

transparency

Anti-corruption summit calls for more enforcement

Brian Collett

Will authorities enforce tough measures on transparency and cross-border co-operation decided at the recent London anti-corruption conference?

The question emerged after the 41 countries at the summit, hosted by the UK government, agreed to establish the ownership of businesses within their jurisdiction and allow finance officials to access bank and payment information.

This action would enable investigators to track the offshore trails of law-breaking companies and individuals.

The participating nations extended their transparency commitment to foreign aid, insisting they would aim to ensure that funds from development agencies and other bodies reached intended recipients, not dishonest opportunists.

PROTECTED

Whistleblowing has to be free from fears of reprisals. The conference communiqué said: "We commit to making it easier for people to report suspected acts of corruption, to protect whistleblowers from discriminatory and retaliatory actions."

The media, businesses and civil society would all be protected.

The participants guaranteed they would have laws to find and convict culprits and to restore the proceeds of corruption to

their rightful owners.

They resolved to work with one another and business "to drive out those lawyers, accountants, real estate agents, trust and company service providers, and other professional service providers who facilitate or are complicit in corruption". The co-operation would include arrangements between institutions.

Finally, all nations at the summit said they would review their progress regularly.

LEGISLATION

Transparency International, the Berlin-based NGO formed to fight corruption, welcomed a decision by eight nations to found a centre supporting efforts to prosecute offenders and seize stolen assets.

The organisation observed: "The UK has said it will introduce legislation to punish the facilitators of corruption who fail to do due diligence on their clients – lawyers, bankers, property dealers. This will help stop people using the UK to launder illicit wealth, but more countries have to follow suit."

At present, the London-based business ethics consultancy GoodCorporation points out, 20 of the 41 signatories to the Anti-Bribery Convention of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation

and Development in 2000 have done little about cross-border bribery.

Leo Martin, a GoodCorporation director, blamed this on failure to enforce the rules.

Martin endorsed the summit objectives agreed upon 16 years later but emphasised that poor enforcement remained a problem.

Exposure could be the solution. Martin said: "We need an annual survey giving a ranking of the best and worst enforcers. There should be naming and shaming. That would have a big impact."

The UK's Serious Fraud Office complains its work is hampered by inadequate resources. Martin suggested a proportion of the fines should be used to finance investigations.

He believes trading will benefit if companies are clean. He said: "With the commitments of the summit fulfilled we would be in a different position. Good companies would perform. But we are a long, long way from that."

A Global Asset Recovery Forum is now proposed for next year. The forum, co-hosted by the UK and the US, would deal with the grabbing of assets by political tyrants and officials and their return.

However, Martin said: "That type of enforcement is so many steps down the road. The first step is to prosecute where we can."

renewable energy

Mars commits to wind power for UK sites

Brian Collett

The food multinational Mars is to source all electricity for its 12 UK sites from a Scottish wind farm.

Mars, which is based in Virginia and does huge business in Britain, has signed a ten-year contract to buy power from the Moy Wind Farm, near Inverness, opened last month by the UK subsidiary of the Dutch utility Eneco BV.

The company, whose flagship products include Snickers and M&M's, employs at least 4,000 people in Britain. The Eneco deal makes its British operation carbon-neutral.

Mars says the wind farm electricity would power 34,000 average-sized UK

homes – or produce 4.2 million Mars bars, or three billion servings of Uncle Ben's Rice, or 80 billion pieces of Wrigley's Extra chewing gum!

However, Mars is a privately owned company and has withheld the financial details of the partnership.

Kevin Rabinovitch, Mars' global sustainability director, said: "We look at climate change through a scientific lens."

Zoisa Walton, Eneco's UK director, said the contract represented all elements of her company's strategy, comprising "a renewable generating asset, a like-minded partner in Mars, and the opportunity to deliver real benefits to the local community".

The deal moves Mars closer to its

objective of eliminating greenhouse gas from operations worldwide by 2040. Last year it hit its interim target of cutting the emissions by 25% of the 2007 figure, partly by opening a wind farm the previous year in Lamesa, Texas, which generates the equivalent of Mars' entire US energy use.

The Mars-Eneco agreement should please UK advocates of continued renewables use, in contrast to the UK government's softening of the aggressive clean energy policies adopted after the 2010 general election.

This year, EY, part of the Ernst & Young business consultancy, ranked the UK at an all-time low for renewable investment. A decade ago the UK topped EY's list.