

## Concept Note

### **Global Expert Group Meeting on Corruption involving Vast Quantities of Assets 12-14 June 2019, Norway**

#### **Background**

In 2018, the international community celebrated the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (Convention), adopted by the UN General Assembly on 31 October 2003. The Convention, which provides the only global legally binding framework for preventing and combatting corruption, has achieved near-universal adherence with 186 Parties.

In 2019, the United Arab Emirates will host the eighth session of the Conference of States Parties (CoSP) to the Convention in Abu Dhabi from 16 to 20 December. The Global Expert Group Meeting on Corruption involving Vast Quantities of Assets in Norway in June 2019 constitutes a follow-up to the adoption by the Conference of resolution 7/2 in November 2017 in Vienna, Austria, and intends to inform the discussions during the next CoSP in December 2019 on this important topic.

The Preamble of the Convention refers to “cases of corruption that involve vast quantities of assets, which may constitute a substantial proportion of the resources of States and that threaten the political stability and sustainable development of those States”<sup>1</sup>. CoSP resolution 7/2 entitled “Preventing and combatting corruption in all its forms more effectively, including, among others, when it involves vast quantities of assets, based on a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach, in accordance with the United Nations Convention against Corruption”<sup>2</sup>, was the first resolution to focus on the issue of corruption involving vast quantities of assets. In the resolution, States parties expressed concern about this form of corruption and requested UNODC to compile information on experiences and best practices to tackle it more effectively.

From 3 to 5 December 2018, UNODC convened the first Global Expert Group Meeting on Corruption involving Vast Quantities of Assets in Lima, Peru, in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Peru. That meeting aimed specifically to: (1) share lessons learned from the investigation of corruption cases involving vast quantities of assets, notably in terms of challenges and best practices; (2) consider the impact of corruption involving vast quantities of assets on security, the environment and the enjoyment of human rights; and (3) start identifying good practices to tackle corruption involving vast quantities of assets effectively, notably through criminal and civil measures and remedies to enhance international cooperation and asset recovery and the identification of beneficial owners of corporate vehicles abused in such corruption cases.

Around 80 experts specialized in investigating and prosecuting corruption involving vast quantities of assets coming from nearly 40 countries from all over the world took part in this first Global Expert Group Meeting on Corruption involving Vast Quantities of Assets. The Expert Group adopted an outcome

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNCAC/Publications/Convention/08-50026\\_E.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNCAC/Publications/Convention/08-50026_E.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNCAC/COSP/session7/V1800228e.pdf>

statement at the end of the meeting, available [here](#). The statement acknowledged the various challenges and best practices identified during the meeting, as well as the impact of corruption involving vast quantities of assets on peace, security, human rights and the environment. The statement concluded with the following salient points on the way forward:

- (1) The experts recognized corruption involving vast quantities of assets as a threat to global peace and security, the enjoyment of human rights, and a liveable climate and biodiversity.
- (2) The experts encouraged continued learning on this important topic and the replication of successful policies identified during the meeting in order to prevent and combat corruption involving vast quantities of assets.
- (3) The experts encouraged the continued sharing of knowledge and expertise with the UN Secretariat on innovative ways of improving international cooperation and the tracing of assets and beneficial owners of proceeds of acts of corruption involving vast quantities of assets.
- (4) The experts encouraged the development of innovative ways to adequately investigate, prosecute and sanction those individuals involved in acts of corruption involving vast quantities of assets.
- (5) The experts encouraged the development of sector-by-sector approaches and strategies to adequately prevent corruption involving vast quantities of assets.
- (6) Furthermore, the experts decided to share these observations with their respective governments in order to promote a concerted effort by the international community to tackle corruption involving vast quantities of assets more effectively.
- (7) As a follow-up to the Lima Expert Group Meeting, the next meeting of experts, to be held in Oslo in June 2019, will focus on innovative ways of tackling the drivers and enablers of corruption involving vast quantities of assets.

The Lima Statement on Corruption involving Vast Quantities of Assets recognized various drivers of corruption involving vast quantities of assets. Most notably, in many cases, politically exposed persons (PEPs) pursue financial resources to stay in power. Experts noted “the need to explore mechanisms to reduce the costs of electoral campaigns, as well as to regulate election financing and increase transparency and accountability for political party financing.”

The Lima Statement also identified the following key enabling factors of corruption involving vast quantities of assets:

- (1) The availability of corporate structures that conceal beneficial ownership and financial and legal intermediaries willing to assist corrupt actors in hiding stolen assets abroad;
- (2) The frequent harassment, intimidation, physical attacks and sudden deaths of key witnesses, whistle-blowers and those investigating, prosecuting and adjudicating corruption cases involving vast quantities of assets; and
- (3) Conducive environments where PEPs are able to control all branches of power, notably the executive, legislative and judicial powers, as well as mass media.

## **Purpose**

The Expert Group Meeting (EGM) in Norway will discuss the outcome of the Lima Expert Group Meeting and will seek to analyse in more detail the various drivers and enablers of corruption involving vast quantities of assets, in order to adopt forward looking policy proposals, principles or recommendations to better prevent and combat corruption involving vast quantities of assets.

In this regard, participants will be expected to:

- (1) Share lessons learned from their experiences in preventing and combatting corruption involving vast quantities of assets;
- (2) Identify good practices to tackle corruption involving vast quantities of assets effectively;
- (3) Contribute concrete proposals to overcome the various drivers and enablers of corruption involving vast quantities of assets.

### **Participants**

The participants will be experts, in particular, national and international policy-makers, practitioners, academics, and civil society actors with first-hand experience in preventing and combatting corruption involving vast quantities of assets.

### **Methodology**

The meeting will provide space for 3 days of interactive discussions on the following topics:

- (1) The impact of corruption involving vast quantities of assets on peace and security, human rights and the environment.
- (2) Lessons learned from investigating cases of corruption involving vast quantities of assets and bringing them to justice.
- (3) Enhancing transparency in political party financing and electoral processes.
- (4) Ways to hold financial and legal intermediaries to account for their role in facilitating corruption involving vast quantities of assets.
- (5) Improving international cooperation among law enforcement and judicial authorities to facilitate the investigation, prosecution and adjudication of cases of corruption involving vast quantities of assets.
- (6) Better ways to protect journalists and whistle-blowers, as well as investigators, prosecutors and judges and their independence, by the international community.
- (7) Innovative international standards required to prevent corruption involving vast quantities of assets more effectively.
- (8) Sanctions and compensation for corruption involving vast quantities of assets, including for social damage caused by it.
- (9) Adoption of a set of principles and recommendations to prevent and combat corruption involving vast quantities of assets more effectively.