**Gaining and safeguarding independence**

**Key points from the CBC Auditing in Complex and Challenging Contexts Workstream webinar 1 July 2021**

SAIs have a duty and responsibility to talk truth to power. They need the resources and legal powers to carry out public audits on behalf of citizens and place the results of such audits in the public space without fear or restrictions. This right has been recognised by the governments of the world through UN and other resolutions and is core to the work of INTOSAI. But for too many SAIs such independence in law and in fact is a distant dream, and for still others, freedoms they thought they had, are being eroded.

In this webinar, we heard from Freddy Ndjemba, Benjamin Fuentes, and Marte Briseid from IDI’s workstream on SAI independence and from Mohammed Nour from SAI Sudan. The IDI team took us through the work they are planning to do to support SAIs in their efforts to gain greater independence. The team will focus on providing training and support to SAI leaders, accumulating, and disseminating knowledge of the importance of independence; and levering partnerships so that other key stakeholders understand why SAI independence is crucial and what they can do to support SAIs. At the same time, IDI has set up a rapid response capability to provide context specific support for SAIs especially when existing independence is threatened.

SAI Sudan has achieved enviable levels of independence with the power to recruit and manage their own staff and allocate their one-line budget as they see fit to deliver their audit mandate. Mohammed Nour spoke about how this had been achieved through a long and persistent effort to ensure that legislators and the presidency understood the importance of independence and were made aware of international best standards such as the INTOSAI Mexico declaration, UN resolutions and the practices of advanced SAIs. At the same time, he stressed the importance of earning independence through the delivery of robust, high quality and timely audit reports.

The ensuing discussions covered a wide range of issues, including how to marshal incentives so that governments and public bodies want to see and use the work of SAIs, as well as the on-going importance of maintaining open, two-way, communications with governments, oppositions, senior officials, and others.

