

“It is obvious that having today’s level of corruption in Kyrgyz society and government, we cannot make any economic, scientific, technological or social breakthrough, because the corruption will continue to devour scarce resources that could be invested in our development”, said Adylbek Sharshenbaev, Director of Transparency International in Kyrgyzstan, in an article written exclusively for cabar.asia.

The Corruption Perception Index for 2014 showed that Kyrgyzstan scored 27 points, which is 3 points higher than in 2013 (24 points) and moved from the 150th to the 136th place. Our officials do not miss the opportunity to mention how much we have advanced in this rating and to declare the success of the state’s anti-corruption policy. But is it really and what really has been done by the state in the field of combating corruption?

To begin, we must understand what the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) or Corruption Perception Index (CPI). CPI - is an integral component index, calculated the international movement to combat corruption Transparency International since 1994 to attract public attention to the problem of corruption. The research is based on the isolation and bringing to a common denominator of data corruption from other polls conducted by well-known and credible institutions, procedures which are subject to scrutiny by the experts Transparency International. The index ranks countries on a scale from 0 to 100 points, where zero represents the highest level of perception of corruption, that is, the absolute corruption of a hundred - the smallest, ie the absolute absence of corruption.

Knowing the extent of the CPI measurement scale becomes clear that we are still at the very bottom of the rating, along with the countries with extreme levels of corruption (30 points), and still the situation leaves much to be desired. This is also evidenced by the data and other studies. Thus, according to the survey “Corruption in Kyrgyzstan: the magnitude, causes and opportunities to reduce,” commissioned by the Ministry of Economy in 2014, corruption is the second most important issue after the political instability.

On average, 52.8% of respondents paid a bribe during the past 3 years, and the majority of citizens (72.3%) and entrepreneurs (76.4%) believe that corruption is a very serious problem for the public administration in Kyrgyzstan. According to another global survey conducted by the Transparency International, based on surveys of the national population - Global Corruption Barometer - in Kyrgyzstan, in 2013, 86% of respondents said that over the past 2 years, the level of corruption remained the same (45%) or increased (41%), and

68% said that the government is fighting corruption ineffectively.

To speak confidently about the success of anti-corruption policy, we need a continued positive trend during a longer period than one year. Yes, during recent years that have passed since the last change of government, there have been a number of anticorruption steps: the National Agency for the Prevention of Corruption was abolished as it had become useless, and the Anti-corruption service was created at the State National Security Committee; also a Committee was established to combat corruption in the Parliament; the strategy for the fight against corruption has undergone repeated processing; a package of amendments and additions to the existing regulations, including the Criminal Code has been passed; the Law “On Fighting Corruption” was replaced by the law “On Combating Corruption”, and the National Sustainable Development Strategy was approved, one of indicators of which was the movement of Kyrgyzstan into the first fifty countries according to the CPI rating (which is quite ambitious).

Criminal proceedings are instigated against corrupt officials of various ranks: from petty officials to former ministers and parliament speaker. Public supervisory boards have been created at state bodies; other attempts to involve society in the implementation of anti-corruption strategy are being made. The political leadership of the country makes statements about the importance of fighting corruption and is determined to implement its promises. But improvements in the rankings for one or two years may be associated with the expectations of the population and the international community about the real implementation of anti-corruption reforms. And in order to maintain the positive trend referred to today, it is necessary to meet these expectations, strictly and effectively implementing reforms and avoiding the mistakes made in the past.

There is a recent example: in the early 2000s, our government declared its commitment to actively combat corruption following the trends taking place in the world. The government talked about an administrative reform: in the period of 2003-2004, there had been adopted a number of anti-corruption laws, such as the laws “On Combating Corruption”; “On Civil Service”, “On public procurements”; “On declaring and publishing information on incomes, liabilities and property of individuals holding political and other special public positions, as well as their close relatives”. An Agency for Civil Service and State Procurement Agency were established, and their main task was to restore order in their respective fields.

But the process was briefly interrupted by the change of power that occurred in March 2005, one of the main causes of which was the corruption of the former regime that started the process of reforms. It would seem that the new government would seriously take up the fight against corruption. In the wake of the change of government, documents were signed and “independent” agencies were created to provide the systematic nature of the fight against corruption. So, in June 2005, there was approved the National Anti-Corruption Strategy in the Kyrgyz Republic, and later there were signed decrees establishing the National Council for Combating Corruption and the National Agency for the Prevention of Corruption. In the same year, our country joined the Anti-Corruption Network of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which developed the so-called Istanbul Action Plan against Corruption for the countries included in this network. And finally, we almost were among the first thirty countries that had ratified the UN Convention against corruption necessary for its entry into force. Naturally, all this was accompanied by statements of the country’s leaders about the country’s commitment to the fight against corruption.

But the revolutionary impulse did not last long. The first director of the National Agency for the Prevention of Corruption created to ensure the desired systematic nature, appointed for four years without the right to suspension, was however dismissed only nine months later “due to a transfer to another appointment” for being too “diligent” in finding high-ranking corrupt officials. Naturally, no one was going to appoint him to another office. The materials containing unflattering information about senior officials, including the head of the Presidential Administration and Chairman of the Supreme Court, sent by the National Agency for the Prevention of corruption to the President and the Agency for Civil Service Affairs (the body responsible for monitoring the property of state officials) were revoked by the National Council for the fight against corruption that did not have rights for that but proved to be more loyal. The following appointees to the post of Commissioner (the head of the anti-corruption agency) were chosen more carefully from the “obedient” staff. As a result, the fight against corruption was reduced to formal events to create visibility of the strategy enforcement.

As you can see, in fact, everything had remained at the level of declaration. The government did not take tangible steps towards the establishment of mechanisms for the implementation of the above legal acts, organization of effective work of the created structures and the involvement of society in the fight against corruption. Clear evidence of this is the data below, reflecting the CPI for Kyrgyzstan (calculated for Kyrgyzstan since 2003):

Year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Score	2,1	2,2	2,3	2,2	2,1	1,8	1,9	2,0	2,1
Position	118 of 133	122 of 146	130 of 159	142 of 163	150 of 180	166 of 180	162 of 180	164 of 178	164 of 183

As can be seen from the table and chart, indicators of our country vary with small deviations in the region of 2 points (up to 2012, CPI scale ranged from 0 to 10 points). The low score received by our country and among the last twenty or thirty countries in the rating indicate that the government has not worked seriously on the problem of corruption in our country over these years.

Now, it is obvious that having today's level of corruption in Kyrgyz society and government, we cannot make any economic, scientific, technological or social breakthrough, because the corruption will continue to devour scarce resources that could be invested in our development.

What should we do in order to not let the current anti-corruption reforms get reduced to formalism and "hurray" statements?

Let's try to list the required minimum conditions for this:

- It is essential that the statements about the importance of fighting corruption are backed up by real action to ensure their implementation. Only then we can talk about the manifestation of political will, without which, in principle, it is impossible to conduct an effective anti-corruption policy.
- Legislation in the field of combating corruption should be strictly and effectively enforced. The principle of inevitability of punishment for corrupt practices, regardless of the corrupt official's affiliation to ruling government or the opposition, should be strictly observed.
- Involve highly qualified staff in the civil service, which requires to improve the system of staff selection and increase the attractiveness of the public service by developing an efficient system of remuneration and motivation. At the same time, we need to seek to establish the civil service management standards of quality and productivity.

Adylbek Sharshenbaev: Corruption is the second most important problem after political instability in Kyrgyzstan

- To organize anti-corruption education among public servants and citizens both in terms of tools and techniques to combat corruption, and in terms of understanding the breadth of forms and types of corruption. It is important to maximize the opportunities which information and communication technologies offer us today.

- Ensure transparency and accountability of public authorities, including the effective implementation of civil control. It does not have to be under the control of the government in the form of the creation of the State Councils and Forums for individual members of society. Authorities in Kyrgyzstan must realize that each and every citizen has a legal right to inspect the actions of those who manage public resources and is in the service of society. And it is necessary to protect these members of society from threats and attacks by the zealous officials and their associates who are trying to get rid of meticulous activists by accusing them of attempting to overthrow the foundations of the constitutional system, of subversive or extremist activity.

This is not the final list.

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