

Letter to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the co-facilitators for the intergovernmental preparatory process of the Summit of the Future, and UN Member States on making the fight against corruption a priority action

To the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Permanent Representative of Germany and the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Namibia, and the Member States of the United Nations,

As a group of organisations dedicated to fighting corruption and promoting good governance and integrity, we applaud your efforts to agree on a global Pact for the Future, committing to concrete actions for the benefit of present and future generations. At the same time, we share your concern that progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is far too slow. One of the key reasons for this is the failure to adequately address corruption, which is responsible for the loss of up to 25 percent of global public spending. Without a greater focus on preventing and combatting corruption, it will be impossible to deliver on the promise of the SDGs and future goals. We are therefore urging you to carefully consider the role of corruption as you discuss and agree on new global commitments and actions to ensure a world that is safe, sustainable, peaceful, inclusive, equal and just, and a world where no one is left behind.

Corruption is widely recognised as a significant barrier to achieving the SDGs due to its pervasive negative effects on governance, economic growth and social equity. Grand corruption, in particular, results in the misappropriation of vast quantities of assets and widespread harm to populations. Corruption hinders domestic resource mobilisation and stands in the way of fair and equitable allocation of public funds. Bribery and sexual corruption affect the provision of public services, impacting the most vulnerable. Undue influence by vested interests leads to policy manipulation, misinformation campaigns and delays in the implementation of critical policies. What is more, corruption undermines the effectiveness of climate finance and fuels environmental crime. Corruption also fuels conflict and poses threats to peace and security.

SDG 16 reflected the international community's growing recognition of the centrality of anti-corruption efforts to development. It did so by including specific targets calling for the reduction of bribery and all forms of corruption, as well as building effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels. However, it is also essential to recognise that the impact of corruption cuts across all the SDGs. Progress on SDG 16, which was recently reviewed in a global progress report by the UNDP, UNODC and OHCHR, is clearly not where it should be; adding to this, the role of corruption was conspicuously absent from the discussions at this year's High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

To adequately reflect the centrality of the problem of corruption, the Pact for the Future should explicitly highlight the issue in the preambular text and give it more attention in the Actions. Moreover, the Pact should recognise the need to tackle corruption and related illicit financial flows in a separate Action, reflecting the urgent need to combat both for securing a sustainable, peaceful and equal future for all.

Transparency and accountability make our societies and institutions more resilient to future crises and challenges, including by enhancing our ability to adapt to and mitigate climate change in an inclusive manner. Therefore, the Pact should also reinforce the need for ensuring government transparency and accountability, and to the protection of fundamental freedoms. It should include a reference to the particular role of civil society and the media in exercising oversight, scrutinising decision-making and exposing wrongdoing without having to put their own lives at risk.

Given the systemic and cross-cutting nature of corruption, at the Summit of the Future, we strongly recommend that UN Member States:

- Commit to accelerating the implementation of their obligations under the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), to fulfilling their commitments under the 2021 Political Declaration of the Special Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGASS) against Corruption, and to more robust monitoring of both.
- Commit to eliminating financial secrecy in all sectors, curbing the enabling role of private-sector intermediaries and promoting cross-border cooperation and intelligence-sharing, recognising these as key measures to, on the one hand, combatting illicit financial flows linked to corruption, tax abuse, organised crime and other offences, and, on the other hand, to mobilising additional domestic resources to finance sustainable development.
- Commit to enhancing transparency and accountability, and to strengthening anti-corruption safeguards in recipient countries' budget cycles to ensure that resources are allocated, managed and spent in a way that improves the delivery of and access to essential public services, as well as efforts to achieve peace, stability and inclusive sustainable development.
- Commit to ensuring public access to information and protecting fundamental freedoms as core functions of transparent, inclusive and accountable institutions.
- Focus on corruption as a serious threat to peace and security and as a root cause and consequence of conflict under Action 25. Address the risks posed by corruption to the stability and security of societies, including by strengthening the governance of institutions linked to upholding peace and security, and by integrating good governance measures into national prevention and peacebuilding strategies and approaches under Action 18.
- Recognise the special importance of transparency, public participation, accountability, and good governance in climate policy processes and action.

We welcome the commitments in the Pact, including the commitment to close the SDG financing gap through bolder and more effective ODA commitments, strengthened domestic resource mobilisation frameworks and reforms to the international financial architecture, including sustainable debt. However, these commitments must be combined with an equal commitment to tackling corruption in a holistic manner.

Sincerely,

Transparency International
Transparency International Defence and Security

Signatories:

1. Acción Ciudadana (Transparency International Guatemala)
2. Centro de Integridade Publica - CIP (Transparency International Mozambique)
3. Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre - CISLAC (Transparency International Nigeria)

4. Coalition for Accountability & Integrity - AMAN (Transparency International Palestine)
5. Corruption Watch South Africa (Transparency International South Africa)
6. Costa Rica Integra (Transparency International Costa Rica)
7. Fundación Ciudadanía y Desarrollo (Transparency International Ecuador)
8. Fundación para el Desarrollo de la Libertad Ciudadana (Transparency International Panama)
9. Fundacja Akademia Antykorupcyjna, Poland
10. FUNDE (Transparency International El Salvador)
11. Ghana Integrity Initiative (Transparency International Ghana)
12. I-Watch (Transparency International Tunisia)
13. National Integrity Action (Transparency International Jamaica)
14. PROÉTICA Perú (Transparency International Peru)
15. The Daphne Caruana Galizia Foundation, Malta
16. Transparencia Mexicana (Transparency International Mexico)
17. Transparencia por Colombia (Transparency International Colombia)
18. Transparencia Venezuela (Transparency International Venezuela)
19. Transparency Internacional Chile
20. Transparency International Anticorruption Center (Transparency International Armenia)
21. Transparency International Bangladesh
22. Transparency International Belgium
23. Transparency International Bosnia and Herzegovina
24. Transparency International Brazil
25. Transparency International Bulgaria
26. Transparency International Cambodia
27. Transparency International Cameroon
28. Transparency International Canada
29. Transparency International Colombia
30. Transparency International Czech Republic
31. Transparency International Denmark
32. Transparency International Estonia
33. Transparency International EU
34. Transparency International Finland
35. Transparency International France
36. Transparency International Germany
37. Transparency International Greece
38. Transparency International Greenland
39. Transparency International Hungary
40. Transparency International Indonesia
41. Transparency International Ireland
42. Transparency International Kazakhstan
43. Transparency International Korea
44. Transparency International Lithuania
45. Transparency International Madagascar

46. Transparency International Malaysia
47. Transparency International Netherlands
48. Transparency International New Zealand
49. Transparency International Norway
50. Transparency International Pakistan
51. Transparency International Portugal
52. Transparency International Russia (in exile)
53. Transparency International Slovenia
54. Transparency International Solomon Islands
55. Transparency International Spain
56. Transparency International Sri Lanka
57. Transparency International Sweden
58. Transparency International U.S.
59. Transparency International UK
60. Transparency International Vanuatu
61. Transparency International Zambia
62. Transparency International Zimbabwe
63. Transparency Maroc (Transparency International Morocco)
64. Trinidad and Tobago Transparency Institute (Transparency International Trinidad and Tobago)