



European Union

**EU Statement on
Agenda item 1(f): General Discussion**

**10th Session of the
Conference of the States Parties to the
United Nations Convention against Corruption**

Atlanta, 11-15 December 2023

Distinguished President, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. The following countries align themselves with this statement: North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia*, Albania*, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Iceland*, and Norway*.

Let me start by wishing you, Mr President, success for your work during this session. We would like to express our thanks to the United States for hosting this Conference and for making anti-corruption a top priority of this administration. We would also like to commend the United States for choosing the theme of “accountability” for this year’s CoSP, a theme that complements “integrity” and “transparency” and that is closely linked to good governance, democratic values and inclusiveness.

It is an honour for the European Union to be here today among this community of anti-corruption stakeholders.

We all know that corruption in all its forms remains an impediment to democracy, the rule of law, gender equality, the enjoyment of human rights, the trust in institutions, and to a robust, shared and sustainable economic development.

Global corruption indices put the EU among the regions seen as the least corrupt in the world.

Nonetheless, corruption remains a key concern for people across the EU, with a large majority [about 70%] of European citizens and companies perceiving that corruption

* Candidate Countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland and Norway are members of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.

remains widespread in their country, while only few [30%] have the opinion that governments' efforts to combat corruption are effective.

The UNCAC is a beacon of hope in the fight against corruption, and the Conference of States Parties represents the global arena where anti-corruption ideas and actions are born and shared.

2023 marks a crucial year for anti-corruption, both for the UNCAC and the European Union.

Firstly, the UNCAC celebrated its 20th anniversary, and for this we commend the Convention, and its implementing institutions, for the progress it has brought worldwide in the fight against corruption.

Secondly, this year, the EU has taken unprecedented steps in the fight against corruption. The European Commission has adopted an anti-corruption package, with proposals for a range of different measures to tackle corruption, both nationally and globally.

The anti-corruption package contains concrete objectives, with proposed repressive and preventive measures.

In September, the Commission set up the EU Network Against Corruption with law enforcement authorities, public agencies, and representatives of civil society. The Network will act as a catalyst for corruption prevention and repression across the EU. It is envisaged by the Commission that the network will develop best practices and practical guidance. One key task of the Network will be to support the Commission to perform a corruption-risk mapping across the EU, which will be used to develop a future EU Strategy against corruption.

A second fundamental piece of the package is the proposal for a Directive on combating corruption by criminal law.

The proposal aims at modernising the existing EU anti-corruption legal framework, and at establishing rules for both the prevention and the repression of corruption. It contains proposals for measures for building a culture of integrity, but it also aims to improve the effectiveness of investigations and prosecution of corruption cases. This includes raising awareness of corruption through information and awareness-raising campaigns, research, and education programs designed to enhance integrity and reduce corruption risks.

Inspired also by the non-mandatory provisions of the Convention Against Corruption, the proposed Directive, once in force, will harmonise the definitions of a wide array of criminal offences to cover all forms of corruptive and corruption-related behaviours.

Globally, the EU relies on a comprehensive toolbox to support partner countries' anti-corruption efforts, promoting the effective implementation of UNCAC.

The Rule of Law is a universal value on which our Union is founded, and we stand firm in defending and promoting it, and this includes respecting the rule of law also in case of anti-corruption measures.

We continue to act in order to detect and prevent challenges encountered by our Member States in four key areas for the rule of law, including but not limited to, anti-corruption legal frameworks.

The annual dialogue on the Rule of Law with EU Member States has proven effective in anticipating possible deficiencies, and in supporting relevant reforms aimed to achieve long-lasting results.

Corruption remains an obstacle to development.

The Council of the EU has recognized the urgency of adopting a whole-of-government approach to combatting corruption. It is important to incorporating a strong anti-corruption perspective in all development efforts, and that mainstreaming anti-corruption can contribute to improving the everyday lives of citizens.

As explicitly recognised by the UN Convention against corruption, we can only fight corruption with the help of civil society. It helps to maintain the integrity of the public sector, and to keep it honest, transparent and accountable. And accountability is the theme of this year's Conference.

In this context, objections to the participation in this conference of certain non-governmental organisations, one of which is based in the European Union, undermine our joint fight against corruption. This is a matter of great concern to us.

Mr President, let me be clear: our commitment to fight corruption remains unequivocal and we look forward to continuing our cooperation with global partners in order to bring common responses to common challenges.

Thank you, Mr President.