

Statement: [International Anti-Corruption Academy](#)

Excellencies, dear colleagues,

I come on behalf of the International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA), and I would like to take a few minutes to talk about the role of international cooperation in tackling environmental crime through education and, more specifically, anti-corruption education.

At IACA we see corruption as a cancer whose perverse effects are felt in all areas, including the environment. From bribing a customs official for trafficking endangered species, to corrupt deals for exploiting natural resources, corruption has devastating effects on the environment. I am not here to call for a global pledge to tackle this problem, but rather to talk about the potential of individuals, and how empowering them is the trigger for unleashing positive impact.

At IACA we have contributed to the training and education of more than 3,500 people around the world and have seen how empowering professionals through knowledge and by providing them the tools, has created an immediate and far-reaching impact.

Moreover, we witness every day how our students cooperate with each other for the sole purpose of fighting corruption in their countries. These experiences have taught us some lessons, which I would like to share with you:

- The first has to do with our role as an International Organisation. We recognise our role as facilitators of a learning process and have a responsibility to provide the tools for addressing the problem of corruption; but it is ultimately the students who put into practice what they learn in the classroom. Therefore, a primary condition of the assistance we provide is to recognise the role of individuals as agents of change, also considering their cultures and the contexts in which they will promote change as essential factors. It is important to understand that any policy, reform, or concrete change we want to promote will only be effective if people take ownership of it.
- We have also seen how dealing with crime through a purely law enforcement and criminalisation approach is limited, especially in places where law enforcement institutions themselves face major challenges, including corruption. Here we witness the power of collective action as an alternative approach with great potential. Collective

action is based on the collaboration and trust of multiple actors with a common interest in addressing a problem that affects their livelihoods.

Collective action is not a substitute for a law enforcement approach but can complement and even reinforce it. We are currently promoting collective action projects around the world to tackle corruption, including corruption affecting the environment as a priority.

- A third lesson we want to share is the role of networks and cooperation. As Sustainable Development Goal 17 clearly defines, there is no way to achieve the other SDGs without a global partnership for sustainable development. Never in human history has our world been more interconnected and globalised than it is today. And tackling a problem such as crime affecting the environment requires a common effort by all. In our classrooms we have participants from many nationalities, and they have taught us that despite cultural and language differences they all have a common goal to make a change. That determination to make a change transcends their time as students and goes a step further in our Alumni Network where they collaborate and share ideas with like-minded anti-corruption practitioners.

We recognise that combating complex crimes with transnational implications, such as environmental crime, requires new ideas and innovative approaches. We would like to invite the international community to consider education, collaboration, and collective action as effective ways to combat these pressing issues.