

MEDIA RELEASE

Opinion Sharing Meeting on Challenges of NGO Governance

UNB REPORT IS MISLEADING - says TIB

Dhaka, 25 June, 2009. Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) wants to clarify that no one participating in the Opinion-Sharing Meeting on the Challenges of NGO Governance held in Rajshahi on June 24, 2009, said or implied in any manner that "most NGOs were involved in political and commercial activities". Nor did anyone make any sweeping observation in the meeting that "they (NGOs) were no longer involved in poverty alleviation or providing services to the poor", as reported by UNB yesterday and published by some newspapers today. It was also wrong to report that "most of them (NGOs) are cheating people in rural areas", and that "they collect money with promises of employment opportunities and soon disappear with money".

Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, Executive Director of TIB said, "on behalf of the organizers of the initiative we thank UNB for taking the trouble of reporting on the event, but at the same time, we are very surprised and disappointed that a responsible news agency like the UNB could publish such representation and distortion of facts." We only hope that this was not willful and deliberate, he said.

The nature of problems quoted in the UNB report were indeed discussed as being applicable for a few, but no speaker including those quoted by UNB meant to generalize it and imply that these were applicable to "most" NGOs.

"The purpose of the initiative is not to indulge in wholesale bashing of the NGOs the way the UNB has presented, but to contribute to creation of conditions in which the sector could do more as a co-stakeholder with the government and other relevant actors", Dr. Zaman said. It is also aimed at promoting better mutual understanding, partnership and collaboration between them.

"As moderator of the session, I say in full confidence that the participants in the meeting strongly emphasized the highly commendable role of the NGO sector in challenging poverty and catalyzing development and social change in Bangladesh", he said. They lauded the NGOs for bringing reputation to the nation by being models in many ways for the international community. At the same time they also discussed the challenges of governance, transparency and accountability faced by the NGO sector which needed to be addressed in the interest of the sector's credibility and sustainability, not to defame the sector the way the UNB report implies.

"Like any other sector and aspects of life in Bangladesh NGOs also need to put in greater efforts to improve the levels of their transparency, accountability and good governance, which is why this initiative has been taken by the NGO Affairs Bureau of the Government, together with TIB, Brac, Manusher Jonno Foundation and Oxfam GB", the statement said.

Its objective is to create greater awareness of the challenges faced and to discuss ways ahead. The initiative, designed to hold six such divisional level meetings, is aimed at engaging the relevant Government officials, NGO representatives, media and other stakeholders in a process to collectively acknowledge the highly important contribution of the sector.

"Among many outcomes of the Rajshahi event was the recommendation for stronger internal self-regulation of the NGOs individually and collectively as well as the need for building facilitative rather than controlling capacity of the NGO Affairs Bureau and other relevant government departments", the TIB executive director said.

TIB also urged upon all concerned including the media to take the issue with a positive outlook and refrain from creating any scope that could harm the NGO sector, and thereby the prospect of development and social change in the country in which the NGOs have, and will certainly continue, to play an indispensable role.

Media contact:

Rezwan-ul Alam
Director, Outreach & Communication
TIB.
Mobile: 01713065012, E-mail: rezwan@ti-bangladesh.org