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**Transparency International Submission
to the 14th Session of the UNCAC Implementation Review Group**

A Call for Indo-Pacific Governments to Take Greater Action against Corruption

Transparency International urges UNCAC States Parties in the Indo-Pacific region to identify clear plans to combat corruption in their countries. We commend Indo-Pacific leaders' for recognising the importance of addressing corruption and strengthening democratic governance to achieve greater peace and prosperity in the region – but just words and commitments are insufficient; now is the time for action.

We now call upon you to partner with civil society and make greater progress against key corruption problems with which the region continues to grapple.

Indo Pacific governments have made several positive steps in tackling corruption particularly through passing relevant laws, developing national policies and adopting anti-corruption strategies. But the 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index shows that governments' efforts in the fight against corruption have stagnated¹. Findings from public corruption surveys conducted by Transparency International in Asia and the Pacific in 2020² and 2021³ reveal that people in these regions believe that both governments and businesses have serious issues with corruption. Politicians are seen to be the most corrupt, and people experience high levels of corruption when accessing public services, particularly through bribery and sexual extortion, as well as vote buying and voter intimidation.

Corruption also impacts governments' abilities to achieve their core mandate: protecting the public against major threats.

Climate change persists as the greatest threat to the livelihood, security, and well-being of people around the world – particularly for those in the most marginalised in communities – and corruption lies at its heart. Globally, climate resilience is hampered by the impact of corruption when climate finance is diverted. Findings from the above-mentioned surveys show that for the Indo Pacific region, which is endowed with rich natural resources, oversight of extractive industries and carbon emitting industries is weak. More and more governments are run or influenced by a few big interests; the way public contracts are awarded has challenges; and climate programmes are a long way from being inclusive, transparent, and accountable to the communities they should serve.

At the same time, people believe that few face consequences for crimes of corruption. Consultations with diverse stakeholders on the surveys' findings reveal that law enforcement and judiciaries are in some cases inadequately equipped to sanction high-level corruption. Key integrity institutions such as national anti-corruption agencies seldom have the resources to

¹ <https://www.transparency.org/en/news/cpi-2022-asia-pacific-basic-freedoms-restricted-anti-corruption-efforts-neglected>

² <https://www.transparency.org/en/gcb/asia/asia-2020>

³ <https://www.transparency.org/en/gcb/pacific/pacific-2021>

function effectively. This has been an advocacy priority for many of the Transparency International national chapters in the region to national governments⁴.

There is hope: citizens in the Indo Pacific region believe they can make a difference in the fight against corruption. But too few governments meaningfully engage with them. Many citizens in the region face challenges in accessing public information or do not feel they have the freedom to engage without fear of persecution. While numerous Indo Pacific countries have legislation that protects the right to information and whistle-blowers, the main challenge is that few have effective enforcement systems or proactive disclosure causes⁵.

Transnational crime also plagues the region. And yet advanced economies are not pulling their weight in the fight against cross border corruption⁶. Transparency International New Zealand recently conducted research revealing that preventative and investigative systems are insufficient and not operating effectively in the Pacific⁷.

Considering the above, we implore States Parties in the Indo-Pacific region to partner with civil society and address the following key priorities:

1. Strengthen accountability of political leaders, requiring all high-level officials to publicly disclose their income and assets, tightly monitoring public funds, and empowering the police and courts to properly investigate and punish corruption.
2. Increase transparency in the relationship between governments and businesses by monitoring companies' involvement in electoral campaigns and policymaking, and by ensuring that all public contracts are awarded fairly and competitively.
3. Ensure elections are fair and free of vote buying or threats by strengthening independent electoral commissions and anti-corruption agencies.
4. Ensure meaningful engagement of citizens, including young people, by providing space, capacity support and civic education.
5. Collaborate with the region's gender equality movement to mainstream gender into anti-corruption initiatives, including taking measures to address sextortion.
6. Introduce and enforce the right to information and whistle-blower protection laws.
7. Combat money laundering by strengthening cross-border cooperation, the capacity of country Financial Intelligence Units, due diligence by financial institutions and legal frameworks around confiscation of criminal proceeds.

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⁴ <https://www.transparency.org/en/press/anti-corruption-agencies-must-start-prosecuting-the-powerful-to-gain-credi>

⁵ <https://www.transparency.org/en/publications/right-to-information-in-asia-pacific>

⁶ <https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=5c32e516-912a-46c0-8446-10a35661934b&subId=713699>

⁷ <https://www.transparency.org/en/news/cpi-2022-trouble-at-the-top>

⁷ [https://uploads-](https://uploads-ssl.webflow.com/5f3c5d2bb263505e25811876/6269bc87c4a9ce0f4a870808_4782_TI_Pacific%20Corruption%20Report%202022_FA_web.pdf)

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