Grand corruption is ‘crime against humanity’ - lawmakers

Source: Fri, 29 Nov 2013 05:36 PM
Author: Luke Balleny

LONDON (Thomson Reuters Foundation) – The most serious forms of corruption are crimes against humanity and should be prosecuted in the highest national and international courts, the head of a global anti-graft alliance of parliamentarians has said.

Akaash Maharaj, executive director, of the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC), urged the international community to act across borders in the fight against corruption.

“We believe there are some forms of corruption so grave, whose effects on human life, human rights, and human welfare are so catastrophic, that they should shock the conscience of the
international community and mobilise the will of nations to act across borders,” Maharaj told a side event on Thursday at the U.N. Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) conference in Panama City.

GOPAC has unanimously adopted a declaration to make grand corruption a crime that can be prosecuted anywhere in the world, he said.

“GOPAC members, the parliamentarians of the world, have given the community of nations the mandate and strategy to bring the worst perpetrators of corruption to justice,” Maharaj added.

GOPAC proposes four potential paths for prosecuting grand corruption: the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague; endowing national courts with universal jurisdiction; the creation of regional courts; the creation of a new mechanism for providing justice.

While most countries have established a legal framework to fight corruption, they often struggle to enforce their laws in practice because those who have grown rich and powerful through corruption are able to shield themselves from the rule of law in their home countries, a paper published by GOPAC earlier this month said.

When this occurs, the international community has an obligation to act, the paper added.

Over the next two years, GOPAC will work with its national and regional chapters, partner organisations and international institutions to implement the declaration.

Corruption costs nations billions in lost revenue. U.S.-based campaign watchdog Global Financial Integrity (GFI) estimates that developing countries alone lost $859 billion due to illicit financial outflows including corruption, the proceeds of crime and commercial tax evasion.

Campaigners say that corruption is not just an economic issue but also a human rights issue because the public wealth lost to graft could eradicate extreme hunger and poverty globally.

TOPICAL NEWS

Lack of cash and monitors add to Afghan election troubles

Somaliland minister says blocking remittances would spur criminal activity

China punishes 20,000 officials for being too bureaucratic

Super typhoon Haiyan wrecks havoc in Philippines

A protester gestures during pro-Mursi demonstration in Cairo

5 facts: World AIDS Day 2013