

**“Joint Statement by Mr. Jason Eligh, UNODC Country Manager and Mr. Toily Kurbanov, UNDP Country Director on the International Anti-Corruption Day, 9 December, 2012”**

December 9 is International Anti-Corruption Day, as designated by the UN General Assembly. This day provides us with an opportunity to reflect on how corruption can prevent us from reaching the human development targets set out in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and how it undermines democracy and the rule of law, leads to human rights violations, distorts markets and infrastructure investments, erodes quality of life and allows organized crime, terrorism and other threats to human security to flourish.

There is a much evidence now in place that shows, quite clearly, that in countries with high levels of corruption, immunization rates are lower and child mortality rates are higher. In education, higher levels of corruption are strongly correlated with fewer children attending schools and higher dropout and illiteracy rates, blocking key routes out of poverty. In infrastructure, extending water, sanitation and electricity coverage is expensive, requiring large-scale investments - yet on average in the Asia-Pacific region, up to 40 per cent of this is dissipated through corrupt practices

The United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) is the first universal anti-corruption instrument of its kind. UNCAC obliges State Parties to implement a wide range of anti-corruption measures that affect national laws, institutions and everyday practice. UNCAC reaches both the public sector and the private sector. The Convention calls upon State Parties to “prevent corruption involving the private sector, enhance accounting and auditing standards in the private sector and, where appropriate, provide effective, proportionate and dissuasive civil, administrative or criminal penalties for failure to comply with such measures.” Equally, civil society is called upon to create anti-corruption awareness through public information and education programmes that promote transparency, integrity and zero tolerance of corruption. Since 2010, a Review Mechanism monitors the implementation of the Convention at national level through self-assessment and peer reviews.

Myanmar signed the UNCAC in 2005 but is the only country in ASEAN yet to ratify it. The government has made its intention to ratify and implement the UNCAC clear. Myanmar is also in the process of adopting a new Anti-Corruption Law. As Myanmar has embarked on an impressive political and economic reform process it is important that the focus on fighting corruption remains strong to ensure that the development of democracy and the rule of law and economic growth benefit all – thereby creating a more stable and prosperous society.

Ratifying the UNCAC will be a first step in the right direction for Myanmar. It will introduce an internationally recognized standard and a strong legal framework that can help support the government in fighting corruption. The Convention is an instrument that embodies a global consensus on what nations can and must do to prevent and criminalize corruption, improve international cooperation, and recover ill-gotten assets. This will support reforms and economic development in Myanmar, helping ensure that their benefits reach the people and are not consumed by corruption.

Once adopted, like for any other legal framework, the key challenge will be in successfully implementing UNCAC. This will require legal and institutional reforms to ensure the sustainability, independence and capacities of anti-corruption bodies, as well as sectorial reforms in health and education, among others.

As elsewhere, UNCAC ratification can foster new dynamics in the struggle against corruption. UNCAC ratification is credited with initiating path-breaking national dialogues among institutional actors on anti-corruption reform in countries like Bangladesh, Mongolia, Lao PDR and Vietnam. For their part, countries such as Indonesia, Georgia and Rwanda have seen significant progress since UNCAC ratification,

achieving visible and decisive changes that have had a real impact on ordinary people's lives. In the few short years since UNCAC ratification, for example, Indonesia's Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) reached a 100 percent conviction rate in prosecuting corrupt public officials across all major branches of the government.

Corruption is a global concern that affects all countries, rich and poor, while disproportionately afflicting the poor. It contributes to instability and poverty and is a dominant factor driving fragile countries towards state failure. This crime can only be fought through concerted efforts by the government, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, the media and citizens. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) are at the forefront of these efforts and stand ready to support Myanmar in taking its own action in this regard.