

**Africa Regional Webinar on Combating Corruption and Illicit Financial Flows:
New Measures and Strategies.
In Celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the Independent Corrupt Practices
and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC). 10am – 12pm,**

14 - 15 July, 2020

**Remarks by Mr. Edward Kallon
United Nations Resident Coordinator
Nigeria
14 July 2020**

Protocol:

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is my pleasure to join you today in celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the Independent Corrupt Practices and Related Offences Commission only a few days after we commemorated the Africa Anti-Corruption Day for the fourth time.

As the first United Nations Special Session against Corruption comes up in early 2021, it is most timely for the African Anti-Corruption community to come together to jointly determine Africa's anti-corruption agenda at the global stage.

In doing so, we can draw inspiration from the progress made in the past two decades. It is important to note that African nations have been at the forefront of negotiating the United Nations Convention against Corruption and, in particular, ensuring the inclusion of the innovative Chapter on Asset Recovery.

Today, fifty-two African countries are States parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption and are actively participating in its Implementation Review Mechanism.

In implementing the provisions of the Convention, African nations have put into place necessary laws and institutions to prevent and combat corruption. These efforts have started to show results.

In Nigeria for example, 2019 marked the year with the largest number of corruption related convictions. At the same time, the Nigerian Government in cooperation with its partners was able to recover and return to Nigeria hundreds of millions of US dollars from a few jurisdictions.

However, despite these efforts and successes, citizens' appreciation of the fight against corruption remains low in many countries across the globe. While negative perceptions may not be a fair reflection of the progress being made, we need to acknowledge them.

Going forward, I would like to propose to you today an adjustment to our approach. It is our belief that we need an approach that puts citizens at the center of the fight against corruption.

It is only when citizens see tangible progress directly impacting their lives positively, that we can expect them to support the fight, to refuse to take part in corrupt practices and to report corruption incidents whenever they become aware of them. In short, we need to do better in demonstrating the actual benefits of the fight against corruption.

While such a citizen-centered approach should become an integral part of all anti-corruption efforts that we undertake, there are four specific actions I would like to propose for your further discussion, drawing from our experience in Nigeria:

1. **Ending wide-spread small-scale bribery:** While large scale corruption scandals may capture the attention of the public, it is the actual experience being confronted with bribe-seeking behavior by public officials that shapes citizens' opinions concerning the effectiveness and seriousness of Governments' anti-corruption agendas. Unless we put into place effective preventive and disciplinary measure to drastically reduce such conduct, citizens will continue to have legitimate doubts concerning the actual commitment and reported successes to eradicate corruption.
2. **Enhancing the development impact of asset recovery:** The recovery of large sums of proceeds of corruption from a citizens' perspective is only relevant if these proceeds translate visibly into improvements in their lives. It is thus crucial that countries find practical ways to ensure that both domestically and internationally recovered assets are managed in a

transparent and accountable fashion, and reliably reinvested into the achievement of the SDGs.

This is in line with the respective Resolution on *Strengthening Asset Recovery to Support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, which was sponsored by Kenya, Nigeria and the State of Palestine and adopted by the Conference of States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption at its 8th Session, held in December 2019 in Abu Dhabi, UAE.

- 3. Creating effective and responsive public complaints systems:** The request for citizens to own the fight against corruption is not new. Yet, as long as the State and its institutions are failing in the eyes of the public to demonstrate their determination in the fight against corruption, it is unlikely that we will convince citizens to embrace the fight against corruption wholeheartedly.

In Nigeria for example, since 2016, consistently less than 4% of those who were confronted with a demand for the payment of a bribe went on to report the incident. We are not surprised by this result, since only 15% of the reported cases resulted in a formal criminal or disciplinary action.

In the absolute majority of cases, those who had the determination and means to report incidents of corruption were either discouraged from pursuing the matter, or never received any feedback on their reports or, in some cases, even suffered negative consequences.

- 4. Improving transparency and communications in the fight against corruption:** I believe we can and must do much better in communicating about the fight against corruption, bearing in mind that the majority of citizens in Africa are below the age of 25.

In this context, it is my great pleasure to be able to share with you in a few moments the short animated film which has been produced by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime summarizing the key findings of the 2nd *Corruption in Nigeria Survey* with a view to reaching a much broader public audience, in particular the youth.



Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United Nations General Assembly declared 2015 to 2024 the International Decade for the People of African Descent: Recognition, Justice and Development. These goals will remain nothing but a fleeting illusion unless we succeed in putting an end to corruption. Thus, let us stand united against corruption for the benefit of our citizens today and for future generations.

Thank you very much, for your attention.