

H.E. Ms. Ine Eriksen Søreide
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway

Global Expert Group Meeting on Corruption involving vast quantities of assets

12.06.2019 / 09:00 – 10:30 / Grand Hotel, Oslo

Ladies and gentlemen,

A warm welcome to all of you!

I am pleased to see such a distinguished group of experts from around the world gathered here in Oslo to shed light on the issue of grand corruption and discuss how to fight it.

In every professional field, getting to know other people working on the same issues in another country can be both interesting and inspiring.

And in the fight against corruption, and especially large-scale corruption, it is essential that we establish closer and stronger cooperation across borders.

As corruption does not recognise borders, those of us who are involved in fighting corruption in different countries must join forces more effectively to prevent corruption and stop financial crime and illicit financial flows.

Simply put, we need a broader, stronger international coalition.

The list of international organisations calling for this is long, and includes the G7, the G20, the OECD, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the European Union, the African Union, and the UN.

Many multinational companies and investment funds have also expressed their strong support for this agenda.

So I'm very pleased that all of you are here in Oslo to take our common efforts against corruption a step forward.

I am confident that you will come up with innovative and constructive ideas.

Corruption is often described in quite abstract terms.

It is sometimes defined as ‘the abuse of public office for personal gain’. And it is said that it ‘increases economic and social inequality, and feeds a sense of injustice, discontent, exclusion, and polarisation’.

But the act of corruption itself is very concrete, very practical. And the results of corruption are also very real.

Corruption stops medicine and drugs from reaching the sick.

It stops schools from being built.

It prevents social mobility, making the rich richer and the poor poorer.

It makes the public sector less effective, unable to deliver adequate services, and it undermines the trust between citizens and the state.

And this trust is essential in all countries and for all governments. Without the trust of its citizens, no government is able to do their job effectively.

In all countries, good governance – based on integrity, inclusion, transparency, and accountability – is key to achieving sustainable development.

Both political and business leaders have an obligation to lead the way in our common efforts to fight corruption.

Norway, together with Peru and Chile, tabled a resolution on combating large-scale corruption at the 7th conference of States Parties to the UN Convention.

This initiative helped set the stage for two expert group meetings. The first one was in Lima, Peru, in December last year, and second one is here today.

I appreciate the cooperation that has been established between Norway, Peru, Colombia and other countries in our joint efforts to prevent and combat corruption, in particular grand corruption.

I’m pleased to see my colleague here today, the foreign minister of Colombia, Mr. Carlos Holmes Trujillo. I would like to recognize the work by Colombia in this field.

Politicians can bring political will and greater visibility. An impartial judicial system, effective regulation, and technical know-how are also essential.

In short, we need experts like you here today.

I am aware that in many countries, leading the fight against corruption can be a dangerous task.

Investigators, prosecutors and judges, witnesses and whistleblowers, journalists, civil society organisations and government employees sometimes have to take a brave stand to stop corruption. As do many others.

Let me just say that I'm impressed by the work and bravery shown by many people – including many of you in this room – in the fight against corruption.

I wish you every success in your important work to combat corruption.

Once again, welcome to Oslo, good luck with the conference, and keep up the good fight.

Thank you.