

**Press release by Transparency Maldives on the occasion of the
2023 International Anti-Corruption Day**

9 December 2023

In the National Corruption Perception Survey 2023 published by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) of Maldives, 64% of the respondents believed that the overall corruption in the Maldives has increased and 28% believed that it has remained unchanged in the past three years.

A crucial step towards restoring public trust in the government and oversight bodies is the establishment of a robust and effective asset declaration regime. The failure to disclose assets by public officials act as a pathway to corruption leading to bribery, fraud, nepotism, conflict of interest, and is a hindrance to uncovering illicit enrichment.

As we mark the International Anti-Corruption Day 2023, we must reaffirm our commitment to tackling corruption and enhancing the transparency and integrity of public officials by ensuring accountability for those who abuse their positions of power and are complicit in acts of corruption.

Government of Maldives: While we recognise the pledges made by the incumbent President to tackle corruption and take legal action against those who commit corrupt acts without hesitation, we call on the government to hasten the anti-corruption efforts that will make those pledges a reality.

We reiterate our calls on the government to uphold their anti-corruption commitments and publish the asset declarations of all high-ranking political appointees, including the Cabinet, President and the Vice President, and to ensure the accuracy of the information.

People's Majlis: According to the National Corruption Perception Survey 2023 by ACC of Maldives, the perception of corruption in the Parliament was one of the highest among the respondents – 75%. To bolster public trust, the Parliament members must execute their duties with integrity and address systemic issues that perpetuate corruption through legal reform.

Transparency Maldives calls on the Parliament to expedite the passing of the Asset Declaration Bill currently in the Parliament to introduce a comprehensive asset declaration system and robust verification mechanism which would ensure successful prosecution of unjust enrichment offences.

State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs): According to the Ministry of Finance SOE Gateway, SOEs generated MVR 46.96 billion in sales and the total assets of SOEs stood at MVR 164.96 billion by the end of 2022. In the National Corruption Perception Survey 2023, SOEs held the same level of perception of corruption as the Parliament at 75%. SOEs perform a crucial role in providing essential services to the public, SOEs must strengthen their business integrity, governance mechanisms and increase transparency to foster public trust.

We welcome the efforts by Privatization and Corporatization Board (PCB) to strengthen the governance of SOEs, including the recent requirement for Board of Directors of SOEs to publish their asset declaration under the Code of Conduct Policy. We call on the Board of Directors of SOEs to publish their asset declaration, and PCB to ensure policy implementation and the accuracy of the information. We also call on extending the asset declaration mandate to senior officers in addition to the Board of Directors of SOEs.

Political Parties: Political parties play a crucial role in holding political party members involved in acts of corruption to account. It is the responsibility of political parties to isolate members involved in corruption, especially those who are contesting for political positions from the process of representation of the people.

Transparency Maldives calls on political parties to refrain from corruption, ensure integrity in the work of public service, and to ensure persons involved in acts of corruption are not able to participate in any party activities or internal elections. Political parties must commit to take necessary actions to enforce the rule of law, protect democratic values and promote transparency and openness.

We also call on relevant institutions to strengthen oversight bodies to ensure anti-corruption authorities and oversight bodies have sufficient funds, resources and independence to perform their duties and to investigate delays in the investigation and prosecution of corruption through conducting performance audits of authorities and oversight bodies.

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