

UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration has for the first time recognized the importance of independence of Supreme Audit Institutions

Accountability, Transparency and Citizen Trust in Government were issues of central importance on the agenda of the 8th Meeting of the ECOSOC Committee of Experts on Public Administration, which was held at UN Headquarters in New York from 30 March to 3 April 2009. The Committee is responsible for supporting the work of ECOSOC concerning the promotion and development of public administration and governance among Member States.

INTOSAI had once again been invited to attend the meeting as an observer. The General Secretariat took this opportunity to represent the interests of INTOSAI and its members and express the concerns of government auditing in the debate on administrative reforms.

Consistent with the INTOSAI priority programme for 2009 'Promoting SAI independence', the General Secretariat raised the issue of independence of Supreme Audit Institutions. The representatives of the General Secretariat emphasized the role of SAIs in ensuring transparency and accountability in the management of public funds. Through independent audits and publication of their audit findings, SAIs provide a good foundation to support public trust. As such, Supreme Audit Institutions promote good governance and contribute substantially to the implementation of international development objectives, including the UN Millennium Development Goals.

The experts agreed with INTOSAI, that SAIs could perform their tasks objectively and effectively only if the constitution endows them with the required organisational independence, and if they enjoy free and unlimited access to information.

The importance of SAI independence was included in the Expert Committee's final report to ECOSOC and its significant relevance for public trust and trust-building mechanisms was specially recognised.

On the initiative of the General Secretariat the Expert Committee created the necessary framework to examine the independence of external government audit in greater depth at the next meeting in 2010.

The General Secretariat has taken a further step in significantly advancing

the INTOSAI initiative to embody the independence of external government auditing – and thus the Declarations of Lima and Mexico - in a UN Resolution, as was decided at the 58th Governing Board Meeting.