Transparency International honours hero in the fight against corruption

An emotional ceremony capped the first day of the 12th IACC as Transparency International presented its 2006 Integrity Award to Dr. Ana Cecilia Magallanes Cortéz, in recognition of her extraordinary courage in bringing down the criminal organisation of Alberto Fujimori and Vladimir Montesinos.

One of Peru’s most respected prosecutors, Dr. Magallanes was the leading force in the prosecution of some 1,500 members of the network of corruption. Her work led to the arrest of the highest profile figures in Peru’s organised crime, including Fujimori himself, and helped initiate the recovery of more than US $250 million in stolen assets for the citizens of Peru.

“Dr. Magallanes’ investigations brought her up against a government that used disappearances and murder to quell dissidents. This courageous and determined judge risked her life to cleanse Peruvian society,” said Proetica, TI’s chapter in Peru. “Dr. Magallanes is a shining example of integrity, courage and professionalism. She is an inspiration for millions of Peruvians.”

Transparency International created its Integrity Awards programme in 2000 to honour the bravery and determination of individuals and organisations around the globe whose selfless acts have helped curb corruption. Past winners include journalists, civil society activists and whistleblowers who investigate and unmask corruption, often at great personal risk.

Many past winners of TI’s Integrity Awards have continued in their fight against corruption, have taken on new challenges; many have also had their courageous actions recognised in other ways. To read profiles of past winners and where they are now, go to the November issue of TI’s newsletter Transparencyst Watch: www.transparency.org/newsletter.

Did you know?
There are 33 volcanoes in Guatemala. Of these, four are four active volcanoes: Fuego, Pacaya, Santiaguito and Tacaná. Pacaya has been in an active phase since 1965, and erupted last in August. It lies to the south of Guatemala City.

Special session: Knowledge sharing to fight corruption (Obelisco-Independencia)

18:00-19:30 Special plenary sessions
18:00-19:30 The World Bank anti-corruption strategy (Esmeralda/Bronce)
Corruptionintheextractiveindustries(Oro/Jade)

21:00-24:00 Networking evening (Palacio Nacional de la Cultura)

*Workshop names have been shortened from their full titles
Corruption in humanitarian assistance hurts the neediest

Humanitarian assistance can be vulnerable to corruption because of the circumstances in which it is delivered.

Yesterday’s workshop on Corruption in humanitarian assistance: Lessons from anti-corruption strategies focused on identifying recommendations to ensure that society’s most vulnerable people receive the full benefit of assistance pledged to them.

Recommendations targeted donors, humanitarian providers, civil society and government. Donors should increase their operationalisation coordination efforts to avoid duplication of projects; humanitarian agencies should commit to independent audits and local monitoring of projects; and governments and humanitarian providers should establish complaint mechanisms so that beneficiaries have somewhere to report suspicions of corruption.

A strong role for civil society was also identified, for example, to help with independent monitoring and to press for increased and effective information sharing, so that beneficiaries know what they are meant to receive. According to panelist Paul Harvey of the Overseas Development Institute, “A beneficiary who knows what they are meant to receive, from which organisation, and can complain to an independent body if they don’t get it will help reduce corruption.”

OAS Secretary General speaks about corruption

IU: Have you personally experienced corruption? Have you ever been asked for a bribe?

JMI: Well I have never been asked for a bribe because I couldn’t pay one - I don’t have so much money. And as a public official, no one has ever offered me a bribe. But years ago, when I was a private citizen, bribery was common in several cities of Latin America; where a „mordida“ was the usual alternative to traffic tickets. But as a public official I have never experienced this.

IU: Is it this personal experience with corruption that motivates you to fight corruption?

JMI: No. I’ll tell you what motivates me. There are some big problems in our societies. To modernise the states of Latin America, to improve the delivery of the state towards the people, you need transparency. The role of government is to make society more transparent. We have to give everyone more information so that corruption can be discovered when it occurs.

IU: The OAS declared 2006 the Inter-American Year against Corruption. What are the successes of this year? What gains did you make in the fight against corruption?

JMI: It was a year of evaluation and of cooperation. We have completed the first round of evaluation of the OAS Convention. It was also a big year for elections in Latin America: 13 presidential elections and 26 elections in total. This was another success; they have been transparent and competitive.

IU: The first round of the follow-up mechanisms for the Implementation and Monitoring of the OAS Convention against Corruption is finished. What have you learnt?

JMI: I think we still have a long way to go with fighting conflict of interest and developing international co-operation. We don’t have much co-operation in fighting corruption among countries.

IU: What needs to be improved? We are not just there to monitor, but to follow up as well. We have to see if our recommendations are being carried out. There have been suspicions that at the OECD may not fully fund monitoring of its anti-bribery convention. Is this the case at the OAS?

JMI: This is not a problem. Getting money for monitoring is not a problem. Getting money for cooperation, for supporting countries to follow up on our recommendations, for example to improve government procurement, is another thing.

The IACC will host a workshop on Lessons from the implementation and the monitoring of the OAS conventions today from 11:30-14:00 in Onix.

« We often see that countries of the developed world are not able to understand the difficult situation of poor countries trapped in the framework of the illegality of political clientelism or the clientelism of organised crime. These systems of clientelism reproduce corruption. »

Eduardo Stein, Vice President of the Republic of Guatemala

For help with:
Logistics (computer problems, problems with technology for workshops, lost badges or meal tickets), contact the IACC organising company in the Cafetal I.

12th IACC programme (workshops, plenary sessions, social activities), contact the IACC staff in the Cafetal II.

Computers, internet access and photocopying are available free of charge in the Salon Próceres.

For questions or comments about this newsletter, contact Amber Poroznuk at: aporoznuk@transparency.org

TOWARDS A FAIRER WORLD: WHY IS CORRUPTION STILL BLOCKING THE WAY?