

**10 May 2018, Journalists' House**

**Chair of the Board Speech, Mr Marios Skandalis**

Friends,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning!

Thank you for responding to our invitation and for being here with us today to inform you about the renaming of our Organisation and about its action since its establishment.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2017, following the General Assembly of the members of Transparency Cyprus Ltd (known at the time as Transparency International Cyprus), the suspension of the cooperation with the Berlin-based Transparency International was announced in the media.

Our Organisation, under its new name of Cyprus Integrity Forum, has evolved from Transparency International Cyprus, and is continuing its action based upon the principles of Transparency, Integrity and Ethos, namely the foundations of our organisation since its inception in 2010. The Cyprus Integrity Forum will carry on its already rich action with further national and international partnerships and more projects to be implemented. Conferences, seminars, lectures in schools and universities as well as the business world, meetings with government officials, the EU and Ambassadors are some of the many activities in the pipeline for implementation. Our objective will remain to improve knowledge and raise public awareness on corruption-related issues and promote integrity and transparency in the public and private professional spheres.

During the eight years we have been active in Cyprus, we have been able to raise public awareness and inform the executive and legislative powers as well as the state officials in order to step up their efforts in combating corruption and consolidating transparency. In particular, we have succeeded in promoting and encouraging the establishment of the National Strategic Anti-Corruption Action Plan by the executive and legislative powers. Moreover:

- (a) we have intervened more than 300 times in the media,
- (b) we organised more than 15 events, conferences and short seminars,
- (c) we organised workshops and visited more than 40 different educational and academic institutions in our country,
- (d) we organised school and professional competitions on the subject of combating corruption,
- (e) we took part in summer student camps,
- (f) we held meetings with government and European officials to promote issues related to transparency and corruption,
- (g) we contributed to establishing synergies with various agencies and international organisations with which we signed memoranda of understanding,
- (h) we submitted research proposals to European funding programmes,
- (i) we created the Business Integrity Forum with the aim of committing its members to a framework of minimum criteria for corporate governance,

(j) we have successfully completed the EU-funded ALAC programme (Advocacy and Legal Advice Centre) within the framework of which an independent help line was established for all citizens and

(k) we contributed to the promotion of significant legislation: National Anti-Corruption Strategy, Independent Anti-Corruption Authority, Asset Declaration, Whistleblower Protection, Lobbying, Access to Information, E-Petitions.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that many of our proposed recommendations to the executive power have either already been implemented or are to be implemented.

The actions reported were carried out with resources secured by the organisation stated in the Financial Reports available on our website.

At this point, it is with pleasure that I wish to announce that as of 20<sup>th</sup> March 2018 the Board of Directors of the Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) has decided to place the Cyprus Integrity Forum under its aegis. In the context of their standing cooperation over the years, the two Organisations have been co-hosting the Business Ethos Awards. The objective of this initiative is to foster the right culture so that businesses and organisations may adopt responsible practices to achieve social and moral commitment against corruption. The Award ceremony will take place on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2018 in the presence of His Excellency the President of the Republic, Mr Nicos Anastasiades.

With regard to our cooperation with Transparency International and its suspension, I would like to begin by thanking Transparency International for enabling us to create this organisation which made all the difference in Cyprus 8 years ago.

Throughout this 8-year period, although we have had a good cooperation, Transparency International has never funded any of the actions of our organisation and therefore this suspension of our cooperation will not in any way affect the effectiveness of our further action.

The termination of our collaboration with Transparency International has come as a result of the diversification of our organisation's strategy vis-a-vis the strategy and objectives of Transparency International HQ in Berlin.

The nature of corruption in Cyprus and the sectors in need of immediate improvement differ from similar sectors in other countries worldwide and unfortunately we have not been able to persuade in this direction. It is worth reporting and emphasising that this was the only reason for ending our cooperation since Berlin-based Transparency International itself acknowledged through a recent official survey conducted in 2017 that Cyprus is the country with the most comprehensive and transparent information framework for combating economic crime as compared with 12 other countries such as Germany, the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, USA and Australia.

Our hope is that very soon Transparency International will change its approach and have the flexibility of formulating its strategy and objectives according to the partner country and we will certainly seek to re-activate our cooperation.

In the meantime, as mentioned before, the Cyprus Integrity Forum, remains focused and committed to our objective for fully combating and eradicating corruption and economic crime, continuing our action to promote transparency and integrity more dynamically both in society and in the state as well as the business environment of our country. If you wish to contribute to our work to enable us to extend our activities to areas that you, the citizens of this country, consider that we should act upon, do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you for your attention.