

Italy's Anti-Corruption Agency chief visits Belgrade

SOURCE: TANJUG

BELGRADE -- Serbia "has achieved progress in reforming its judiciary and, in particular, in ensuring its institutional independence."



That is what Serbian MPs told the president of Italy's National Anti-Corruption Agency, Raffaele Cantone, in Belgrade on Friday.

Nedjo Jovanovic from the Committee on the Judiciary, State Administration and Local Self-Government and Olgica Batic, chairperson of the Serbian branch of the Global Organisation of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC), met with Cantone in the Serbian parliament building.

They discussed the parliament's role in the judicial reform and the fight against corruption, the relationship with the Anti-Corruption Agency and the alignment of the national legislation to European regulations.

Jovanovic said that there has been positive progress in the judicial reform, in particular in ensuring the institutional independence of the judiciary.

Batic said that a project is under way to introduce a portal for monitoring state budget spending to establish a system that would be a connection between the Serbian parliament and the Treasury Administration of the Ministry of Finance.

This will enable MPs to monitor in real time the flow of budget spending with ease and efficiently and oversee public finances in a quality manner, she said.

The MPs briefed Cantone on the procedure of assessing the annual reports by independent state bodies, including reports by the Anti-Corruption Agency, and noted the intensive legislative activities aimed at aligning the national legislation to that of the EU.

Previously, Serbian Justice Minister Nikola Selakovic also met with Raffaele Cantone and the two officials "agreed that cooperation between the two countries is necessary especially in the area of fight against corruption."

After the meeting held late on Thursday, Selakovic told reporters that one of the main tasks is embodied in the establishment of international cooperation between Serbia and Italy which covers both the takeover of legal solutions and their implementation.

He underscored that the process of European integration offers a lot of changes for Serbia to work together on the realization of tasks in the fight against corruption through various international and partnership projects.

The cooperation between the two countries has so far produced excellent results in terms of takeover the Italy's experiences in the fight against organized crime, the justice minister said and expressed the hope that the cooperation between Serbia and Italy would this year get fresh momentum.

Cantone said that from what he had a chance to see and hear during the meetings on the fight against corruption with Serbian officials is much better than what was originally expected.

He said that his talks with the justice minister covered the possibility for drafting a memorandum of understanding so as to create the conditions for cooperation in corruption prevention.

I hope that the memorandum of understanding would be signed soon and that we will have the possibility to implement good practice from Italy here and exchange our experiences with Serbia, Cantone said.

On Thursday, Cantone conferred with Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic and Director of the Anti-Corruption Agency Tatjana Babic.

Vucic informed him about the problems Serbia is facing in the fight against corruption.

In the talks, Vucic especially pointed to the need for improvement of efficiency of the judiciary system, the Serbian government said.

Cantone is visiting Serbia in order to communicate the knowledge and experience in the sector of fight against organised crime and corruption in Italy to his Serbian colleagues.

Cantone's visit was realized at the joint initiative of Vucic and Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi who believes in the will of the Serbian government to tackle crime and corruption, which is very important for the countries on their EU path, according to a government statement.

The meeting produced an agreement according to which the cooperation between the Italian National Anti-Corruption Agency and the Serbian government to continue through contacts with representatives of the Justice Ministry, Anti-Corruption Agency and Council so that Italian experiences could be implemented through legal solutions on prevention and penalization of criminal acts of corruption.