



Recent High-Level Bribery Allegations Highlight Disregard For International Anti-Corruption Laws

Transparency International

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RECENT HIGH-LEVEL BRIBERY ALLEGATIONS HIGHLIGHT DISREGARD FOR INTERNATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION LAWS

TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL CALLS ON COMPANIES FROM OECD COUNTRIES TO STOP PAYING BRIBES AT HOME AND ABROAD

Posted 29 October 2004 by [Transparency International Secretariat](#)

Translations: [ES](#)

Transparency International (TI) urges companies, politicians and public officials from member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to put a stop to bribe-paying by multinational companies abroad. A wave of corruption scandals shaking Costa Rica is a wake-up to respect national and international legal norms, implement business principles in the private sector and consistently investigate and prosecute cases of corruption. The recently launched Corruption Perceptions Index 2004 shows that corruption is rampant in 60 countries and is a major problem in large-scale public works.

"We are concerned with the low level of compliance with the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention. Recent allegations of bribe-paying by Alcatel in Costa Rica suggests that large numbers of multinational corporations from the richest nations are pursuing a criminal course to win contracts in emerging market economies of the world," said Peter Eigen, chairman of TI, the leading international non-governmental organisation engaged in the fight against corruption.

Accusations of bribe-paying by French telephone company Alcatel in Costa Rica are alarming. The company is reported to have paid bribes in connection with a \$149 million cellular phone contract in Costa Rica in 2001. The allegations in Costa Rica have led to the resignation of former Costa Rican President Miguel Angel Rodríguez from his position as Secretary General of the Organisation of American States (OAS) to which he had only recently been appointed. Mr. Rodríguez is accused of having received a US\$2.4 million bribe in connection with the Alcatel contract under his presidency. Former President Rodríguez has also been the subject of further allegations, that the Spanish multinational Abengoa paid US\$100,000 into a company he owned. The alleged bribery suggests blatant disregard for national law and for the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention that prohibits bribing in international business transactions, and which France ratified in July 2000.

"Mr. Rodríguez's resignation as Secretary General of the OAS is certainly an important and necessary step which demonstrates that an organisation like the OAS that has repeatedly declared the fight against corruption a priority, cannot allow itself to be led by individuals involved in alleged corruption scandals." said Silke Pfeiffer, Regional Director for the Americas at TI. Speaking today in Berlin, she continued, "At the same time it is important not to turn a blind eye to the responsibility of the private sector."

Addressing the Alcatel case in Costa Rica, Rosa Inés Ospina, Vice President of Transparency International states "We will closely monitor the case of Alcatel in Costa Rica and we expect the Costa Rican and French authorities to firmly proceed with the investigation of the case and to apply the appropriate sanctions. We are pleased to see that the Costa Rican government has already excluded Alcatel from competing in future contracting bids in the country." Ospina added, "Alcatel, a company which claims to comply with high ethical standards, must ensure that these standards are enforced by means of an effective compliance program."

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TI encourages companies to use the TI Business Principles for Countering Bribery as a benchmark for their own anti-bribery systems. With the widespread enactment into national law of the OECD Convention on Combatting Bribery of Foreign Public Officials, there are now laws criminalising foreign bribery in most major exporting nations. This has led to broader acceptance by international companies with headquarters in OECD countries of the need for corporate codes of conduct. An international group of companies and other stakeholders led by TI developed the Business Principles for Countering Bribery in order to provide a benchmark for such codes.

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