

Thank you, Chair,

I congratulate you and the other officers on your election and would like to thank the United States and UNODC for organizing this conference, and for making the participation of non-governmental actors a key priority.

Dear delegates,
we appreciate that States Parties decided to allow for the participation of all non-governmental organizations that had expressed their interest. We believe this decision is an important step towards a truly inclusive UNCAC.

The UNCAC Coalition works to advance the implementation of the UNCAC, and to facilitate and support the participation of civil society in UNCAC fora. We have created regional civil society communities around the UNCAC, and are hosting six working groups to advance key issues linked to corruption, asset recovery, victims, environmental crime, gender, grand corruption, and human rights.

We are thrilled to see unprecedented participation of civil society in this conference, including through the Civil Society Forum on the day before the CoSP, with some 900 registered civil society representatives, representing some 330 organizations from around the globe. We are convinced that this participation will have a positive impact on the outcomes of the Conference – and we hope that this practice will set a precedent for future Conferences.

Civil society plays a crucial role in advancing anti-corruption efforts on the global, regional, and national levels. The UNCAC recognizes the central role that civil society plays in preventing and combating corruption. However, many brave reporters, whistleblowers, and civil society representatives face threats and persecution when they speak up against corruption in a number of UNCAC States Parties.

To name just one case: Our colleague Gubad Ibadoghlu – who was supposed to be with us today – and wife Irada have been beaten, and he has been detained by his government on trumped-up charges because of

his anti-corruption work. His life is at risk as he does not receive needed medical treatment in prison.

Dear delegates,

37 States Parties have signed the UNCAC Coalition's Transparency Pledge, voluntarily committing to higher levels of transparency and civil society inclusion in the second cycle of the UNCAC implementation review. We invite the other States Parties who are currently undertaking their second cycle review to also join the Pledge.

We also call on States Parties to support the United Kingdom's IRM initiative and their related plenary statement, which aligns with the principles of our Pledge and calls for more transparency and participation in UNCAC reviews and follow-up.

Over the past few years, the UNCAC Coalition has supported more than 40 civil society organizations in producing civil society parallel reports on national UNCAC implementation in an effort to contribute to the national reviews and to inform reform efforts.

I invite you to consult the more than 70 written submissions the UNCAC Coalition and its membership have made to this Conference, including on challenges and priorities in different regions, and on issues such as

- tackling the links between environmental crime and corruption;
- promoting the rights of victims of corruption to seek and receive redress;
- strengthening the UNCAC implementation review mechanism by making it more transparent, inclusive, and effective; and
- promoting a gender-responsive and inclusive approach to anti-corruption.

Furthermore, we invite you to join us at the many special events that are co-organized by civil society at this Conference.

Finally, I would like to invite the representatives of States Parties to continue to engage and collaborate with us, the civil society representatives present at the Conference.

We ask you to work towards full inclusion of civil society in UNCAC fora, including by allowing civil society participation in CoSP subsidiary bodies and the national UNCAC reviews.

We stand ready to support the Conference with our expertise and experience so that we jointly advance the global anti-corruption agenda. We will only be effective in our efforts to tackle corruption if we all work together toward this common goal.

Thank you very much!