

Speaking notes

For the event “Fighting corruption in cities: identifying risks and reacting on time, the role of local governments”, organized by UN Habitat, UCLG and UNODC

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Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I am glad to welcome you today to this Special Event on “ Fighting corruption in cities: identifying risks and reacting on time, the role of local governments”

I would like to thank the UN Habitat and United Cities and Local Governments for taking the lead in organising today’s event and the distinguished panelists for their interest and willingness to participate in this debate.

Since its entry into force, the UN Convention against Corruption has firmly established itself as the global international anti-corruption legal instrument. 183 States parties have agreed to be bound by the provisions of UNCAC. Corruption has been universally recognized as the main impediment to sustainable development; the prevention and fight against corruption have become the focus of the international concern and a priority for many governments.

Corruption is a key governance challenge, affecting the ability of governments to provide services to citizens. Corruption undermines security and is used as an instrument by organized crime and terrorists to achieve their goals.

Corruption is often caused by ineffective institutions. Ineffective institutions are unpredictable; people are uncertain if they would receive what they are entitled to and often the bribe becomes the price of certainty.

Moreover, ineffectiveness of the institutions makes many people think that they could receive what they are not entitled to; unscrupulous businesses, organized crime, criminal groups and opportunistic staff members may try to get advantage of the weak institutions using corruption.

Weak and corrupt institutions are usually not trusted by citizens; mistrust and corruption lock into a vicious circle, further exacerbating the governance challenges faced by the central and local governments.

This challenge is often faced by both central and local governments.

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in particular the Sustainable Development Goal 16 recognizes that accountable and effective institutions are a prerequisite for sustainable

development. It calls for the Member states to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and responsive institutions at all levels. SDG 16 targets to be achieved include reduction of illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime, substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms and develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels

UNCAC recognizes that effective governance and strong institutions are impossible without effective access to information by empowered citizens. Well informed and engaged citizens can play an essential role to spark change in the cities they live. In its work, UNODC has, consistently and in a targeted manner, promoted effective participation of society in all aspects of the anti-corruption work.

We encouraged the Governments of States parties to involve all stakeholders in the Implementation Review process; during the first implementation review cycle, 89 percent of the countries have involved, in one way or another, different stakeholders in the review process. The second cycle is still ongoing, but the results are encouraging – all countries reviewed so far have opted to involve other stakeholders in the review.

We work together with civic organizations to deliver technical assistance, and we coordinate and cooperate with civil society organizations on a number of policy issues worldwide.

The discussion we are having today is therefore very timely and needed; I would like to reiterate the UNODC's commitment to promoting participation of society and strengthening local government and I look forward to hearing the experiences and views of the panellists on how to most effectively put into practice the provisions of the Convention and what are the best practices identified by them in this regard.

Thank you!