

A scenic photograph of a Southeast Asian landscape. In the foreground, a river flows through lush greenery. In the middle ground, there are several traditional houses with tiled roofs. In the background, there are large, forested mountains under a clear blue sky.

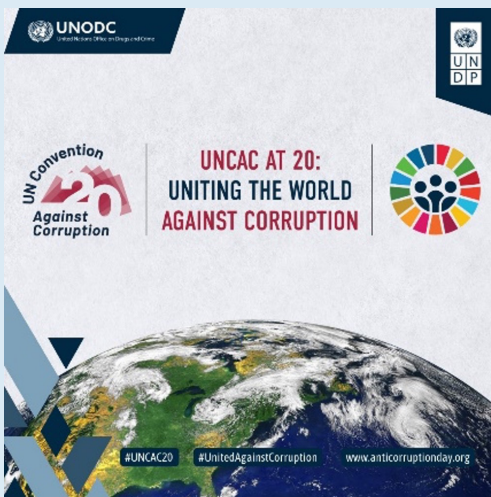
Southeast Asia Anti-Corruption Newsletter

This newsletter is publicly shared with colleagues and partners of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Regional Anti-Corruption Platform for Southeast Asia. It provides updates on the Platform's activities involving UNODC and its partners across the region in the fight against corruption.

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UNCAC Celebrated 20 Years



The United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) celebrated 20 years since its adoption in 2003. With Barbados becoming the 190th State party to the Convention, the world has shown a ground-breaking commitment to tackle corruption.

UNCAC is the world's only legally-binding, anti-corruption instrument, to which UNODC is the guardian. UNCAC continues to remain unique and relevant in its holistic approach, adopting prevention and enforcement measures, including mandatory requirements for criminalizing corrupt acts. The Convention reflects the transnational nature of corruption, providing an international legal basis for enabling international cooperation and recovering proceeds of corruption (i.e., stolen assets). The important role of government, the private sector and civil society in fighting corruption is also emphasized.

UNCAC importantly has a Mechanism for the Review of Implementation (UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism), which helps States parties assess their national anti-corruption laws, processes and institutions and empowers them to learn from and help each other. All ASEAN Member States have completed the first cycle of the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism, which focused on UNCAC chapters III (Criminalization and law enforcement) and IV (International cooperation), and are completing the second cycle, focusing on UNCAC chapters II (Preventive measures) and V (Asset recovery).

[Read more here](#)

Success at CoSP10 with Active Participation from Southeast Asian States parties

The tenth session of the UN's anti-corruption conference - the Conference of the States Parties to UNCAC (CoSP10) – brought together over 2,300 participants from across the globe, including active participation from Southeast Asian States parties, from 11 to 15 December 2023 in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. CoSP10 resulted in the adoption of 12 resolutions and two decisions, helping us move toward a more transparent and united world. This included key topics for this region, such as gender and corruption, beneficial ownership, and whistleblower protection.

Southeast Asian partners—both government and non-State actors—further exchanged ideas and lessons in dedicated special events. One of the highlights was the winning cadets from the UNODC-organized essay competition for youth police cadets from Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam participating in the youth engagement in anti-corruption and “Youth Changemakers” events.

[Access more information and related documents/publications here](#)



Southeast Asian Anti-Corruption Network for Civil Society Launched

On International Anti-Corruption Day, 9 December 2023, 13 civil society organizations from across ten Southeast Asian countries launched a regional anti-corruption network, with the support of UNODC. The Southeast Asian Anti-Corruption Network for civil society organizations (CSOs) is chaired by the Knowledge Hub for Regional Anti-Corruption and Good Governance Collaboration (KRAC) under Thailand's Chulalongkorn University. It aims to facilitate the sharing of experiences and lessons in advocating for reforms and greater transparency and accountability. It also seeks to support diverse voices in policy and decision making, identify commonalities in regional challenges, and work together to address them in line with UNCAC article 13 — the article that highlights the participation of society.



[Read more here](#)

More than a Hundred Experts Addressed Corruption as a Facilitator of Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling in Bangkok

Under the surface, smugglers and human traffickers rely on corrupt officials to succeed. The key role that corruption plays in facilitating these transnational organized crimes was the topic of discussion between more than a hundred experts from across Asia and the Pacific who gathered in Bangkok to address the issue and find solutions to it. Hosted from 21 to 22 November 2023 by UNODC, the Regional Support Office of the Bali Process, and the Office of the National Anti-Corruption Commission of Thailand, the conference attracted experts from anti-trafficking and anti-corruption departments, civil society organizations, the media, academia and the private sector.

[Read more here](#)





UNODC Participates in the 19th Principals Meeting of the ASEAN-Parties against Corruption (ASEAN-PAC)

The ASEAN-Parties against Corruption (ASEAN-PAC) is committed to combating corruption as one of its fundamental objectives in line with the 2030 Development Agenda. At the 19th Principals Meeting of the ASEAN-PAC in Vientiane, Lao PDR, UNODC highlighted the implementation of UNCAC chapter III on criminalization and law enforcement, noting the good practices, challenges and trends among ASEAN Member States. The meeting brought together ASEAN countries with the aim of enhancing collaboration and anti-corruption efforts of ASEAN-PAC institutions to advance the Sustainable Development Goals.

International Conference on Anti-Corruption Innovations in Southeast Asia

Recognizing the importance of adapting innovations to address corruption problems, UNODC cooperated with partners, including KRAC of Chulalongkorn University and the Office of the National Anti-Corruption Commission of Thailand, with support from National Research Council of Thailand, to organize an international conference in Bangkok on 16 June 2023. This provided a forum for presenting new approaches to establish good corporate governance in Southeast Asia. The conference gathered researchers, civil society organizations, private sector reformers, and public policy-makers from several countries in the region, and provided opportunities to share innovative ideas across borders to tackle corruption.



[Read more here](#)



UNODC provided Expertise to Southeast Asia at the UNAFEI Good Governance Seminar, ARIN-AP Annual General Meeting and ASEAN for Good Governance Conference

The United Nations Asia and Far East Institute (UNAFEI) convened representatives from nine ASEAN countries to provide opportunities to learn from each other, present legal frameworks to address corruption, and identify good practices. UNODC highlighted ASEAN's implementation of UNCAC, drawing on the UNCAC review information from ASEAN Member States with a focus on criminalization and law enforcement.

UNODC also presented on asset recovery at the 8th Asset Recovery Interagency Network- Asia Pacific (ARIN-AP) Annual General Meeting on 1 December 2023 in Bangkok, Thailand, and on UNCAC implementation in ASEAN at the ASEAN Good Governance Conference hosted by the C4 Centre in Penang, Malaysia, from 5 to 6 December 2023.

Cambodia's Anti-Corruption Unit Becomes the 190th Member to Join the GlobE Network

The Global Operational Network of Anti-Corruption Law Enforcement Authorities (GlobE Network) is a platform for peer-to-peer information exchange and informal cooperation to better identify, investigate and prosecute cross-border corruption offences and recover stolen assets. Launched in 2021, the GlobE Network is open to specialized authorities as referred to in UNCAC article 36 (anti-corruption law enforcement authorities) from all UN Member States and States parties to UNCAC. Cambodia's Anti-Corruption Unit recently joined this network, able to now tap into the resources and informal channels linking over 180 members from 106 countries.

[Read more about GlobE network and also consider joining here](#)

Indonesia Commits to Anti-Corruption Drive

Twenty years since the adoption of UNCAC and a decade after its inaugural cycle review, the Government of Indonesia renewed its commitment to comprehensively address corruption. Relevant practitioners gathered on 13 to 14 November 2023 to participate in the UNODC workshop on asset recovery and management, in partnership with the Corruption Eradication Commission (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi), and the Ministry of National Planning and Development (Bappenas). This was deemed highly relevant given that Indonesia's Asset Recovery Bill is currently under consideration.

[Read more here](#)



Workshop on Strengthening Integrity and Advancing Collective Action Against Corruption in Indonesia's Land-based Sector

On 21 July 2023, UNODC, in collaboration with the Corruption Eradication Commission (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi) and Indonesia Global Compact Network, hosted a workshop on *Strengthening Integrity and Anti-corruption Collective Action* in East Kalimantan, Indonesia. This was based on a series of focus group discussions that highlighted prevalent corruption risks within Indonesia's land-based business sector, particularly regarding land conversion and obtaining permits.



[Read more here](#)

Malaysia Tightens Anti-Corruption Laws

There have been various efforts by the Government of Malaysia to close the gaps on private sector corruption and public sector mismanagement through the enactment of the Beneficial Ownership Bill and the proposed drafting of the Public Procurement Act, Fiscal Responsibility Act, and amendments to the Corporate Liability Provision of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission Act.

UNODC supported the Government with research and advice, and by organizing multi-stakeholder roundtables on the liability of legal persons, followed by workshops for the private sector in five States around the country. UNODC also supported discussions relevant to the Public Procurement Bill with policy advice and by organizing a forum on international good practices on public procurement. UNODC also began working on a report on Integrity Pacts for Public Procurement, in partnership with the Ministry of Finance.

[Read more here](#)



Malaysia: Liability of Legal Persons Workshops for the Private Sector

On 21 August 2023, UNODC and its implementing partner, Transparency International Malaysia, organized a training on the implementation of adequate procedures for corporate liability, in the Southern State of Johor, in the Malay language, titled “Section 17A: Understanding, Importance and Effects towards Corporate Liability”. The training was attended by local Johor-based companies, namely small-medium enterprises (SMEs), but also included a few State-owned companies. This event is part of a series of similar trainings organized to highlight section 17A of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission Act, known as the Corporate Liability Provision, in 2018. This provision allows for directors and company management to be held criminally liable for acts of corruption perpetrated by any member of staff or agents of the company, unless management can prove adequate procedures are in-place to prevent corrupt practices within and involving the company.

[Read more here](#)

The Philippines Advances in Anti-Corruption Measures

UNODC, together with the Presidential UNCAC Inter-Agency Committee Secretariat of the Philippines, conducted a joint UNCAC Review Follow-Up and Implementation Workshop on 10 November 2023. Through open dialogue, knowledge sharing, and collaborative problem solving, the workshop facilitated a comprehensive review of UNCAC implementation in the Philippines, identifying specific areas requiring attention and generating actionable recommendations for more effective anti-corruption efforts. Some of these areas included exiting the gray list of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) by increasing the country’s anti-money laundering measures and addressing the pending FATF recommendations.



[Read more here](#)

Beneficial Ownership Data Training for Law Enforcement Agencies in the Philippines

In a significant move toward enhancing transparency and accountability in the Philippines, UNODC and Open Ownership, in collaboration with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), conducted a training workshop on Beneficial Ownership Data for Law Enforcement Authorities from 29 to 30 August 2023 in Manila.

The workshop brought together over 40 key representatives from various government agencies, including the SEC, Office of the Ombudsman, the Anti-Money Laundering Council, National Bureau of Investigation, and the Department of Justice. The workshop aimed to equip law enforcement authorities with a comprehensive understanding of beneficial ownership and its critical role in combating corruption and financial crimes. It provided practical insights into accessing and effectively utilizing beneficial ownership data for investigative purposes.



[Read more here](#)

Lao PDR: Anti-Corruption in Infrastructure Projects Workshop



Recognizing the importance of strengthening the capacity of Laotian law enforcement authorities to address corruption in infrastructure development projects, the Lao State Inspection Authority (SIA), with support from UNODC, organized two trainings on this topic for law enforcement authorities in the country. The participants learned how to identify and investigate common forms of corruption in the planning and building of roads, public buildings, and other infrastructure projects, as well as how corrupt

officials and their accomplices conceal the payment of bribes using corporations and trusts based in the nation or another jurisdiction. Additionally, they gained knowledge of the function of correspondent banks, the SWIFT system for international transfers, and how to obtain information from each source to track down and retrieve stolen money and bribe receipts.

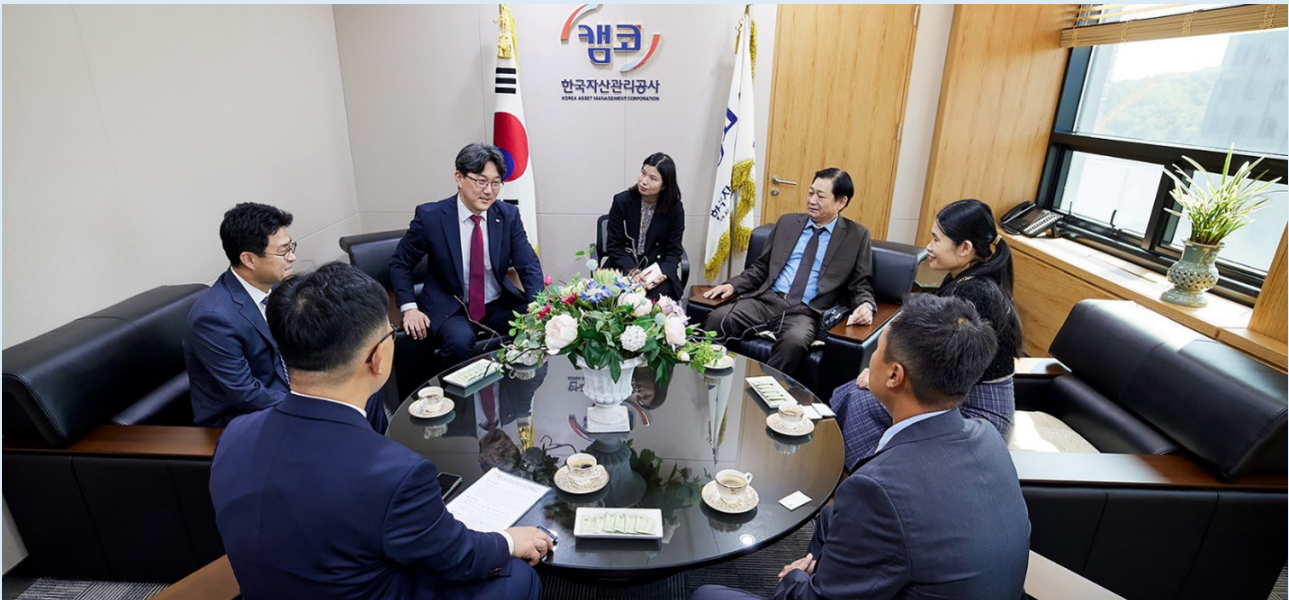
[Read more here](#)

Thailand's Police Cadets Essay Competition

The award ceremony, celebrating the achievements of the finalists and winner of the Police Cadets Essay Competition, co-organized by UNODC and the Royal Police Cadet Academy (RPCA) of Thailand, was held on 7 November 2023 at the Royal Police Cadet Academy in Nakhon Pathom Province. The winner participated in CoSP10. The essays drafted by the cadets varied widely, covering policy integrity, corruption and human trafficking, and the behavioural science of why people engage in corruption/do the wrong thing in the first place.



[Read more here](#)



Vietnamese Authorities Exchange with the Republic of Korea on Asset Confiscation Measures

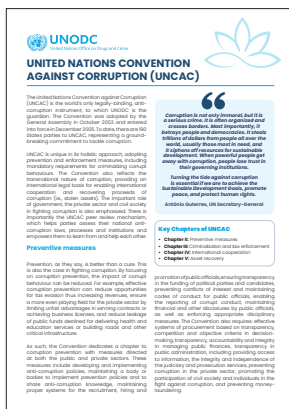
Changes in asset confiscation processes in Viet Nam has been a key priority for the country’s Ministry of Justice (MOJ) since 2020. UNODC has been working closely with MOJ to enhance Viet Nam’s legal and policy framework concerning the confiscation of corrupt assets. In October 2023, Viet Nam took part in a study visit to the Republic of Korea to gain insights into Korean experiences and good practices related to the development of laws, policies and mechanisms on asset confiscation.

[Read more here](#)

Check Out Our New Resources and Publications

Factsheets on UNCAC

The series of two-page factsheets explains in a nutshell what UNCAC is, what it says, and how it can serve to help Member States, civil society and citizens in their work to address corruption. Access them [here](#).



Whistle-blower Protection in ASEAN Member States

Whistle-blowers play an important role in the detection and prevention of corruption. However, in raising their concerns, they often face the risk of retaliation. This discussion paper explores the current situation across ASEAN Member States on their legal frameworks surrounding whistle-blower protection, identifying gaps and outlining recommendations.

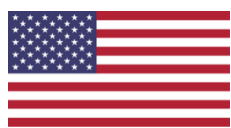
Access this discussion paper [here](#)



Looking Ahead

- Kick-starting 2024 with a Regional Conference to Reinvigorate the Regional Platform to Fast-Track the Implementation of UNCAC in Southeast Asia, from 27 to 29 February, co-organized with the Chair of ASEAN-PAC (Lao PDR) and the host country (Thailand's Office of National Anti-Corruption Commission). The Conference gathers anti-corruption practitioners from Southeast Asian Member States to Bangkok to reflect on progress made, identify areas that the region can work together, and build momentum in the fight against corruption.
- UNODC will also be coming out with a series of substantive resources, including UNCAC thematic papers on ASEAN Member States' implementation of UNCAC chapters II (Preventive measures), III (Criminalization and law enforcement), IV (International cooperation), and V (Asset recovery).
- UNODC will focus on accelerating the established CSO Southeast Asian Anti-Corruption Network, and in parallel empowering regional investigative journalists to conduct corruption reporting through the upcoming establishment of the Southeast Asia Anti-Corruption Journalists Network.
- Through a new national project, UNODC will also be expanding beyond Southeast Asia and establishing an Office in Ulaanbaatar that will focus on supporting Mongolia in its anti-corruption efforts and implementation of UNCAC.

With Special Thanks to UNODC's Donors



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