to communicate effectively with decision-makers. This is in addition to internal structural challenges that may affect the independence, effectiveness, professionalism and integrity of those non-governmental actors. This, however, does not negate the important role that these actors could play if properly supported and empowered, especially given the existence of similar successful models in some Arab Countries.

Based on the above, ACINET identified two following objectives within the framework of this component:

- To establish a more favorable environment for the participation of specialized national non-governmental actors in anti-corruption efforts through supporting the implementation of Article 13 of the UNCAC, which calls for promoting the active participation of society and the adoption of more open measures in this regard.

- To support ACINET’s Non-Governmental Group to crystallize

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- To support ACINET’s Non-Governmental Group to crystallize
and present its ideas and proposals on reform priorities in the area of anti-corruption and cooperating with its members, whenever possible, to transform those ideas and proposals to realities on the ground.

Related activities under this component vary, and include (a) providing technical support to ACINET members on the implementation of Article 13; (b) supporting the Network’s Non-Governmental Group in drafting papers expressing its position on priority anti-corruption reforms; (c) developing and disseminating training materials dealing with investigative journalism; and (d) developing a report that surveys the efforts of ACINET’s members in strengthening the participation of society during the third session of work and providing an award to the three most successful members in this area.

Second Component: support the de facto implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption

The UNCAC, to which 16 Arab Countries have subscribed, provides a roadmap for national anti-corruption efforts. A number of Arab countries have exerted extensive efforts to implement it in the recent years; however, more effort is still needed, especially in the area of corruption prevention.

With the first decade on the adoption of UNCAC fast approaching, and in light of what the Arab region is witnessing in terms of increased calls against corruption, the need to rethink the approach towards UNCAC is implementation emerges. Indeed, building trust between the State and the citizens and enhancing mutual

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cooperation to address corruption, requires a careful reading of the state of UNCAC implementation on the ground and not only in texts. This invites a search for ways through the pace of implementation can be accelerating, building on the dynamics of the Mechanism for the Review of the Implementation of the UNCAC, and, whenever possible, in the framework of joint initiatives between the various parties involved.

Based on the above, ACINET identified the following two objectives in the framework of this component:

- To enable Arab countries that wish to monitor their progress in the de jure and de facto implementation implementing of the UNCAC and to enhance their participation in the related the Mechanism for the Review of the Implementation of the UNCAC.

- To support the exchange of experiences and expertise among ACINET members and with their counterparts in the Arab region and the world, in order to accelerate the implementation of Chapter II of the Convention dealing with corruption preventive measures, in the framework of the Marrakech Declaration issued at the fourth session of the Conference of States Parties.

Related activities under this component vary, and include (a) supporting the conducting of assessments of the implementation of the UNCAC; (b) organizing national and regional training sessions on the Mechanism for the Review of the Implementation of the UNCAC; and (c) organizing joint learning sessions in the field of corruption prevention.

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Third component: develop law enforcement capacities against serious corruption crimes.

The events unfolding in the Arab region put in focus the growing need for better capacities in ensuring the punishment of corruption crimes, including the processes of detection, investigation, prosecution, international cooperation, and the recovery of assets derived from corruption. Despite the fact that most Arab countries have criminalized most corrupt practices including bribery, embezzlement, misuse of authority, trading in influence, and others, experience has proved that there are still many obstacles that obstruct the application of these criminalization texts even in cases where political will appears to be clearly expressed and popular demands are strong calling for punishing the perpetrators.

This is true particularly in the case of serious corruption crimes that involves senior officials or high financial costs, crimes which are often transnational in nature and in need of cross-jurisdictional cooperation. Confronting such crimes requires special technical skills, modern legal, procedural and institutional frameworks, and an open approach to cooperation with the concerned authorities in other countries in accordance with the national interest. Limited capacities in this area represent a primary obstacle to anti-corruption efforts in the Arab region and a major cause of the lack of citizen trust in concerned national authorities and more broadly in the State itself.

Based on the above, ACINET identified the two following objectives in the framework of this component:

- To support the undertaking of legal, procedural and institutional reforms which are necessary to facilitate the work

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- To support the undertaking of legal, procedural and institutional reforms which are necessary to facilitate the work
of investigation and prosecution officials as well as international cooperation and asset recovery related to corruption and other associated crimes.

- To develop national specialized skills on financial investigations of serious crimes of corruption with international dimensions.

Related activities under this component vary, and include (a) drafting and publishing a specialized training manual; (b) organizing a specialized training course at the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Academy, and (c) convening a regional conference on the role of the justice authorities in the area of anti-corruption in Arab countries.

Fourth component: various activities.

ACINET's work during its third cycle of work will not be limited to the three components mentioned above, but will also include a number of complementary activities, and some of which are related to the enhancement and some of which proper management of the Network's institutional work, and exploratory activities aimed at keeping the Arab Network informed of the latest research trends in terms of anti-corruption.

Related activities under this component vary, and include (a) establishing a database for ACINET members that includes information and documents on anti-corruption issues and a list of Arab experts in the relevant areas; (b) exploring ways to involve parliamentarians and parliaments in Arab countries in ACINET’s work in a systematic and constructive way; (c) developing a research
paper on anti-corruption in the use of international financial assistance; (d) supporting regional research and consultations to identify areas of focus for the fourth cycle of work; (e) continuing the enhancement of ACINET’s institutional performance and working tools including efforts to expand its membership and the preparation and dissemination of related informational material; and (f) participating in the fifteenth International Anti-Corruption Conference.

For info on work progress, please contact info@arabacinet.org.