

COLOMBIA

*The Permanent Missions of the
Russian Federation, Italy, Qatar and Colombia to the UN,
and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
cordially invite you to join a special event on*

“Safeguarding Sport from Corruption: Towards UNGASS 2021”

**Tuesday 22 October 2019
11:30 – 13:00 in Conference Room 11, UNHQ**

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- H.E. **Andrey Avetisyan**, Ambassador for International Anti-Corruption Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation;
 - H.E. **Sheikha Alya Ahmed Al-Thani**, Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the UN;
 - H.E. **Stefano Stefanile**, Deputy Permanent Representative of Italy to the UN;
 - Ms. **Daniela Bas**, Director of UN DESA Division For Inclusive Social Development;
 - Ms. **Simone Monasebian**, Representative, UNODC NY Office.
 - Mr. **Ronan O'Laoire**, Coordinator, UNODC Global Programme on Corruption and Crime in Sport.

When we think about sports, the first words that come to our mind are most probably: hard work, leadership, perseverance, teamwork, success. However, due

to the corrosive effects of corruption, this phenomenon is damaging and undermining the potential of sport, by stealing the future of youth, and the future of athletes and players.

In all countries, without distinction, we are witnessing how corruption has become a true pandemic with a wide range of corrosive effects on our societies. But corruption is not only a problem that affects the public sector, it also touches the private sector.

Corruption is a global problem that disturbs the efficiency of government, decreases citizen confidence in institutions and the ability of officials to solve public problems. Besides, it slows economic development, deepens social inequality, threatens the sustainability of the rule of law and democracy itself. In short, corruption has corroded the fundamentals: the social contract between citizens and the State.

Looking at the figures of the Index of Corruption Perception of Transparency International, we find out that in two-thirds of the countries of the world evaluated, corruption has a strong presence. According to the data collected by the World

Economic Forum, the estimated annual global costs of corruption amount to at least USD 2.6 trillion, which represents approximately 5 % of the global GDP (Gross Domestic Product).

Likewise, the International Monetary Fund has estimated that - approximately - 2% of the world's GDP is lost in payment of bribes.

At the regional level, in Latin America corruption is ranked 4th as the most important problems. In my country, corruption is ranked in the first place.

We are convinced that Colombia needs to continue advancing in being a more equitable, productive and implacable society against corruption. In this sense, we have defined four strategic axes with very concrete actions to face the phenomenon of corruption, from a holistic understanding of it and with an integral vision:

1. Understanding and analyzing the phenomenon of corruption and its impact on society.
2. Prevention of corruption through education and the strengthening of ethics and integrity.

3. Strengthening and inter-institutional coordination for the promotion of transparency and the fight against corruption.
4. Investigation and punishment of acts of corruption.

The Government of Colombia strongly believes that this work, together with more information available, more integrity, less impunity and less indifference, will make us prevail over the scourge of corruption. This is what we label the formula of the four “I”s.

In this regard, we have developed along the last years a public policy on transparency; we have included in our national plan of development a special chapter on legality; and we have created the Secretariat of Transparency at ministerial level at the Presidency of the Republic in order to have a more effective fight against corruption.

Furthermore and due to the damaging effects of corruption in all levels of public life, reducing corruption and bribery has been included in the global development agenda.

Specifically, Sustainable Development Goal #16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), recognizes the importance of anti-corruption efforts as a *sine qua non* condition for a more sustainable world. But sport is also a powerful tool in the achievement of the SDGs, and it can do it more broadly; sport is related to a different level to each and all of the SDGs. Through sport we can transmit messages of fairness and respect, mobilize resources, and promote healthy lifestyles. Thanks to the sport we equal the rights of women and girls, sport can offer opportunities for decent work and could also be a very important platform for the dissemination of messages. We can mention multiple impacts of sport in the implementation of the SDGs, but I want to emphasize that for Colombia, sport is also an excellent tool for coexistence and health. This explains why we recently created the Ministry of Sports and we have signed the Pact for the Transparency in Colombian Sport.

Thanks to the effort of official institutions and non-profit organizations, Colombia works for reconciliation and for keeping young people away from violence, crime, and drugs through sport programs. We have achieved a lot, but there is more to do....

In the last decade, we have witnessed how unfortunately major corruption scandals have shaken international sports organizations, due to the incredible amount of money involved in the sector (145 Billion Dollars annually). But corruption scandals in the sport industry involve both athletes and the management and governance of sports in different areas such as embezzlement or misusing of sport funds, corrupted elections in sporting bodies, match-fixing, corruption in hosting of games, corruption in changing sport results, corruption in the development of the athletic activity of sport men and women, corruption in the performance of referees and in the process of hiring athletes for professional or amateur activities, corruption in the construction of sport infrastructure, among others.

For all of that, corruption has not only become the transfer of wealth from the powerless to the powerful but also a major barrier to sustainable development.

There is a growing consensus that corruption is a critical issue, that is why on last October 15th we have conveyed a regional conference in Colombia, to identify opportunities to improve international cooperation and detect new tools to face the current challenges posed by corruption in our societies.

The conference seek to have a better understanding of how to move from commitments to action before the *Conference of States Parties of the United Nations Convention against Corruption* to be held in Abu Dhabi at the end of this year.

Distinguished participants,

Corruption is linked to other forms of national and transnational organized crime, such as terrorism, drug trafficking, money laundering, smuggling, illicit trade of arms, illicit betting and human trafficking. Corruption is driven by and feeds criminal activity, hence the importance of addressing this problem as part of our response to all forms of criminality.

The United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) has elevated corruption from a national concern to one of international proportions and importance: It has established an international mechanism for developing and perfecting laws to confront corruption; and most importantly, it offers a set of tools to enhance global cooperation in the fight against corruption.

However, enforcement of the criminal laws required by the UNCAC prohibiting crimes of corruption by national leaders has been weak in many countries.

Excellencies,

We need to do more than just criminalize corruption! We must strengthen our institutions in charge of preventing, detecting, investigating and punishing acts of corruption.

Perhaps most importantly, we have to think out of the box, use technology as big data and analytics, and create new and innovative measures to combat corruption. The government of Colombia believes that it is necessary to create an International Anti-Corruption Court that would provide a forum for the prosecution and punishment of corrupt leaders who enjoy impunity in their own countries because they control the administration of justice.

Only together, and through innovative ideas (like the International Anti-Corruption Court) Member States from the UN will be able to ensure the fight against corruption, in all its forms and expressions, as major transnational challenge that

undermines legality, hinders entrepreneurship, and prevents our societies from reaching higher levels of equity and welfare for all.

Dear friends,

Please allow me to highlight that we need to blend sports with education, promoting values of excellence and respect, creating a way of life based on the joy found in effort, the educational value of a good example and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles.

This is the opportunity to invite you all and your Governments to the Sport Integrity Workshop that INTERPOL, UNODC, and the International Olympic Committee, are organizing in Medellin on the 18th of November 2019. We will have representatives from law enforcement, criminal justice authorities, and sport from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay. This workshop is being planned as a side-event to an international anti-corruption conference that INTERPOL is organizing in Vienna in November 2019.

I would like to conclude indicating that if the international community does not fight effectively corruption, we are condemn ourselves to live with its corrosive

effects in society for more than 100 years of solitude, as Garcia Marquez wrote in Nobel price work.

Thank you,