Seven Principles of Public Life

Selflessness

Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material advantages for themselves, other institutions or political parties.

Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organizations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take.

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

Corruption, organised crime and money laundering – often in connection with economic crime and fraud – have been identified as major impediments to the successful implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement, to democratization and the development of a market economy in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The elimination of corruption is fundamental to the normalization and integration of this country's society into the European home of nations and the global economy. This fight is not only a challenge to the state's legal and economic system, but also a demand for a systemic transformation of the accepted norms and values of public life.

What is corruption?

Corruption is the abuse of public life for private gain. Decisions are not taken for the public benefit, but rather to serve private interests. Corruption is often misunderstood as an exchange of money or granting of a favor, but it is more the misuse and abuse of the public trust and mandate for private interest benefit.

This activity undermines a society's integrity and distorts the operation of markets, depriving ordinary people from the benefits that should flow from them. Corruption undermines also good government, harms the private sector and its development. One of the saddest faces of corruption is that it harms the poorest and most vulnerable, it hardly ever touches the "decision makers".

Political Will and Transparency

Political will is a demonstrated credible intent of political actors to attack perceived causes or effects of corruption at systemic levels. Without political will corruption cannot be fought. Though it must exist among the political leadership, it is also very important that transparency in the institutions and processes mobilizes the citizenry's own political will to act against corruption. In this context, democracy based on pluralism, tolerance, freedom of expression and individual security offers the best environment for transparency.

All sectors of a democratic society must participate in the fight against corruption as only continued public scrutiny can make anti-corruption efforts sustainable. In particular, an independent media plays an essential role. The media has a unique position to inform the public about corruption, and in doing so, ensures that transparency over the government is improved.

The Road to Europe

The future of BiH is in its incorporation into the European mainstream and the global economy. For BiH to move forward along this path, a rigorous attention must be given by the public authorities to not only promote democracy, media freedom and supporting anti-corruption measures, but also in holding themselves to the highest standards of public accountability. In this way the BiH political leadership will not only lead their own society to prosperity and a better life, but also the Stability Pact to being a successful phase in the European integration process.

Public Accountability

It is imperative that in a mature, democratic country the public organs behave responsibly and effectively as foreseen by law. This can only be achieved when the public authorities – ministers, legislators and public officials – act in a manner that supports the law and the public interest. As a result, it is vital that standards of accountability are reinforced by mechanisms which minimize conflicts of interest..

Conflict of interest

A conflict of interests arises when the private interest of a politician or an official clashes or coincides with the public interest. This raises an ethical dilemma as the private interest can take influence over the exercise of official duties.

The legislators, ministers and public officials have the duty to serve the public interest and the citizens are entitled to feel confident that their power of sovereignty is being exercised for their benefit. The United States Senate Code of Conduct describes the duty as follows:

The ideal concept of public office, expressed by the words, "A public

office is a public trust", signifies that the officer has been entrusted

with public power by the people; that the officer holds this power in

trust to be used only for their benefit and never for the benefit of himself

or of a few.

This confidence can be eroded by the conflict of interest. Therefore, ethical requirements for legislators, ministers and public officials should help to avoid the conflict of interest.

The linkage between conflict of interests and corruption has lead to the conclusion that the adoption of international instruments on corruption including a code of good conduct for public servants is recommended. Through the adoption of similar standards of ethical conduct, conflicts of interests by legislators, ministers and public officials can be avoided.

Supporting the public interest

Integral parts of democratic government accountability include the mechanisms that support the integrity of its public officials. It is necessary for BiH to adopt various mechanisms that will support the legislators, ministers and public officials to act on behalf of the public interest and to improve the low level of public confidence in the

integrity of politicians. These include:

- Transparency and accountability in government procurement and other decision making;
- Free media and access to official information;
- Independent and highly trained judiciary and law enforcement agencies;
- Elected legislatures with power to hold public officials to account;
- Clear commitment by political leaders to fight corruption;
- Ensure that salaries of civil servants and political leaders adequately reflect the responsibilities of their posts;
- Civil service and administrative reforms;
- Transparent budget systems;
- Anti-Corruption laws and conventions;
- Audit institutions.

Codes of conduct are another effective mechanism, which clearly define where conflicts of interest lie and allow the public authorities to hold themselves accountable. A code of conduct sets the standards for legislators to follow which includes:

- Prohibition on the use of influence;
- Prohibition on the use of confidential information;

Additional standards included in codes of conduct for ministers and public officials that reflect a conflict of interest:

- Directorships;
- Shareholdings;
- Acceptance of gifts;
- Use of government property;
- Dealings with former ministers;
- Business enterprises.

Violations of the code may incur the imposition of criminal and civil penalties by the courts. In this way, the codes of conduct help maintain high levels of accountability for those persons employed in serving the public interest.

The technical support for legislators, ministers and public officials is crucial in securing that they act ethically. They must have adequate salaries which enable them to have lifestyles appropriate to their positions and which will reduce their exposure to conflicts of interest. Appropriate compensation is necessary for the public trust to be secured.

Transparency and the public interest

Laws, codes and other mechanisms alone will not ensure that public accountability is guaranteed. Government officials must open up their decision-making processes and procedures, forcing them to justify their actions and be held accountable to the public interest. Through this transparency, corruption becomes a high-cost affair.

In order for transparency to be achieved, citizens need to be able to access information on the government, a framework must be created which allows the government’s operations, deliberations, decisions and documentation

to be reviewed openly. Independent audits of government programs should be a regular occurrence, as should the public reporting of their results. Confidence in the government is increased and anti-corruption becomes systematic within the society.