

United Nations Convention against Corruption

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Mr. President,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Honourable representatives of civil society,

At the outset, I would like to wish you, Mr. President, every success for your work during this session; and thank the United States of America for hosting this important conference. Let me also commend the staff of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) for their dedicated work against corruption.

We all come together united in a common effort: The **relentless pursuit of a corruption-free society**. As a global scourge, corruption hits all countries, rich or poor, large or small, but has its worst effects in the developing world. If we want to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, especially No. 16, we need to rein in corruption. In that regard, it is of utmost importance to concentrate in our meeting on issues related to corruption and to not let our discussions be overshadowed by other political issues not connected to corruption.

The occasion of the **20th anniversary of the Convention** is a good opportunity for reflection: What have we achieved, what remains to be done?

In this regard, let us underscore the pivotal roles of **prevention and accountability**. These need to serve as the linchpin of our strategy.

In this regard, we need to **step up preventive measures** under the UNCAC. The **International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA)** with its seat in Austria should be a key partner in this endeavour. IACA is the only international organization exclusively devoted to anti-corruption training and education.

I would like to invite all States, which have not yet done so, **to join IACA** and benefit from its experience, training and research.

To fortify our commitment to combat corruption, Austria has recently adapted its **National Anti-Corruption Strategy and National Anti-Corruption Action Plan**, providing a comprehensive framework for both preventive and punitive measures. Austria's National Anti-Corruption Strategy is not merely a bureaucratic exercise but a testament to our unwavering belief in the power of, particularly, preventive measures.

Moreover, Austria is in the final stage of its **second UNCAC review cycle**, with a particular focus on chapters II and V of the Convention. The country visit took place virtually in March 2022, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It allowed for direct engagement with Austrian authorities and representatives from civil society, providing invaluable insights into our national prevention mechanisms. We are currently anticipating the finalization of the final review report. We would like to thank the experts from the peer reviewing States as well as the UNODC secretariat for their commitment and assistance.

Ensuring a high level of transparency and **inclusion of civil society organisations** during the review process was of utmost importance to Austria. We acknowledge the crucial role of civil society organizations among other institutions as for example media in combatting corruption and support an active involvement of civil society in the review process. In this regard, Austria has not only signed the **UNCAC Coalition's Transparency Pledge** but also supports the **joint plenary statement on the Implementation Review Mechanism**, which will be delivered by the United Kingdom. We also would like to welcome the efforts of the United States to ensure the active participation of civil society at this year's conference and highlight the successful Civil Society Forum, which took place just before the Conference.

While prevention is key, we must ensure **accountability** for the perpetrators of corruption. It is imperative that State parties embrace a comprehensive approach. This involves, for instance, the implementation of robust enforcement mechanisms, accompanied by appropriate penalties and sanctions. Furthermore, **fostering collaboration** is of utmost importance. We must extend to one another the broadest scope of **mutual legal assistance** particularly in the recovery and **return of proceeds of crime**.

Only through such concerted efforts can we ensure the strength and resilience of our legal frameworks. Adopting the **Atlanta Declaration** will mark an important first step into this direction.

It is of equal importance, that for the first time, the Conference of the State parties will address the links between corruption and organized crime and the protection of whistle-blowers.

To conclude, Austria remains steadfast in our common pursuit of integrity, transparency, and a corruption-free society. We all should take the 20th anniversary of UNCAC as a commitment not to rest our ambitions, but to fortify our efforts and to continue building on the Convention through the Conference of the State parties and its forthcoming resolutions and decisions. Together, we can build a future where the values enshrined in the UNCAC become a reality for all. Thank you.