

13 April 2021

Re: Proposal concerning the political declaration of the UN General Assembly Special Session against corruption

Dear UN Member States,

We commend the UN General Assembly's decision to hold a Special Session against corruption (UNGASS against Corruption) in June this year and to adopt a political declaration for that meeting. The COVID-19 pandemic makes it especially urgent that the UNGASS against Corruption yield results since the scale of the global corruption problem undermines efforts to tackle the disease. We are writing to you to urge that the UNGASS against Corruption establish an expert working group to develop technical proposals for new frameworks and mechanisms that would address weaknesses in the current international legal framework and infrastructure.

The negotiations for the political declaration that are due to conclude in early May, have been about text that largely reiterates language in the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and associated resolutions, with a few small advances. However, new commitments are urgently needed that are bold, clear and concrete. While the adoption of the UNCAC in 2003 was a landmark achievement, in the years since its entry into force in 2005, there has been little progress in tackling global corruption based on the UNCAC framework and its review mechanism. Moreover, lessons have been learned since 2005 that point to the need to strengthen, expand or add to existing legal and institutional frameworks.

The state of play in 2020 was summarised by the United Nations Secretariat in its *Common position to address global corruption*, which said that corruption and the looting of staggering amounts of assets undermine the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), have a negative impact on peace, stability, security, the rule of law, gender equality, the environment and human rights, and contribute to the spread of terrorism and violent extremism.¹ That document pointed to pervasive corruption networks that often include politicians, civil servants working at all levels of state institutions, representatives of the private sector and members of crime syndicates. It noted that complex, multi-jurisdictional corruption scandals perpetrated by these organised networks, sometimes involving the highest levels of government, result in loss of resources and undermine public trust in democracy and the rule of law. In short, the UNCAC is proving inadequate to counter globalised corruption. Thus, new approaches should be considered.

Many valuable and innovative ideas have been presented to the UNGASS negotiating body, including those cited in the *UN Common Position annex* and recommendations made in the *Oslo Statement on Corruption Involving Vast Quantities of Assets*.² These merit in-depth consideration that has not been possible in the negotiations for the UNGASS political declaration.

For this reason, we call on UN member states to commit in the UNGASS declaration to establishing an open-ended intergovernmental expert working group - including experts from civil society, academia, private sector and other relevant stakeholders - to prepare concrete, technical proposals for

¹ [The UN Common Position to Address Global Corruption \(2020\)](#)

² [Oslo Statement on Corruption Involving Vast Quantities of Assets \(2019\)](#)

supplementary frameworks and mechanisms to address gaps in the UNCAC. The proposals of this working group should be presented to the UNCAC Conference of States Parties and the Conference of Parties of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime for their joint consideration.

Sincerely,

Global and Regional Non-Governmental Organisations

1. Access Info Europe
2. Accountability Lab
3. Accountability Now
4. Africa Centre for Open Governance (AfriCOG)
5. Anti-Corruption Trust of Southern Africa
6. Article 19
7. Centre for Civil and Political Rights
8. Civil Forum for Asset Recovery (CiFAR)
9. Criminologists Without Borders
10. Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime
11. Global Governance Forum
12. Institute for International Criminal Investigations
13. Integrity Initiatives International
14. International Bar Association Anti-Corruption Committee
15. International Chamber of Commerce
16. International Institute for Anti-Corruption Studies
17. International Lawyers Project
18. International State Crime Initiative, Queen Mary University of London
19. Open Contracting Partnership
20. Shadow World Investigations
21. The Sentry
22. Transparency International
23. Transparency International EU
24. UNCAC Coalition
25. Wildlife Justice Commission
26. The World Refugee and Migration Council

National Non-Governmental Organisations

27. Africa Network for Environment and Economic Justice (ANEEJ), Nigeria
28. Al-Nahrain Foundation for Supporting Transparency and Integrity (NFTI), Iraq
29. Anti-corruption Action Centre, Ukraine
30. Anti-Corruption Coalition Uganda
31. Anti-Corruption Initiative - Uganda Chapter
32. Asociación Civil por la Igualdad de la Justicia (ACIJ), Argentina
33. AWTAD Anti-Corruption Organization, Yemen
34. Bahrain Transparency (TI chapter)
35. Center for the Study of Democracy, Bulgaria / SELDI Knowledge and Outreach Coordinator
36. Center to Combat Corruption & Cronyism (C4 Center), Malaysia

37. Centre de Recherche et de Formation sur le Développement Intégré (CREFDI), Ivory Coast
38. Centre de Recherche sur l'Anti-Corruption, Democratic Republic of Congo
39. Centre for Democracy and Development, Nigeria
40. Centre for Development and Democratization of Institutions, Albania
41. Centre for Peace and Justice, Bangladesh
42. Centro de Gobernanza Pública y Corporativa, Inc, Puerto Rico
43. CEYWI - 21st Century Community Empowerment for Youth and Women Initiative, Nigeria
44. CISLAC (TI Nigeria)
45. Costa Rica Integra
46. CreDO, Moldova
47. Daphne Foundation, Malta
48. Derechos Humanos y Litigio Estratégico Mexicano (DLM), México
49. Federation of Environmental and Ecological Diversity for Agricultural Revampment and Human Rights (FEEDAR & HR), Cameroon
50. Fundación Poder Ciudadano (TI Argentina)
51. Government Accountability Project, USA
52. Impunidad Cero, México
53. Institute for Democracy and Mediation, Albania
54. Institute of Governance and Development, BRAC University, Bangladesh
55. ITEC - International Tax Ethics Centre, Australia
56. International Association for Advancement of Innovative Solutions to Global Challenges, Austria
57. Jordan Transparency Center
58. Lebanese Transparency Association (TI Lebanon)
59. Ligue Congolaise de Lutte Contre la Corruption (LICOCO), Democratic Republic of Congo
60. Pakistan Rural Workers Social Welfare Organization
61. PILDAT - Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development And Transparency
62. Proética (TI Peru)
63. Rasheed for Integrity and Transparency (TI Jordan)
64. Resource Centre for Human Rights & Civic Education (CHRICED), Nigeria
65. Semillas para la Democracia, Paraguay
66. Sherpa, France
67. Stefan Batory Foundation, Poland
68. Social Watch Bénin
69. Socio-Economic Rights & Accountability Project (SERAP), Nigeria
70. Syri i Vizionit, Kosovo
71. Tax Justice Network Australia
72. The Coalition for Integrity and Accountability, AMAN (TI Palestine)
73. TOJIL, Mexico
74. Transparência e Integridade (TI Portugal)
75. Transparency International Anti-Corruption Center, Armenia
76. Transparency International Azerbaijan
77. Transparency International France
78. Transparency International Germany
79. Transparency International Indonesia
80. Transparency International Ireland
81. Transparency International Kenya
82. Transparency International Macedonia
83. Transparency International Moldova

84. Transparency International Nepal
85. Transparency International Netherlands
86. Transparency International Norway
87. Transparency International Sri Lanka
88. Transparency International Taiwan
89. Transparency International UK
90. Transparency International Zimbabwe
91. Transparency Maldives (TI Maldives)
92. Transparencia por Colombia (TI Colombia)
93. UMTAPO Centre, South Africa
94. Uniting Church in Australia
95. Uzbek Asset Return Network