

Thank you Mr President

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Fellow Colleagues,

Addressing you today is indeed a unique opportunity for the civil society sector to send a precise message to the Member States and major stakeholders in regard to our most pressing concerns.

We deeply appreciate the multilateralism and inclusiveness that the Conference brings while deliberating on joint efforts to combat corruption and achieve more transparent and accountable society.

We regretfully acknowledge that corruption erodes all spheres of public and private life, leaving regular citizens no ways to avoid its pervasive influence. There are places where the lack of transparency and accountability has contributed to a culture where corrupt practices, such as bribery and nepotism, have become deeply planted in the fabric of governance, hindering the fair distribution of resources and opportunities. A well-organized system of illicit financial flows enriches modern kleptocratic regimes which are responsible for global insecurity.

Corruption impacts a broad range of human rights and serves as a main restraint in meeting UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In the context of fragile peace and democratic backsliding there is a growing need to consider corruption as inalienable part of the most atrocious human rights violations.

We welcome the initiative of the UNCAC in establishing a relevant WG on Corruption and Human Rights to address the destructive impact of corruption on basic human rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 75th anniversary of which we marked this December.

This conference serves as an exceptional platform to exchange best practices, challenges and experiences among States, private sector and CSOs - thus, it is crucial to highlight the responsibility of all parties in upholding human rights and overcoming corruption.

Especially, we would like to draw attention of the financial institutions, investment funds as well as transnational corporations to their role in enabling kleptocrats to further undermine democratic principles. We

underline that private sector representatives involved in money laundering activities shall show more responsible attitude in regard to stolen assets repatriation. We thus call to increase the participation of such enablers in relevant discussions and processes to find better solutions, as enhanced international and inter-sectoral cooperation is essential in order to efficiently combat the roots and consequences of corruption.

In this context we particularly highlight the role of civil society representatives, whistleblowers, investigative journalists and anti-corruption activists in holding States and financial institutions accountable for their crucial responsibility to diligently pursue and recover ill-gotten money to the affected.

We strongly believe that civil society serves as a guardian of integrity and justice, acting as a moral compass that steers societies away from kleptocracy and corruption. With an unwavering commitment to transparency, civil society plays a crucial role in scrutinizing the actions of both States and financial institutions, ensuring they are compliant to ethical standards and accountability.

In the relentless battle against corruption, civil society urgently requires increased support and financial resources to strengthen its capacity, amplify its impact, and effectively counteract the pervasive challenges posed by corruption worldwide

Our statement it is a collective call to action - civil society sector, alongside Member States and major stakeholders, must send a resolute message that resonates with the shared values of transparency, accountability, and human rights.