



**“THE UNGASS 2021 ON CORRUPTION:
A PATH FORWARD TO ENHANCE AND STRENGTHEN THE INTERNATIONAL
ANTI-CORRUPTION LEGAL FRAMEWORK”**

New York, UNHQ, CR 4

September 24th, 2019, 8.00 - 9.00 a.m.

Ministers,
Dear Judge Wolf,
Excellencies,
Distinguished participants,

In all countries, rich and poor, developed and developing, **we are witnessing how corruption has become a true pandemic with a wide range of corrosive effects on our societies.**

These **detrimental effects of corruption in all its manifestations are well known. Corruption erodes the basis of our societies in the political, economic and social spheres, by undermining the rule of law and economic investment, and victimizing its most vulnerable citizen.**

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 anticorruption efforts as a *sine qua non* condition for a more sustainable world.**

Regrettably, **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** in many States, and, of course, **in COLOMBIA WE ARE NOT OBLIVIOUS TO THIS CHALLENGE.**

That is why we are convening a regional conference, next month in Cali (October 15) to identify opportunities to improve international cooperation and detect new tools to face the current challenges posed by corruption in our societies.

The conference aims 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. **We hope that this regional exercise that we will be hosting could be replicated in other regions by the likeminded States present in this panel.**

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 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.**

In the most troubled countries in the world, **corruption isn't simply a part of the system. Corruption is the system.** The governments serve their own interests and corruption is the means by which they do so. **That is why we firmly believe that corrupt regimes cannot be ignored, because looted funds are laundered through the global financial system. They are a threat to international security!**



On the other hand, regarding the international legal framework, last year we commemorated the **15th anniversary of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC)**, an instrument that is an integral part of the modern system of international law with 186 States Parties. This demonstrates the commitment by States to support the first internationally agreed framework for combating and preventing corruption at global and national levels.

The Convention 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 important, 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.

Therefore, despite the many efforts made by the international community, when we look at the figures the prospects remain discouraging.

As we strive for more inclusive societies, 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).



Ministers,
Dear Judge Wolf,
Distinguished participants,

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 need to create an **International Anti-Corruption Court**. Among other things, this Court 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.

I urge that we take a longer view on this proposal. If the international community fails to take seriously the issue of corruption now that we have an UNGASS in 2021, we will doom ourselves to deal with the violence and the inequalities it creates in the future.