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OECD Report on Foreign Bribery Confirms Lackluster Enforcement

Transparency International-USA welcomed today the groundbreaking release of data by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on the extent to which each of the 38 Parties to the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention are imposing sanctions for violations of their foreign bribery laws. The publication, which TI-USA has long advocated, makes available information not ordinarily accessible to the public, permitting an assessment of present action and a benchmark for future progress.

Like the TI Progress Report on Enforcement of the OECD Convention, an annual, independent assessment of enforcement efforts whose latest edition is about to be released, the OECD data underscores that only a handful of countries (including the US, Italy and Germany) are actively enforcing the Convention. By contrast, more than two dozen have done little or nothing. This failure by so many to enforce existing laws threatens to undermine the Convention's potential to curb bribery in international business and development. With an estimated trillion dollars in bribes paid annually, there is an urgent need for consistent action. The OECD data provides a sound basis for holding governments to account.

Highlights from the OECD survey include the following:

- Only 13 of 38 Convention parties have imposed sanctions in the 11 years since the Convention entered into force (Ireland provided no enforcement data);
- 148 individuals and 77 companies have been criminally sanctioned;
- Of the individuals sanctioned, 40 were sentenced to jail time;
- Combined fines of approximately 1.24 billion euro have been imposed on companies; and,
- Approximately 280 investigations are ongoing in 21 countries.