



*Parliamentary Centre
Le Centre parlementaire*

**3rd APNAC Regional Conference for Central Africa
13 & 14 December 2004
N'Djamena, Chad**

1. Objectives of the Conference

The third regional conference of the African Parliamentarians Network against Corruption (APNAC), held on December 13th and 14th in N'Djamena, Chad, was planned with the goal of spreading the Network in the parliaments of Central Africa, previously uninvolved except for Chad. APNAC, funded under the Africa-Canada Parliamentary Strengthening Program (financed by the Canadian International Development Agency-CIDA) and Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) aims to equip parliamentarians all over Africa with the knowledge and capacity to fight corruption.

The role of APNAC can be accomplished at two levels:

- i. Within parliament – the Network can work to sensitize MPs about anti-corruption and help to spread good anti-corruption practices;
- ii. Outside of parliament – working with civil society to spread anti-corruption awareness and practices on a national level.

For the past one year, the Network has been organizing regional conferences aimed at drawing even more countries into the anti-corruption network, of which a dozen countries are already actively involved. The first conference was held in Nairobi, Kenya in November 2003; the second in Abuja, Nigeria in March 2004; and this third and most recent one was held in Chad. Eight parliaments of Central Africa were invited but only the parliaments of Chad, Cameroon, Gabon, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Central African Republic actually attended the conference.

2. Conference presentations and discussions

The conference program was developed around the theme of “New Parliamentary Challenges in the Fight against Corruption”, with topics that reflected the goals of APNAC, i.e. to convince Parliamentarians about the importance of APNAC as a network;

how to create and sustain APNAC chapters within parliaments of a particular region; how to link the APNAC chapters with civil society organizations, such as Transparency International.

Secondly, the program also explored the question of corruption in public procurement with specific reference to existing laws and cases in Malawi and Kenya.

Thirdly, and in direct reference to the context of the Central African countries – who for the most part produce minerals and petroleum - the program looked at the various mechanisms developed to combat corruption in the Extractive industry. An expert from the World Bank, Silvana Tordo, delivered a very interesting presentation on a new anti-corruption mechanism, Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) that aims to fight corruption in the extractive industries by obliging companies and governments alike to publish what they pay or receive in the transaction involving extracted products.

Finally, the recurring topic covered at every regional conference so far, international anti-corruption mechanisms, was also discussed. The conference explored the role of parliaments in promoting the ratification and implementation of the African Union and United Nations conventions against corruption and more specifically how APNAC members can play an active role in supporting and building awareness for the conventions.

The various presenters at the conference included Members of Parliament from the attending countries; experts, (such as the Senior Energy Analyst from the WB); and representatives from Civil Society (Transparency International, “Publish What You Pay” Chad Coalition).

It should be noted that increasingly, the members of the APNAC Executive are playing a more visible leadership role – four of the conference presentations were made by Executive members from Uganda, Malawi, Kenya and Tanzania. Their active and engaging participation in the plenary discussions was also a sign of leadership and a mentoring role as they shared various experiences from their APNAC chapters and parliamentary institutions.

The discussion sessions centered on carefully designed questions focused on the presentation subjects, as well as further questions arising after each presentation. These questions, which were very animated, ensured that all Parliamentarians from participating countries were able to debate amongst themselves as well as the presenters. Due to the overall majority of Chadians present, the discussions also dealt extensively with the national situation in Chad. For instance, it came as a great shock to participants to learn that neither the Chad MPs nor the ministers present could give an exact figure as to the amount of money constituting oil revenues, nor how this money was utilized by the Chad government. These figures were apparently not available to Parliament or to the population at large. To some at the conference, this lack of transparency and accountability constituted a great risk as it provided to both government and oil corporations potential opportunities for large scale corruption

3. Conference resolutions

The conference ended with the drawing up of a *communiqué* entitled “Appel de N’Djamena”. After it was adopted by all conference participants, it was read to the representative of the Prime Minister of Chad, the Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs as he closed the conference. The communiqué addressed itself to three entities: Parliaments, Governments and Civil Society.

A. To Parliaments, the document asked that they:

- ✘ Vote in anti-corruption laws and ensure their implementation;
- ✘ Oversee transparency and good governance in public procurement;
- ✘ Inform and sensitize the population and civil society on the evils of corruption;
- ✘ Pass and implement laws that would allow civil society organizations to become third party witnesses in corruption cases*; and,
- ✘ Pass and implement laws that would give freedom to the press to investigate thoroughly and report on all manner of corruption.

B. To Governments, the Appel asked them to:

- ✘ Promote the respect of legal rights and liberties;
- ✘ Collaborate more closely with Parliaments and Civil Society in the fight against corruption;
- ✘ Implement existing anti-corruption laws;
- ✘ Pass new anti-corruption bills that complement existing anti-corruption laws;
- ✘ Put into practice the principles of good governance; and,
- ✘ Engage in the process of signing and ratification of anti-corruption Conventions.

C. And finally to Civil Society:

- ✘ To engage further and more whole-heartedly in the fight against corruption;
- ✘ To increase its role in creating awareness and sensitizing the population about corruption; and,
- ✘ To play its role fully in the education of the society about the evils of corruption.

4. Attendance

The conference, whose official opening was made by the Prime Minister of Chad, was attended by a total of 100 people during the two days it lasted. Although invitations had previously been sent out to the Parliaments of Chad, Gabon, DRC, Central African Republic, Cameroon, Congo Brazaville, Rwanda, and Burundi, only the first five countries were able to participate. Reasons for this varied. While the Rwanda delegation accepted the invitation, the five members did not make it to the conference due to last minute transportation complications. The Congo Brazaville and Burundi parliaments did not respond to the invitations at all nor did they send delegations. Again, the numbers in each delegation varied. DRC was only able to send two representatives; the CAR

delegation consisted of four MPs and one staff member; the Gabon delegation was composed of four; while the Cameroon delegation had five.

It is worth mentioning that both the Deputy Speakers of the Cameroon and Central African Republic parliaments were included in the respective delegations. The Gabon delegation included an MP who also happens to be the Speaker of the CEMAC Parliament.

As with every past APNAC conference and workshop, gender balance was an issue at the Chad conference. Despite requests to make the delegations gender balanced as much as possible, men were clearly the majority at the conference. This could either be a reflection of the lack of enough women MPs in the respective parliaments, or it could be, more worryingly, an indication of a marked lack of involvement of women parliamentarian in anti-corruption initiatives. From the foreign delegations, five women delegates attended out of a group of twenty-one MPs, approximately 24% of the total. It should be noted, however, that during the two days of the conference, there was an average of four Chad women MPs in attendance each day as well as participation of women from civil society. Mme la Ministre for the Ministry of Control and Moralization in Chad also attended the first day of the conference and sent her representatives on the second day.

5. Evaluation and observations

As with any activity, especially in the field of good governance, it is difficult to judge the long-term outcomes from the activity itself. But the immediate outputs of the N'Djamena conference give us some clear indications about the potential and limitations to spreading the APNAC network in the Central African region in the future.

a) Large scale corruption and skepticism about the role of Parliament in fighting corruption –

The conference discussions revealed that parliamentarians were very conscious of the large scale corruption operating in their countries' region, both in public procurement and within the extractive industries. Much of this corruption is carried out by governments but it permeates all levels of society, including parliament. Consequently, almost all of the delegates, except the two from DRC and several MPs from Chad, expressed their utter disillusionment and skepticism at the ability of Parliaments to be involved effectively in the fight against corruption. Exchanges with the Members of the APNAC Executive were quite heated as MPs such as Hon. Gama and Agwenyi defended the efforts of APNAC chapters and encouraged their colleagues in Central Africa to continue the fight and avoid a defeatist attitude toward corruption. The definition of corruption and where Parliamentarians can become involved in fighting corruption was also a topic of agitated discussion.

The concerns and resistance of several delegates therefore raises the question about how willing or committed MPs from the region will be to create APNAC chapters.

b) Evidence of Executive dominance within Central African parliaments –

Discussions and debate during the conference revealed that most parliaments in the region (francophone) were modeled after a presidential style of government. This means that the ruling party has a majority in Parliament and that MPs from this party are bound unequivocally to defending the government's policies. This would make it very difficult for any MP, therefore, to criticize or even challenge the government on corruption. The Opposition, if it exists, is fundamentally weak, giving undue power to the Executive branch which in turn erodes parliament's powers. The francophone MPs in Chad could not fathom the idea that both government and opposition members could stand together to fight corruption, as was reported to be the case in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. In some Parliaments, such as Gabon, where they have had essentially a dictatorship for the last 40 years, the thought of parliamentary opposition to the Executive power is almost unimaginable.

c) The spread and sustenance of APNAC in the Central African region –

The Central African MPs marveled at the progress made by APNAC in Anglophone countries, which have primarily parliamentary systems of governance. The perceived freedoms of MPs in these parliaments were almost unheard of in the francophone parliaments. There were general misgivings about the potential success of APNAC chapters in these central African parliaments. However, the Chad chapter, established two years ago and numbering about 30 members, was living proof that an anti-corruption chapter can exist in a presidential system as long as the members stayed committed. DRC has also very recently established a chapter and its two representatives at the conference made an appeal to their regional colleagues to commit to APNAC and anti-corruption and confirmed the determination of the DRC chapter to become active and resolute in the fight against corruption. The President of the CEMAC Assembly also spoke favorably of the importance of parliamentary oversight and accountability in the fight against corruption and announced that he hoped the CEMAC could develop an anti-corruption committee and become more involved in APNAC.

All evidence shows, nevertheless, that spreading APNAC in the region will be an uphill battle – both in changing the perception of MPs towards fighting corruption, and to finding ways of making the idea of APNAC take root with the different groups in a particular parliament.

Another limiting factor is that almost half of the parliaments in the region are transitional. This is the case with DRC, Central African Republic and Burundi. The MPs who attended from DRC and CAR will most likely not be present after the next elections. For CAR, the four MPs were certain that they would not stand for election in January, leading to questions about the sustenance of the APNAC message they would take back with them, if at all.

d) Involvement of NGOs and other partners in the fight against corruption in Central Africa –

The conference was attended by what was perceived to be two very strong civil society groups, namely Transparency International-(Berlin and Cameroon) and the Publish What You Pay/Publish What you Earn coalition of Chad (PWYP/PWYE). These two groups

could be regarded as future potential partners of APNAC in the region. TI-Cameroon was represented at the conference by its Chair Akere Muna, who is also the elected Africa representative for TI-International, who elaborated on the different anti-corruption instruments in force within Africa, namely the AU and UN anti-corruption conventions. PYYP/PWYE Coalition, in existence only since October 2004, comprises of a hundred or so civil society groups in Chad, all working to ensure transparency in the domain of petrol production and in the relation with International Financial Institutions. These two NGOs expressed their willingness and readiness to work more closely with Parliamentarians in the fight against corruption. RENAC (Reseau Anti-corruption de Cameroon) represented in N'Djamena by its chair, Dahirou Yaya, also showed initiative to work with the Cameroon Parliament to launch an APNAC Chapter. However, from conversations with Mr. Yaya, the initial assessment is that RENAC still lacks the necessary capacity to engage meaningfully with parliamentarians and that it does not have, at this time, credibility within Parliament to be accepted as a legitimate partner or secretariat. But the idea of a partnership can be revisited in the future and RENAC was encouraged to take steps to strengthen its relationship with Parliament and provide results in its objectives to promote anti-corruption in Cameroon.

The World Bank, though not an NGO, only recently began to involve parliaments in anti-corruption programs, especially those related to the Extractive Industries. Silvana Tordo, mentioned above, made an announcement about a WB workshop to be held on January 27th 2005 in Malabo (Gabon) with the 30 members of the CEMAC Parliament. The seminar will focus on transparency in the management of petroleum resources. APNAC will seek to collaborate more closely with the WB on anti-corruption programs in the future.

e) Overall evaluation

Details of the logistical evaluation of the conference can be found in the following section. From the program side, there was a unanimous consent that the conference was a success. Chad MPs were extremely proud to receive colleagues from the region to exchange ideas and experiences and the majority of MPs attending the conference felt it was an important event and thanked PC for the opportunity to participate. The conference provided a real opportunity for debate between MPs from the region not only on the issue of anti-corruption but also on the role of MPs and Parliament and the extent to which parliamentary institutions need to become involved in oversight, regardless of the governance system in the country. Members of the APNAC Executive also spoke positively of the conference and enjoyed the fact that they were challenged on their role in the fight against corruption and the role of their APNAC chapters. This conference also provided real insight into the differences that mark the various systems of governance in Africa and one could see that MPs from Central Africa clearly saw their situation, both in their roles and opportunities to participate in the governance process, as very different to those of their colleagues from Eastern Africa.

6. Expected Results

While it is too early to measure the impact of this conference, some results can already be identified and we hope to report on additional ones as national chapters and other delegates report back to APNAC.

Some of the immediate results of this conference include:

- ✘ Increased awareness among Central African parliamentarians of corruption issues and mechanisms available for Parliaments to increase oversight and control.
- ✘ Improved understanding among participants of corruption in national procurement programs and specifically in the extractive industries.
- ✘ Development of country chapters (DRC and possibly Gabon) and enhancement of country chapter strategies (particularly for Chad)
- ✘ Strengthening of linkages between parliamentarians and anti-corruption groups and civil society
- ✘ Greater awareness among Central African parliamentarians of the importance of ratification and proper implementation of international anti-corruption conventions

7. Challenges faced and lessons learned

The planning and implementation of the conference was not without its drawbacks. The one overriding problem which created difficulties and challenges throughout the entire course of this activity was concentrated on logistical issues linked to the remoteness of Chad and limitations of its infrastructure, services and so forth. An example of these limitations included difficult accessibility of the conference venue from other parts of Africa. Flights to N'Djamena are rare and irregular, which means that most of the delegates either arrived too early, too late or for some, not at all. Some left the conference early to avoid possible delays with unreliable airlines and regular flight cancellations. Another disappointment was that the Rwanda delegation did not make it to the conference at all, despite setting out on their trip. The return home was also fraught with unexpected delays at airports from some of the delegates.

Another problem faced at the conference was the total lack of good interpretation services, which meant that all interpretation was consecutive and extremely time wasting. The total lack of reliable equipment for simultaneous interpretation as well as other technical problems with audio-visual equipment forced PC staff to constantly adjust approaches to the program, presentations and so forth, unable to rely on PowerPoint or simultaneous interpretation. This, for instance, curtailed any possibility of breakout sessions for discussion among the one hundred participants in attendance. The original program had planned for at least 3 breakout sessions to facilitate greater discussion.

However, the commitment and enthusiasm of the APNAC-Chad chapter needs to be emphasized here, given the circumstances they went to tremendous efforts to make this activity a success and went the extra mile with details such as outings for the foreign delegates, handmade artisan folders for conference participants and generous amount of their time to the planning and implementation of the conference. Yet despite all their

good efforts, the limitations of Chad's service industry, lack of resources of Parliament (financial and staff) and other factors created several obstacles for this conference, at least from a logistical point of view.

8. Other developments

1. Meeting with the President of Chad

The Chad Parliament arranged for a meeting between the Head of State, President Lt. Gen. Idriss Deby and the APNAC Executive. The meeting took place on the morning of December 15th and lasted approximately half an hour. During that time, Hon. Ruzindana briefed the President on APNAC and the success of the Chad Conference. The President addressed the delegation for several minutes and spoke in a very candid manner about the ills of corruption and the impact it has in Chad and the region. He discussed some of the measures taken by his government to combat corruption but also commented on the challenges and difficulties. On several occasions he linked the effects of corruption and poverty in his country and also talked about instability in the region and the effects it has on Chad. Overall, APNAC members were impressed by the frank and direct nature of the President and were pleased to have received the honor of meeting him.

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