

Supporting the fight against Corruption in Asia and the Pacific: The ADB/OECD Anti-Corruption Initiative

Governments around the globe seek to curb corruption to counter its negative effects on political stability, health and welfare, sustainable economic development, international trade and investment, and environmental protection.

Anti-Corruption Initiative

In 1999 several governments in Asia-Pacific agreed to cooperate in the fight against corruption by launching the [Anti-Corruption Initiative for Asia and the Pacific -- a regional forum for supporting national and multilateral efforts to reduce corruption in Asia and the Pacific](#). Member governments formulate the Initiative's strategies and implement programs and activities with the help of its Secretariat, which is jointly managed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

Strategic Principles

The Initiative was originally based on the [Anti-Corruption Action Plan for Asia and the Pacific](#) endorsed by the member countries, which sets out goals and standards for sustainable safeguards against corruption in the region.¹ Since the Initiative's inception in 1999, international anti-corruption standards have advanced significantly, especially with the advent of the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC). In 2010, the Initiative adopted [Strategic Principles](#) that guide the Initiative's future activities and strategic direction, and made UNCAC implementation a priority for the Initiative.

Members of the Initiative

To date, the following 31 countries and jurisdictions from Asia and the Pacific have joined the Initiative: Afghanistan; Australia; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Cambodia; People's Republic of China; Cook Islands; Fiji Islands; Hong Kong, China; India; Indonesia; Japan; Republic of Kazakhstan; Republic of Korea; Kyrgyz Republic; Macao, China; Malaysia; Mongolia; Nepal; Pakistan; Republic of Palau; Papua New Guinea; Philippines; Samoa; Singapore; Solomon Islands; Sri Lanka; Thailand; Timor-Leste; Vanuatu; and Vietnam.

Membership in the Initiative is open to any economy in Asia and the Pacific that: recognizes the need for action against corruption and the benefits of sharing knowledge and experience across borders; is actively taking steps to implement anti-corruption measures; commits to undertake reforms to implement the Initiative's "strategic principles"; and to participate in the Initiative's review mechanisms.

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The Action Plan provides three pillars for the fight against corruption in Asia-Pacific: a) measures in the public service; b) private sector integrity; and c) citizen involvement.

Organizational structure

The Initiative's [Steering Group](#) comprise representatives of the Initiative's member governments and defines the Initiative's priorities and activities to support the members' anti-corruption reforms. The [Advisory Group](#), which includes relevant international organizations, donors, civil society, business organizations, and other constituencies that support the Initiative, provide technical advice to the Steering Group and mobilize resources. A small Secretariat, run jointly by ADB and OECD, supports the Steering Group.

Implementation mechanisms

The Initiative seeks to achieve its main goal of effective UNCAC implementation in Asia and the Pacific through capacity building based on peer-learning, mutual support and exchange of expertise, while taking into account the geographical and developmental diversity of its members; demands on members' human and financial resources; and the need to provide value-added in view of the functions and roles of other multilateral anti-corruption bodies. The Initiative engages in essentially four main activities to achieve its goals: (1) regular meetings of its Steering Group and self-reporting; (2) thematic reviews and scoping exercises; (3) capacity building seminars; and (4) regional anti-corruption conferences.

Steering Group Meetings and Country Reporting

Sharing experience inspires reform

[Steering Group meetings](#) are held once every year. Delegates at the meetings discuss their countries' efforts to implement the UNCAC and the Action Plan, assess developments and progress, and exchange experience about successes, challenges, and failures in anti-corruption reforms. By focusing on issues and challenges shared by the members, the meetings take advantage of the Initiative's feature as a regional network.

Thematic reviews and scoping exercises

Reviews to identify government-specific and regional priorities

In-depth Thematic Reviews are conducted on priority areas of regional concern in the implementation of international anti-corruption standards. These reviews, which have recently taken on an UNCAC focus, analyze and make recommendations on region-wide as well as country-specific challenges. They are an excellent resource for legal and institutional anti-corruption reform. They could also be an important source of information for providing technical assistance for UNCAC implementation at the regional and country levels.

[Curbing Corruption in Public Procurement](#) was the first review published in September 2006. A second review concerned frameworks and practices for [Mutual Legal Assistance, Extradition and Recovery of Proceeds of Corruption](#) in 2007. A third review on the [Criminalisation of Bribery Offences under the UNCAC](#) was concluded in 2010. In 2013, the Initiative began its fourth review on Corporate Compliance, Ethics and Internal Controls, Including Accounting and Auditing Measures, for Preventing and Detecting Corruption, in compliance with Article 12 of the UNCAC.

The Initiative has also agreed to conduct [Scoping Exercises](#) on a voluntary basis. A country can request a Scoping Exercise to help it identify solutions to specific challenges in UNCAC implementation. A Scoping Exercise can also help a country mobilise resources for technical assistance. The Initiative's Secretariat is now seeking volunteer countries and financial support for the first two Scoping Exercises as a pilot project. Thereafter, the Initiative will refine its methodology before further such exercises are conducted.

Capacity building seminars and conferences

Capacity building seminars

To support progress in priority areas for reform, the Initiative conducts [regional technical seminars](#) every year, unless a regional conference is held instead. Seminar topics have ranged from criminal prosecutions, public procurement, international co-operation in criminal matters to corruption prevention and political economy of corruption. These technical seminars bring together experts and policy makers from the region and beyond to strengthen capacity, foster dialogue, and encourage policy reform. Proceedings of the seminars are published to disseminate the expert findings to a wider audience.

Regional Anti-Corruption Conferences

Policy dialogue also takes place during the Initiative's [regional anti-corruption conferences](#), held every three years. The conferences provide a forum for exchanging knowledge and experience among governments, civil society, the private sector, and the donor community. The conferences build networks among concerned stakeholders; foster innovative anti-corruption strategies tailored to Asian and Pacific countries' needs; and allow for evaluation of achievements, challenges and future priorities.

Technical advice

A vast network of [partners](#) contributes technical advice and experience to the Initiative's work. Experts from member countries of ADB and the OECD Working Group on Bribery in International Business Transactions participate in technical seminars and conferences and contribute their expertise to reports and studies. Their experience is thus shared with their counterparts from the Initiative's members. Specialists from international organizations, the private sector, civil society and donors also offer advice on policy design and implementation.

Partnerships and alliances in the fight against corruption

To underpin the support of Asian and Pacific governments in fighting corruption, the Initiative has built strong partnerships with the private sector, civil society, donors, and regional and international organizations.

The [Advisory Group](#) serves as a forum for these partners to coordinate their efforts in support of the governments of the region. The Group brings together the Initiative's donors, currently the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). Other Group members include international bodies actively involved in fighting corruption in the region: American Bar Association/Rule of Law Initiative, Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG), Transparency International (TI), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the World Bank.

The Initiative also works in close partnership with the OECD Working Group on Bribery in International Business Transactions and other OECD bodies, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and various other regional organizations.

More information and contacts

Website and newsletters

The Initiative's website www.oecd.org/corruption/asiapacific provides more information on the work of the Initiative, its members and its partners. The Initiative also publishes a newsletter highlighting upcoming events and developments in anti-corruption work of the Initiative's members. For more information and requests, please contact the Initiative's Secretariat.

Secretariat contacts

Asian Development Bank (ADB)

Cholpon Mambetova
Integrity Specialist
Office of Anticorruption and Integrity
Asian Development Bank
6 ADB Avenue, Mandaluyong City 1550, Philippines
Tel: +63 2 632 6190 | Fax: +63 2 636 2152
cmambetova@adb.org

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

Emma Scott
Anti-Corruption Analyst /Asia-Pacific Outreach
Anti-Corruption Division, Directorate for Financial and Enterprise Affairs
2, rue André Pascal
75775 Paris Cedex 16, France
Tel: +33 1 45 24 82 19 | Fax: +33 1 44 30 63 07
emma.scott@oecd.org