

An International Overview of Whistleblower Laws and Best Practices

2021 UN Convention Against Corruption Conference of State Parties

Conference Room Ste Catherine (CR3)

Friday, December 17, 2021

4:00-4:03 PM

Opening Remarks

Moderator, **Samantha Feinstein**, International Program Director, Government Accountability Project

4:04-4:13 PM

Panel Discussion

Question 1: What are the international best practices for protecting reporting persons?

Speaker, **Louise Portas**, Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officer, UN Office of Drugs and Crime

Question 2: You recently launched a guide on whistleblowing in the health sector. Member States, in their political declaration, committed to protecting those who report corruption and providing them with secure, confidential reporting systems. In your opinion, could implementing these commitments to protect whistleblowers in the health sector and beyond help prevent the next pandemic?

Speaker, **Louise Portas**, Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officer, UN Office of Drugs and Crime

4:14-4:23 PM

Question 3: Historically whistleblowers lacked support in Serbia and were viewed by the public as spies. Today, Serbia's whistleblower law is widely recognized as one of the strongest in the world. Can you describe the unique process utilized in 2014 for developing such a strong bill and how public engagement and consensus building was utilized?

Speaker, **Vladimir Radomirović**, Editor-in-Chief, Pištaljka, Serbia

Question 4: Effective implementation must follow legislative achievements for whistleblower laws to operate as an anti-corruption tool. What are the key lessons from Serbia’s experience implementing the whistleblower law that you would want other countries who are working on new draft whistleblower protection bills today to know?

Speaker, **Vladimir Radomirović**, Editor-in-Chief, Pištaljka, Serbia

4:24-4:33 PM

Question 5: How does the OSC have and maintain structural independence to avoid conflicts of interest and political influence? Could anything be done better or differently to ensure an investigative agency has both independence and accountability?

Speaker, **Christopher Leo**, Attorney, Office of Special Counsel, USA

Question 6: How does the OSC handle issues with obstruction of justice, intimidation, stonewalling, or other issues related to interference with investigations?

Speaker, **Christopher Leo**, Attorney, Office of Special Counsel, USA

Question 7: How is mediation handled at OSC and what do you think the benefits and lessons learned are?

Speaker, **Christopher Leo**, Attorney, Office of Special Counsel, USA

4:34- 4:43 PM

Closing Remarks

Moderator, Samantha Feinstein, International Program Director, Government Accountability Project, Summary of discussion and transition to audience questions, Samantha Feinstein

4:44-4:50 PM

Questions and Answers

Online and in person questions may be asked and answered during this time.

Moderator

Samantha Feinstein, Staff Attorney & Director, International Program, Government Accountability Project

Speaker

Louise Portas, Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officer, UN Office of Drugs and Crime

Speaker	Vladimir Radomirović, Editor-in-Chief, Pištaljka, Serbia
Speaker	Christopher Leo, Attorney, Office of Special Counsel, USA

Bios

Ms. Louise Portas is a Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officer with the Corruption and Economic Crime Branch of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Vienna. Ms. Portas is a Doctor in Law and has a PhD doctorate in anti-corruption. She has been with UNODC since 2016. Before joining the United Nations, she worked in the compliance departments of several private companies. As a Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officer, Ms. Portas provides technical assistance to States parties to fast-track and strengthen their implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption. Ms. Portas is also specialized on issues related to whistleblower protection and serves as the whistleblower protection focal point for the Corruption Economic Crime Branch. In this regard, she provided expertise and support to a wide range of countries on whistleblower protection frameworks.

Mr. Vladimir Radomirović is the editor-in-chief of Pištaljka (The Whistle), an investigative journalism outlet/whistleblowing platform in Belgrade, Serbia. A veteran journalist, Vladimir has worked in a number of media outlets in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina before founding Pištaljka 11 years ago. At Pištaljka, Vladimir coordinates a team of 4 journalists and 5 lawyers who provide journalistic and legal assistance to whistleblowers. Vladimir's work has appeared in a number of international media, including the Times of London, Brave New Europe, Nieman Reports, etc. Apart from editing major publications in the Balkans, he broke the news of Kosovo PM Ramush Haradinaj being indicted for war crimes, of the killing of three Albanian-American brothers in 1999, and that Jack Abramoff's first lobbying job was for the government of Montenegro. Vladimir is chair of the board of trustees of Whistleblowing International Network (WIN), based in Glasgow, UK, and a founding member of the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF), based in Leipzig, Germany. Vladimir holds a degree in English Language and Literature from Belgrade University and was a Neiman Fellow at Harvard University.

Mr. Christopher Leo has been an Attorney with the U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) for nearly six years. Chris currently serves in the agency's Investigation and Prosecution Division where he specifically focuses on investigations of whistleblower retaliation and other prohibited personnel practices. He also served in the agency's Retaliation and Disclosure Unit where he assessed disclosures of alleged wrongdoing for referral to agencies for further investigation under OSC's disclosure referral authority, and investigated claims of whistleblower retaliation and other prohibited personnel practices. Prior to his tenure at OSC, Chris worked for the non-profit Government Accountability Project. He holds a law degree from Hofstra University and a Bachelor's in Foreign Service from Georgetown University. Chris is originally from Long Island, New York and now lives in Washington, DC.

Ms. Samantha Feinstein is a Staff Attorney and Director of the International Program at Government Accountability Project. She develops and advances private sector whistleblower-rights legislation; represents public, private, and international whistleblower clients; and conducts research, training, advocacy, and public education for the international program. Before joining Government Accountability Project in 2017, she worked at the American Bar Association (ABA) Section of International Law and the

ABA Rule of Law Initiative. Ms. Feinstein has also worked at International Rescue Committee, Banyan Global, and she was Middle East Policy Advisor to Nirj Deva, UK Member of European Parliament. Ms. Feinstein is co-author of the Government Accountability Project and International Bar Association joint report, [*Are Whistleblower Laws Working? A Global Study of Whistleblower Protection Litigation*](#), published in March 2021. She also authored the Government Accountability Project Report, [*Whistleblowing at International Financial Institutions: An Assessment of the Effectiveness of the Regional Development Banks' Whistleblower Policies*](#), published in September 2019. Ms. Feinstein is also co-author of a forthcoming Springer International chapter; *Whistleblowing is the Best Antidote for COVID-19: U.S. Case Studies*. She also authored various blogs and OpEds, including [*A Comparative Analysis of U.S. v E.U. Whistleblower Law*](#) and [*The World Abandoned COVID-19's Best Antidote: Whistleblowers*](#). Ms. Feinstein holds an M.A. in International Relations and a J.D.