

Topic : Assessment and evaluation of Ombudsman work

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In the name of Allah most gracious most merciful

Honorable Chair Distinguished Colleagues

At the outset, I should express my pleasure for being once again among the gathering of Ombudsman officials from across the world. Such meetings are unique opportunities for the exchange of information and experience and an appropriate ground for learning from successful stories of the fight against corruption-a phenomenon which is on the rise.

I would also like to extend my sincere appreciations to the officials of the Kingdom of Thailand for the appropriate organization of this meeting and wish them more success in their future efforts.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The subject of my speech in our today's meeting is the fundamental, critical and sometimes sophisticated concept of assessing ombudsman activities. It is known to all that assessment is one of the most all-inclusive ombudsman activities which encompasses among others various daily life activities and government policies at various national, regional and global levels.

To put it simply, I define assessment as knowing the outcome of an action, policy, plan or judgment about it. I believe that participants in this meeting agree with me that behind such a simple definition lies a world of commitments and obligations, from the collection of data to the analysis and interpretation of the findings and conclusion. Therefore, what we are discussing today is a complex but critical phenomenon especially for the ombudsmen who act as intermediary between governments and citizens as misguided assessments of ombudsman activities, either in the form of exaggeration or underestimation or non-consideration of activities, would incur destructive impacts on the future performance of ombudsmen.

Distinguished colleagues

My argument about the issue of assessment of ombudsmanship performance is fundamental and includes elements without which it is not possible to present a precise performance assessment. Even though it is not the only element of performance assessment, the effectiveness of ombudsmanship is the main element of assessment. I would like to emphasize more on effectiveness of ombudsmanship assessment activities. Therefore, assessing the performance of ombudsmen can be summarized in assessing its effectiveness.

An ombudsman should be able to be informed of the effectiveness of his/her activities with reliance on precise methods and statistics within a limited and specific timeframe. Such assessment mainly encompasses three areas: the amount of impact of such activities on the main issue considered by the ombudsman; the impact of activities on the target groups set by the ombudsmen and the amount of impact on other sectors. It is clear that undertaking a precise assessment is impossible without evaluating such factors. On the other hand, such activities are meaningful only in a reliable statistical system. Incomplete or fabricated figures and statistics or intentional or non-intentional manipulation of data and information is like a vehicle whose dashboard indicators are malfunctioning or not functioning so that the driver never knows the level of speed, fuel, water and oil. Only when the vehicle stops running can the driver understand the problem.

The assessment of effectiveness with the help of precise statistics in certain timeframes familiarizes us with the typology of effective ombudsmanship. In the first category, the performance of an ombudsman

is investigated in various timeframes. The ombudsman can be informed of his/her performance and its impacts during the time. The second category however compares various ombudsman activities at cross-national levels which is a more difficult but valuable task as it provides the opportunity for learning from the successful or non-successful experience of others.

The other significant issue which should be highlighted in assessing the performance of ombudsmen is the precise use of performance assessment methods by expert professionals. Even the best benchmarks could result in failure or misguided findings if applied inappropriately or used by non experts.

Given the significance of assessment performance for ombudsmen, both as case studies and comparative studies, I propose that the International Ombudsman forms temporary scientific groups in conjunction with regional ombudsmen, in order to devise regional and global benchmarks for assessing the performance of ombudsmen in critical areas of their activity so that they can obtain a realistic image of their performance compared to the past and peers. Such benchmarks can be reviewed after ten years to enjoy sufficient dynamism.

Also, various international and regional ombudsman conferences can present comparative studies within the framework of such benchmarks to present a general image of the effectiveness of the performance of ombudsmen in various timeframes. Such studies can pave the way for future theoretical and practical researches and can be considered as reliable references for policy makers and planners.

I thank you for your kind attention.