

Medvedev Expands Corruption Fight

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President Dmitry Medvedev opened a new front in the war against corruption Thursday, ordering a thorough check of government officials' income declarations and tough penalties against those who provided false information.

Medvedev, speaking at a meeting of the presidential anti-corruption council, gave prosecutors, police, tax authorities and Mayor Sergei Sobyenin three months to check the income declarations of various officials.

"If someone has purposely underestimated their declared capital, this has to be punished," Medvedev said.

Addressing Interior Minister Rashid Nurgaliyev, Medvedev said police officers who lied on their income declarations must be dismissed.

"This will be easy to do it as part of the re-evaluation that will take place under the police law," he said, referring to an upcoming staff-cutting, salary-raising reform aimed at

eliminating corruption in the police force.

The president told Sobyenin to oversee a check into income declarations submitted by Moscow city officials.

"Pay attention to who declared what because I often hear that everyone has palaces outside the city while their income declarations say otherwise," Medvedev said, Interfax reported.

In a nod to concerns that billions of dollars earmarked for an APEC summit in Vladivostok next year, the 2014 Sochi Olympics and the 2018 World Cup will pose a temptation to bureaucrats, Medvedev ordered the Prosecutor General's Office, the Audit Chamber, the Interior Ministry and several other agencies to jointly oversee spending for the programs, the Kremlin [said](#) on its web site.

Medvedev also told regional leaders to publish reports on their meetings with law enforcement officials in order to "expand the participation of civil society in all anti-corruption events."

Meanwhile, Investigative Committee head Alexander Bastrykin unveiled on Thursday a Kremlin-drafted raft of bills aimed at fighting corruption that won praise from anti-graft experts.

Under the amendments, prison sentences could be waived for people convicted of bribery in favor of fines of up to 100 times the amount of the bribe. Prosecutors would for the first time be allowed to pursue charges against middlemen in bribery cases and foreign nationals living abroad, according to Vedomosti, which first [reported](#) the amendments Thursday.

Bastrykin praised the introduction of fines for bribery as "a very sound measure."

"Practice shows that no jail term ... frightens corrupt officials," Bastrykin told the anti-corruption council, RIA-Novosti [reported](#).

But he voiced concern that the size of bribes might grow as a result of the new measure.

Yelena Panfilova, head of anti-corruption group Transparency International's Russia office, said the amendments should spell out which bribes warranted prison terms and the size of the fine for every bribe to prevent judges and prosecutors from bargaining with suspects about the sentence.

Panfilova predicted that people involved in large-scale bribery would "continue to escape responsibility at the investigation stage," while people involved in small-scale bribery, like doctors and teachers, would "get the maximum" sentence.

The Kremlin initiative will help reduce small-time bribery because people will be afraid that their property might be confiscated to pay off fines, said Kirill Kabanov, head of the National Anti-Corruption Committee, a nongovernmental group. But the changes will create a loophole for people involved in large-scale bribery to pay their way out, he said.

About 80 percent of bribery cases concern small bribes, Kabanov said.

Regarding big bribes, lawyer Kirill Polishchuk said he believed that big fines would only scare corrupt officials into being honest if they were accompanied with jail terms.

He suggested that the Supreme Court explain to judges how to apply the amendments to avoid power abuses and partial interpretation of the law by judges.

The amendments provide a rough outline of the proposed fines, Vedomosti said. Bribing the manager of a private company would carry a fine of 10 to 50 times the amount of the bribe for the bribe-giver and 15 to 70 times the amount of the bribe for the bribe-taker.

Bribing an official would carry a fine of 15 to 60 times the amount of the bribe for the bribe-giver and the option of 60 to 80 times the amount of the bribe or 50 times the amount of the bribe and five to 10 years in prison for the bribe-taker.

Giving or taking a bribe of more than 1 million rubles (\$33,000) would carry a fine of 80 to 100 times the amount of the bribe, or 70 times the amount of the bribe and a jail term of eight to 15 years, both for the bribe-giver and the bribe-taker. But a fine for large-scale bribery would not top 300 million rubles (\$10 million).

The amendments introduce a new criminal offense — mediating in the bribe-taking process, including passing over the bribe or negotiating the bribe. Middlemen would face fines of 20 to 90 times the amount of the bribe combined with a work ban, or by a jail term of up to seven years combined with an unspecified fine.

The amendments also introduce a new criminal offender — foreign officials — who would be punished for bribery with fines slightly lower than those for Russian officials, Vedomosti said, without elaborating on the size of the fines.

Foreign nationals residing abroad would be subject to prosecution in Russia — a measure that is a requirement for Russia to join the anti-corruption convention of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Vedomosti said.

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