



The United Nations and Action against Corruption: A Global Response to a Global Challenge

The Challenge

Corruption is a complex social, political and economic phenomenon that impacts every aspect of society. It causes reduced investments or even disinvestment, with many long-term effects, including social polarization, lack of respect for the rule of law and human rights, undemocratic practices and diversion of funds intended for development and essential services.

The Response

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is leading the global efforts to improve international cooperation in crime prevention and criminal justice. Fighting corruption is part of the overall work of UNODC to create the foundations for democracy, sustainable development and the rule of law. To further pursue these goals and build on long-term efforts, UNODC launched a Global Programme against Corruption (GPAC) in 1999. The activities of UNODC and technical cooperation projects undertaken by this Programme assist Member States in building integrity, as well as preventing and controlling corruption through:

- Advancing knowledge and expertise on anti-corruption measures and tools;
- Providing technical assistance to build and strengthen national capacities to prevent and control corruption;
- Enhancing coordination and cooperation among organizations active internationally in anti-corruption policy and advocacy.

The United Nations provides guidance and technical assistance to Member States upon request. In providing these services, UNODC follows an integrated approach to corruption, namely one that is fact-based, trans-

parent, non-partisan, inclusive, comprehensive, impact-oriented and flexible. Its various elements incorporate activities that can be executed both individually and in packages at the international, national and sub-national (e.g., municipal) levels. It takes into consideration that corruption is a complex phenomenon; its character differs from country to country depending on the prevailing social, economic and cultural conditions and, particularly, the legal context. The Global Programme against Corruption is composed of three main components: action learning, technical cooperation and evaluation.

Judicial Integrity

Since 2000 the Programme supports chief justices from common and civil law countries in identifying and applying best practices in strengthening judicial integrity and capacity.

The outcome of this process has been:

- A list of key objectives for judicial reform;
- A set of measurable performance indicators;
- A comprehensive assessment methodology for judicial integrity and capacity;
- A draft Universal Declaration on Judicial Conduct and
- A "safe" and productive learning environment for chief justices in which they can be exposed to best practices regarding judicial reform, management of change and the strengthening of the rule of law.





Interagency Coordination

In December 2001, UNODC was requested by the Office of the United Nations Deputy-Secretary-General to enhance coordination and cooperation across all organizations internationally active in anti-corruption policy, advocacy and operations. This effort was undertaken to avoid duplication and to assure effective and efficient use of existing resources.

As a result, UNODC:

- has taken the lead in establishing an Interagency Anti-Corruption Mechanism that will assure better synergy across the United Nations and other agencies active in the field of anti-corruption work and
- is supporting the United Nations Office for Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) in developing an Organizational Integrity Initiative aimed at mainstreaming ethics throughout the United Nations system.

By 2005, the Programme plans to manage 15-20 technical assistance projects supporting Member States in preventing and controlling corruption. At present, projects are being implemented in Hungary, Lebanon, Nigeria, South Africa, Colombia, Indonesia, Romania, Islamic Republic of Iran and Uganda. GPAC also works to improve coordination among donors and to identify and promote best practices.

Technical cooperation reflects a modular approach of comprehensive anti-corruption measures, or tools, that may be implemented in different stages at the international, national and local levels. This maximizes the flexibility of such measures to fit the needs and context of each country or subregion.

Tools

Manuals are considered as both policy guidelines and a practical set of "tools" to promote a common understanding of policies and enhance governments' capacities to build integrity to fight national and transnational corruption.

The United Nations Anti-Corruption Toolkit is a set of tools and case studies

designed to help "fix" corruption problems of all kinds.

The Manual on Anti-Corruption Policy intends to guide policy-makers, and the United Nations Compendium of International Legal Instruments against Corruption is a comprehensive guide to existing legal instruments.

The Handbook on Anti-Corruption Measures for Prosecutors and Investigators has been developed in close collaboration with the United States Department of Justice and the criminal justice system in South Africa. Other toolkits and manuals will be developed with the required collaboration, dissemination and support.

The United Nations, an organization with universal membership and a global mandate, is ideally positioned to deal with global challenges. Member States have accepted the fact that corruption is a global phenomenon and mandated UNODC through the General Assembly to support the negotiation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption. The Convention serves as the centrepiece for efforts against corruption, and UNODC will assist Member States in ratifying it and implementing its provisions. More specifically, UNODC will provide advisory services, including training, to help close the gap between existing law and what is being called for or codified as standards in the new Convention.

Resources

Extra-budgetary resources are the basis for technical cooperation activities. Their sustainability will depend on ongoing support from the donor community. Substantially higher resources will be required to best assist Member States in implementing the new United Nations Convention against Corruption.

For further information:

www.unodc.org and www.unis.unvienna.org

