



**Independent Joint Anti-Corruption
Monitoring & Evaluation Committee**

NEWS RELEASE: MEC Sees Small Signs of Progress in the Fight Against Corruption

Kabul, Afghanistan, February 25, 2016: Today, MEC is releasing its Ninth Six-Month Report, which includes updates on MEC's activities during the second half of 2015 and all recommendations issued by MEC that have not been implemented. The report highlights evidence of some progress in the fight against corruption. MEC has seen legal reform and/or improvements in: the land distribution process at the MORR; the hiring and examination process at the MOHE; the pension process at MOLSAMD; developing a stronger internal control mechanism at DABS; and the simplification of many processes, such as the pay and grading system, at the IARCSC.

Such positive developments are modest, fragile and easily reversible, especially given the increasingly contentious political environment in Afghanistan. MEC is increasingly concerned about the ability of the National Unity Government (NUG) to work together to effectively address issues related to corruption, given the continued deterioration in security, increase in unemployment, decrease in international assistance, and spike in both legal and illegal emigration.

In November, the appearance of high-level government authorities on stage with one of the two main convicted criminals behind the Kabul Bank scandal exemplified the challenges to fighting corruption in Afghanistan. Many saw the government as complicit in allowing a convicted criminal to sign a contract as a partner in the multi-million dollar Smart City Project, despite their proclamations that his involvement was simply to help him pay back money he owed as part of his conviction. Although the President established an investigation team – which included a MEC Committee Member – and subsequently fired his legal advisor and cancelled the contract, many question whether these actions were sufficient and simply reactionary.

In today's press conference on the release of the Ninth Six-Month Report, MEC Committee Members will discuss their views of the anti-corruption landscape in the country, touching on the aforementioned issues, among others. MEC's two new international Committee Members, Dr. Slajjana Taseva and Dr. Mark Pyman, will also offer their initial impressions as newcomers to MEC.

Even with the numerous political, social, economic, and security challenges facing the country, MEC remains hopeful that progress in fighting corruption is still possible in Afghanistan. However, with confidence in the NUG at a much lower level than one year ago and a thriving insurgency, the government is quickly running out of time to show concrete efforts and the necessary political will to turn around the country's fortunes.

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