



ACHIEVING CONSENSUS: *GLOBAL STANDARDS ON POLITICAL FINANCE*

Each State Party shall also consider taking appropriate legislative and administrative measures, consistent with the objectives of this Convention and in accordance with the fundamental principles of its domestic law, to enhance transparency in the funding of candidates for elected public office and, where applicable the funding of political parties.

Article 7 (3) of the United Nation's Convention against Corruption

Through its program on Political Finance and Public Ethics (www.moneyandpolitics.net), IFES is assembling a coalition of researchers, experts, anti-corruption activists, and practitioners in the field of political finance to develop a set of global standards that clarify and define article 7 (3), both within the context of the Convention and the emerging set of global best-practices. IFES will prepare a brief document - Global Standards for Political Finance - that will be complemented by a larger document that explains each point in greater detail. IFES seeks to present these materials as a non-binding document for consideration and approval by a wide range of stakeholders from around the world. Once consensus is achieved, IFES will launch Agenda 2008 – a global effort to disseminate the new standards to governmental and non-governmental stakeholders.

RATIONALE

Effective regulation of campaign and party funding is one vital aspect in the fight against corruption. A significant number of transition countries, as well as developed democracies, are considering and entering into reforms (such as introducing public funding, spending limits, enforcement agencies, prohibitions against certain sources of funding, etc) in this area. However, these efforts are often not based on well researched principles and lack a reference point from which to depart. A set of Global Standards for Political Finance will provide such a reference point.

Regulating party funding is one vital aspect of a multi-dimensional effort in the fight against corruption. Unfortunately, in recent decades there has been an increasing rush toward more complicated political finance regulations and more direct state subsidies. The rapidity with which legal changes relating to political finance occur in various countries raises serious concerns about their relation to basic political rights, practical implementation, and proper enforcement. Although the desirable scope of political finance regulations and subsidies is bound to remain a subject of debate, a global consensus on a set of standards can be identified.

Different standards have recently been advocated by a number of international governmental and non-governmental organizations. Most of them have been broad, thus permitting considerable scope for national variations. Many of the proposals, such as those emerging from organs of the Organization of American States (OAS), the Council of Europe (CoE), the World Bank, African Union, ADB-OECD Anti-Corruption Initiative for Asia and the Pacific, or the Association of Central and Eastern European Election Officials (ACEEEO), indicate the direction in which the future of political finance regulations could move. Not surprisingly, all of the above organizations emphasize strategies based on public disclosure and most address the question of monitoring.

APPROACH

IFES and its partners will promote global political finance standards in a way that includes intergovernmental, governmental, and civil society stakeholders for the first time through the effective and efficient use of the internet and other fora to promote a broad-based, results-oriented dialogue. This project seeks to (1) galvanize the debate among global and national stakeholders; (2) identify a set of best practices for global standards; (3) facilitate a discussion and possible consensus among global stakeholders leading to acceptance of the standards by multi-lateral institutions; and (4) encourage implementation of the standards on a national level.

The project will begin with a significant research component designed to collect and analyze existing regulations, standards, and best-practices. At the same time, a dedicated Political Finance Standards (PFS) Portal on www.moneyandpolitics.net will be launched. The PFS Portal will be a repository of project documents and comparative information, and will serve as a global communication and information-sharing mechanism. IFES will facilitate working and advisory groups both virtually and through targeted meetings to conduct a comprehensive review of regional standards and other related documents. The research results will then be distilled into a set of standards together with explanatory language on each standard.

IFES will also launch Agenda 2008 – a global effort to disseminate the new standards to governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. The Agenda 2008 will also include different documents with policy recommendations on how to reform successfully political finance systems. The reform package will reflect variety of political systems as well as cultural and economic limitations. Finally, IFES will work with multi-lateral institutions and national governments to develop a strategy for the formal presentation of the Global Standards for Political Finance for consideration by the Member States of the United Nations.

CONCLUSION

Achieving Consensus will result in global standards, series of useful documents, and the internet-based political finance network that will continue to guide and affect change past the duration of the project. Additionally, Agenda 2008 will enhance the capacity of countries to appropriately design and correctly implement political finance regulations that will secure sustainability of the reforms.

Contacts

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