

Qatar Attorney General is New Chair of International Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities

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The IAACA was officially established following a meeting held at the UN offices in Vienna, Austria in April 2006. In Vienna, Mr. Feng, the first Secretary-General of the IAACA, along with leaders of anti-corruption authorities from several countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, Argentina, South Korea, Namibia, Pakistan and several others, drafted the statutes of the IAACA. The IAACA officially announced its establishment on 22 October 2006 in the Chinese capital of Beijing, at its first annual conference and general meeting. The IAACA was based in Beijing, China until the recent hand-over to Qatar and it has held annual meetings and numerous other meetings in order to combat corruption.

As stated above, the IAACA was established to implement UNCAC as effectively as possible and to fight against all types of corruption in general. In order to assist with this, the IAACA set up a special task force following its fourth annual conference in Macau, China in 2010. The task force has more frequent meetings in order to work as efficiently as possible and has a work plan that it follows, which was devised with the help of the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) of Singapore.

From China to Qatar

Recently, on 11 May 2016, Dr. Ali Bin Fetais Al-Marri, the Attorney-General of the State of Qatar, was unanimously elected as the new president of the IAACA by the General Assembly of the UN, replacing the former president, Professor Cao Jianming of China. In practical terms, moving the organization's headquarters means that its work and meetings will now be held in Qatar. Before his election as president, Mr. Al-Marri was already a member of the IAACA. Born in Qatar in 1965, he has an MA in Public Law from Rennes University in France and a PhD in International Law from the Sorbonne University. A very well-known and respected professional in his field, Mr. Al-Marri has vast experience of the law. He started off working for the Emiri Diwan (HH Emir's office) as a legal researcher in 1996. Following that, he taught International Law at Qatar University. By 1998, he had worked his way up to the Head of the Legal Department at the Emiri Diwan and eventually was appointed as Attorney-General of Qatar. Al-Marri has held numerous prestigious positions throughout his career so far, including:

- Member, UN International Law Commission
- Head of the Qatar Committee
- Represented Qatar before the International Court of Justice (Qatar vs. Bahrain)
- President of the Committee preparing the Constitution of the Public Prosecution and its competences
- President and Vice-President of the World Summit (WSII) of Prosecutors-General, Chief Prosecutors and Attorneys-General
- Member, International Association of Prosecutors
- PhD commission member, Sorbonne University
- President, 6th World Forum Against Corruption
- President, Arab Conference of Attorneys-General, head of prosecutions and prosecutors
- UN Special Advocate against Corruption

Amongst its peers, Qatar has an excellent Anti-Corruption record. In an annual index released by Transparency International, Qatar was ranked 22nd in transparency out of 167 countries. The previous headquarters of the IAACA, China, ranks 83rd out of 167 countries.

Qatar's anti-corruption initiatives

Last year, Qatar launched a new domestic initiative aimed at weeding out graft by encouraging residents to report financial corruption in government organizations, including bribes and embezzlement of public funds. This is in addition to the existing provision in the Qatar Penal Code that criminalises the failure by a person to report a crime or intended crime, about which he has knowledge.

The country's police force and judiciary have also shown a willingness to crack down on corruption, such as running a sting operation in 2014 that led to the arrest of two senior employees of a well-known company, on charges of soliciting a bribe.

Following the call of United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to fight against corruption and to achieve all the Millennium Development goals in early December 2011, the Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption Centre was launched in Qatar the following day on 11 December 2011. Attending the launch of the centre, Secretary Ki-moon described the opening of the centre in Qatar – the first in the Middle East – as a “step forward in a collective journey of implementing the UN's effort against corruption.”

Furthermore, in Qatar's fight against corruption, Qatar hosted the Thirteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in April 2015. The theme and agenda of the conference had already been determined by the UN General Assembly (resolution 67/184) as “Integrating crime prevention and criminal justice into the wider United Nations agenda to address social and economic challenges and to promote the rule of law at the national and international levels, and public participation”. On the agenda was the following:

- Successes and challenges in implementing comprehensive crime prevention and criminal justice policies and strategies to promote the rule of law nationally and internationally and to support sustainable development
- International cooperation, including regionally, to combat transnational organized crime
- Comprehensive and balanced approaches to prevent and adequately respond to new and emerging forms of transnational crime
- National approaches to public participation in strengthening crime prevention and criminal justice
- Simultaneously to this congress, the Youth Congress was held, where selected students in Doha, Qatar were chosen to attend and help to come up with solutions to tackle the issues at hand.

In late 2015, the Arab Convention Against Corruption conference was held in Cairo, Egypt. Qatar is a proud member and strong supporter of the convention, as stated by officials. His Excellency the Chairman of the Administrative Control and Transparency Authority, Saad bin Ibrahim Al-Mahmoud said that the State of Qatar is fully behind all Arab and International efforts that enhance the rule of law and fight corruption, according to the Qatar News Agency. Furthermore Qatar called upon fellow Arab countries to work together – for those who have not yet joined conventions on eliminating corruption and enhancing transparency to do so.

Conclusion

Qatar's in-depth involvement with the IAACA and the efforts it has made to improve its legal and administrative systems in tackling corruption have surely contributed to it now being the president of the IAACA. The IAACA view Qatar in a positive light and have recognised its achievements to eliminate corruption. Now that the headquarters of IAACA will be in Doha, it is very likely that Qatar will experience further growth, including foreign direct investment, at an even faster pace, as the rest of the world sees that Qatar is serious about reducing corruption in this already highly-ranked state.