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GOPAC Secretariat

C/O Parliamentary Centre

255 Albert Street Suite 802
 Ottawa, Ontario K1P 6A9
 Canada

Tel: 613.237.0143 Ext. 319

Fax: 613.235.8237

info@gopacnetwork.org

4th Annual ARPAC Conference in Beirut

The 4th Annual Conference for the Arab Region Parliamentarians Against Corruption (ARPAC) was held May 7-8 in Beirut, Lebanon. The Parliament was represented during the conference by Lebanese MP Ghasan Moukheiber who attended on behalf of Speaker Nabih Berri. Also attending was ARPAC Chair Dr. Naser J. Al-Sane of Kuwait. Participating in the event were numerous Arab parliamentarians and representatives from other interest groups across the region.

This year's conference, themed "Arab Parliamentarians and the Challenges of Effective Engagement against Corruption," touched on a variety of topics. Discussions were centered on compliance with the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), the unique challenges facing parliamentarians who deal with corruption, and how to build coalitions that produce effective laws and policies that prohibit corrupt practices.

Dr. Al-Sane, as chair of ARPAC, and also Chair of GOPAC, opened the conference with a speech on Friday May 7th about the need to form an Arab alliance to combat corruption and force compliance to the UNCAC. Many nations, he says, have ratified the convention but fail to uphold it and an alliance is needed to provide accountability to frustrated citizens. In his own speech, Hon. Moukheiber added that the sixteen Arab signatories to the UNCAC in 2005 must reactivate many of their judicial, legislative and accountability entities and foster new relationships between public governing bodies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to fight the "plague" of corruption.

On Saturday May 8th, as part of the conference, ARPAC held their General Assembly meeting to elect a new executive committee to the organization. ARPAC Chair Dr. Al-Sane was succeeded by Hon. Moukheiber. Also elected was Dr. Mamdouh Al-Abadi, Vice-Chair (Jordan); Dr. Saadi Muhammad, Treasurer (Bahrain); MP Mahi Bahi Ammar, Secretary (Algeria); Dr. Azmi Al-Shuaibi, Board Member (Palestine); MP Mohsen Bassourra, Board Member (Yemen); MP Adnan Abdel Samad, Board Member (Kuwait); MP Ahmed Sebai, Board Member (Morocco); and Dr. Farid Ismail, Board Member (Egypt).



Lebanese MP Ghasan Moukheiber, the new Chair of ARPAC.

At the conclusion of the conference, the newly elected executive committee and attendees announced their full commitment to the UNCAC and developing new auditing legislation. To that point, they commissioned studies from the Arab planning Institute (Apl) to gauge the level of corruption within the Arab world. Furthermore, an agreement was made to produce a guidance document for helping parliamentarians in the battle against corruption in accordance with the UNCAC. Additionally, the deliberations called for individual national teams in Arab parliaments to develop strategies, mechanisms, and education programs to aid parliamentarians in their efforts.

For more information about ARPAC, visit their website: <http://www.arpacnetwork.org/>.

Sourced from ©KUNA (Kuwait News Agency) 3, 7-8 May 2010 and the ARPAC website which is linked above.

GOPAC and Parliamentarians Discuss Development with the World Bank

GOPAC representatives John G. Williams, former Canadian MP and GOPAC CEO; Senator Juan Manuel Galan, GOPAC member from Colombia; and Nola Juraitis, GTF-UNCAC/PO secretary, recently attended the Parliamentary Training program on the role of the World Bank in International Development, a first of its kind. In addition to the twenty five representatives and staff from Asia, Africa, Europe, and America the event, held April 26-27, 2010, was attended by representatives of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). The purpose of the conference was to engage in a learning experience for both sides. Colin Bruce, World Bank Director for Operations in the Africa Region had this to say to the delegates: "I am talking to the right people today, because we are in a business where we don't lack know how, what we lack is political will – you can help us in holding your government accountable in our development efforts..." For their part, the parliamentarians, as representatives of their citizens, expressed the need be included at the earliest stage of consultation processes for new projects.



Parliamentarians in the Board Room of the World Bank.

For more information visit the World Bank website for the May edition of their Parliamentary Newsletter: <http://go.worldbank.org/812ZF7AFN0>

Sourced and image taken from the World Bank Parliamentary Newsletter, May edition. Source link is above.

GOPAC Workshop in Accra

GOPAC, together with the African Network of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (APNAC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), held a workshop in Accra, Ghana from March 11-12th, 2010 for West African country chapters – Burkina Faso, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, and Nigeria participated. UNDP, the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and NGOs participated. The workshop was funded in part by UNDP. The objective was to test a toolkit for parliamentarians to help them assess their strengths and weaknesses in preventing corruption and implementation of the UN Convention Against Corruption.

The toolkit, which was developed by GOPAC in cooperation with the Oslo office of the UNDP, identifies questions, criteria and indicators to help parliamentarians, in consultation with staff, experts and NGOs to identify the strengths and weaknesses, as well as possible corrective initiatives in their own countries. Participants used the toolkit to prepare their assessments in advance of the workshop and discussed their assessments with their colleagues and other participants. The participants also agreed to take several further steps. All chapter representatives committed to engaging other national actors to review their initial assessment and broaden the consensus on their assessments and potential actions. Additionally, they agreed to submit their assessments to both APNAC and GOPAC as input to a global GOPAC report on strengths and weaknesses of parliamentarians in preventing corruption and in supporting the effective implementation of the UNCAC.

Participating members agreed to serve as advocates for the use of the toolkit, particularly in West Africa. They also urged an expanded workshop involving more Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) within a year. In addition, APNAC declared their intention to obtain reports from members of parliament of other APNAC chapters, as well as to provide a list of MPs to serve as focal points from APNAC country chapters. Finally, participating NGO representatives offered to actively support such assessment practices and committed to promote the idea within their own networks.

Workshops of a similar nature are also planned for Paraguay in July 2010 as well as the Philippines in the fall of 2010. For more information please contact Nola Juraitis at nolajur@sympatico.ca.