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# MAAC Mobilizing Action Against Corruption Activity

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## Helping Combat Corruption

Do you think it is possible to effectively fight corruption? In many countries of the world, corruption is being tackled with measurable success, and the USAID Mobilizing Action Against Corruption (MAAC) Activity firmly believes that this will be the case in Armenia. This is what MAAC is all about. MAAC's goal is to reduce corruption in Armenia by providing Armenians with opportunities that would enable them combat corrupt practices encountered, by changing social attitudes and behavior among youth and adults so they become attuned to the consequences of corruption and would be more likely to oppose or confront the problem, and by enabling systems-level changes to prevent or reduce corruption. MAAC plans to fulfill its objectives by providing support to Armenian Government agencies and to Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) over the next three to five years.

MAAC works through the coordinated action of its four components:

- MAAC will establish Advocacy and Assistance Centers in all marzes of Armenia and in the country's capital, Yerevan. The Centers will provide citizens with channels for reporting corruption and directing complaints to government agencies. The centers also will work with government officials to implement systems-level and procedural reforms.

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## Presenting the Development of Armenia's New Anti-Corruption Strategy to the Public



*Conference marks the start of the development of Armenia's new Anti-Corruption Strategy.*

On 7 November, the Anti-Corruption Strategy Monitoring Commission (ACSMC) unveiled its plans for the development of the government's New Anti-Corruption Strategy. The announcement was made at a conference held at the Marriott Hotel in Yerevan. The event, coordinated by the MAAC Activity, was held in collaboration with UNDP.

Present at the conference was the ACSMC Chairman Gevorg Mheryan and other Commission members as well as representatives of government ministries, civil society organizations, the media, and the international donor community.

Opening remarks were delivered by the U.S. Chargé d'Affaires Joseph Pennington, as well as representatives of UNDP, the Council of Europe, and the OSCE. The Conference, which served as an open forum for exchanging ideas, led to a better understanding of participants'

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## Improving Anti-Corruption Communications in Armenia



*Anti-Corruption Strategy Monitoring Commission Debriefing Session*

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*“Although the 2003 GOAM anti-corruption strategy as Armenia’s international obligations stress the necessity of public communication to effectively combat corruption, anti-corruption communication in Armenia does not exist as a systematized and targeted activity per se.”*

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The systematic fight against corruption has been part of the Government of Armenia’s (GOAM) strategic priority since 2003. However, although the 2003 GOAM anti-corruption strategy as well as Armenia’s international obligations stress the importance of public communication in the fight against corruption, anti-corruption communication in Armenia does not exist as a systematized and targeted activity *per se*.

To address this situation, MAAC, from the initial stages of its operation, examined the issues of anti-corruption communications. It analyzed the current situation and presented phased solutions to use to develop a sustainable system of anti-corruption communication in Armenia. MAAC also worked to bridge the communication gap between state institutions and the general public.

In January and February, Arik Brutian, MAAC Communications Specialist, and advisor Erich de la Fuente conducted several rounds of meetings with the heads of public affairs at state institutions to determine the current state of anti-corruption communication. They found that these activities were often conducted on an *ad hoc* basis and with regards to external communications.

MAAC produced a strategy for internal and external communications strategies for GOAM and ACSMC to use. The internal strategy focused on familiarizing public employees with the Anti-Corruption Strategy. Issues addressed include how government employees can mobilize against corruption, and how they can, in regard to anti-corruption activities among government agencies’ public relations structures, establish internal cohesiveness and message consistency.

The external strategy, on the other hand, focused on strengthening public trust by keeping the public abreast of GOAM efforts to fight corruption, by educating them about the issue and by teaching them how best to combat the problem.

Relevant strategic approaches, focused activities, key messages, target audiences and timelines of implementation were set for each of the strategy.

On 4 February, following its review and assessment of anti-corruption communications in

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*The MAAC Team*

- MAAC will design and implement anti-corruption initiatives with targeted government agencies such as the Chamber of Control, the Human Rights Defender, and the Anti-Corruption Strategy Monitoring Commission.
- MAAC will provide financial support through grants to Civil Society Organizations: non-governmental organizations, media, business groups, and community-based groups to implement their own innovative anti-corruption approaches. These activities should be directed at concrete actions and include tangible expected results.
- MAAC will launch public awareness campaigns to make youths and adults understand why all forms of corruption are detrimental to them, to society and to the economy.

The MAAC team is composed of experienced international and national anti-corruption experts. MAAC is implemented by Casals & Associates, Inc., a leading management consulting firm headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia. Founded in 1986, C&A has grown into an international company with overseas experience in democracy strengthening, anti-corruption and good governance, accountability and transparency, and other aspects of sustainable development.

## Presenting Anti-Corruption Efforts to USAID Implementing Partners

On 1 November, MAAC organized the first Anticorruption Coordinating Group (ACG) meeting, to present the GOAM's new Anti-Corruption Strategy development plans to USAID implementing partners.

MAAC outlined the GOAM's anti-corruption efforts from 2003 to 2007 and explained that the new Strategy would be structured along the lines of the international agreements Armenia recently signed, namely UNCAC, GRECO and the OECD Istanbul Action plan.

Prior to the 7 November conference, when development of the new Anti-Corruption Strategy was announced to the public, MAAC organized discussions about the problem of corruption in the following thematic working groups: Democracy, Social Issues/Health/Education, and Economic Growth. Participants developed recommendations, which were later presented and discussed in a plenary session. These have since been brought to the attention of the ACSMC.

MAAC expects the implementing partners' specialists to support ACSMC's Expert Group, which has been charged with developing the new Anti-Corruption Strategy and Action Plan.



*USAID Implementing Partners discuss specific anti-corruption issues*

### *Presenting the Development of Armenia's New Anti-Corruption Strategy* ... from page 1

views about corruption in Armenian society and on the development of the new Anti-Corruption Strategy.

The fight against corruption has been one of the Government of Armenia' strategic priorities since 2003 when it adopted its first Anti-Corruption Strategy. An important milestone in the government's fight against corruption was its decision - announced in September 2007 - to develop a new National Anti-Corruption Strategy.

The Anti-Corruption Strategy Monitoring Commission (ACSMC) was assigned to develop the new Strategy and Action Plan for 2008-2012.

In order to ensure public consultation, MAAC proposed that the ACSMC hold a conference on the development of the new strategy on 7 November. The conference's main objective? To make the general public, civil society activists and international donors community aware of GOAM's agenda and plans to battle corruption and to solicit these organizations' input and recommendations on the priorities, policy directions, content or structure of the strategy paper.

The conference brought together more than 100 participants from government, the Central Bank, the Prosecutor's Office, civil society, the private sector, private citizens, the media, and the international donor community. Opening remarks were delivered by the U.S. Chargé d'Affaires, the U.N. Resident Representative, the ACSMC Chairman, the Council of Europe Special Representative of the Secretary General, and the Deputy Head of OSCE Yerevan Office.

During the conference - considered to be a major breakthrough because it presented the strategy development process from the outset - the ACSMC Chairman outlined the government's plan of action and presented priority areas that the new strategy should address.

The conference not only opened the door to two-way communications between the Government and civil society, it also laid the foundation for future discussions, which will surely contribute to the quality and effectiveness of the new Anti-Corruption Strategy and its Action Plan.

*"The conference not only opened the door to two-way communications between the Government and civil society, it also laid the foundation for future discussions"*



*Opening remarks were made by representatives of the ACSMC, US Embassy, UNDP, COE, and OSCE*

*MAAC Supports the Creation...* from page 2

Armenia, MAAC organized a presentation for ASCMC members to explain the basics and best practices of anti-corruption communications and to introduce the prototype of the ACSMC website.

The site was designed to educate the public about the effects of corruption, to inform them about public sector initiatives passed to combat the problem and to engage them in the fight against corruption.

Commission members found the assessment and proposals

would be very helpful as they progress in their anti-corruption communications efforts. MAAC has incorporated their comments and suggestions into the development of the ACSMC site. The website, when launched, will be a highly effective tool in GOAM's battle against corruption.

This is just the first step. MAAC will continue to work with its partners to implement the best practices in anti-corruption communications. In the second and third year, MAAC plans to further strengthen anti-corruption communications in Armenia.

## MAAC Supports the Development of Terms of Reference for GOAM's Anti-Corruption Strategy's Action Plan

The Government of Armenia's core activity is without doubt the development of the new Anti-Corruption Strategy. MAAC has supported this process from the outset by assigning Public Administration Coordinator Garik Khachikyan and Senior Anti-Corruption Advisor Jean-Pierre Bueb to the Anti-Corruption Strategy Monitoring Commission's Expert Group.

With support from MAAC and the OSCE Yerevan Office, the Expert Group developed a Terms of Reference (TOR) to guide the development of the new National Anti-Corruption Strategy and Action Plan. MAAC suggested a number of proposals that were eventually incorporated into the TOR. They include moving the start date of activities up from 2009, integrating international standards based on Council of Europe's best practices in South-Eastern Europe, and implementing a requirement to report on performance indicators against specific targets. MAAC stressed the need to prioritize the set of reforms

noting that many national strategies fail because they lack realistic planning and were overly ambitious.

MAAC advisors also stressed the importance of having an effective anti-corruption institutional framework. The TOR now includes a requirement to clarify the role of existing bodies responsible for implementation of the new Strategy in regards to the development, monitoring, and control of the future Action Plan.

MAAC expert Jean-Pierre Bueb also trained the Expert Group and ACSMC members on the review of draft legislation for corruption risks as practiced in Moldova and Russia. Mr. Bueb also discussed the nature and role of anti-corruption bodies in Europe, including the French Central Agency for the Prevention of Corruption.

## MAAC Announces its APS for Grants to CSOs and RFA for Opening the Advocacy and Assistance Centers

MAAC is committed to strengthening the role of civil society in advocating and demanding system-level changes in government aimed at preventing and reducing corruption.

On 6 February, MAAC issued its first Annual Program Statement (APS) to provide grants to Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) for projects and one-time events that address corruption in targeted sectors. Funding for grants ranges from AMD1 million to AMD7 million. Applications may be submitted at any time in the 12 months following the APS announcement.

MAAC is also promoting the establishment of anti-corruption Advocacy and Assistance Centers, which would address citizens' grievances and affect systems-level and procedural changes. On 29 February, MAAC issued a Request For Applications (RFA) from non-governmental organizations to establish and operate five Advocacy and Assistance Centers. In March, MAAC organized APS and RFA orientation sessions for potential applicants in Vanadzor, Gyumri, Ijevan, and Goris. During these sessions, the MAAC team provided

explanations about the RFA and APS, outlined the main areas of anticipated activities and answered participants' inquiries. More than 85 representatives from various CSOs attended the March orientation sessions. In early April, MAAC will organize orientation sessions in Kapan and Yerevan.

Full details on the APS and RFA are available on MAAC's website. Please visit [www.maac.am/announcements](http://www.maac.am/announcements).



*MAAC specialists answer inquiries by Civil Society Organizations representatives at an orientation session in Goris*