

**South African statement**

**at**

**THE INTERSESSIONAL PANEL DISCUSSION ON CHALLENGES AND GOOD PRACTICES IN THE PREVENTION OF CORRUPTION, AND THE IMPACT OF CORRUPTION ON THE ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**15 February 2022**

**11:00-13:00**

**Conference Room XX**

**Check against delivery**

Chairperson

Our delegation thanks the panellists for their valuable inputs,

Corruption undermines human rights, exacerbating inequality, poverty and conflict. It robs the poor, taking a disproportionate toll on the most vulnerable in society.

South Africa has not been spared this scourge and its devastating effects. We have thus adopted a zero-tolerance approach and put the fight against corruption at the top of our agenda.

SA has introduced a host of new measures to prevent and combat corruption. Our National Anti-Corruption Strategy adopted in 2020 is premised on the principle that there should be more emphasis on the prevention of corruption through good governance, transparency, integrity management and accountability in all sectors of society. In line with article 13 of the UNCAC, South Africa adopted a partnership, whole-of-society and integrated approach to the fight against corruption where participation of civil society organisations including academia was promoted from the conceptualisation of the Strategy.

The government has taken decisive steps to end state capture and increase the capacity of the State to investigate and prosecute cases of corruption and ensure that stolen public resources are returned to the State. Such initiatives include: The Commission of Inquiry to investigate allegations of state capture; Promulgation of section 8 and 15 of the Public Administration Management Act, 2014; the establishment of the Investigative Directorate in the National Prosecuting Authority; a Special Tribunal under the Special Investigation Unit and the Party Political Funding Act, 2018.

The first two parts of the report of the Commission of Inquiry make it plain that there was indeed ‘state capture’ in South Africa, whereby public institutions and state-owned enterprises were infiltrated by a criminal network intent on looting public money for private gain. The reports have detailed the devastating effects of this criminal activity on the lives of all South Africans, but especially the poorest and most vulnerable members of our society. We are now doing everything in our power to ensure that it never happens again. We will, as the Commission’s first report recommends, strengthen the system to protect whistle-blowers, who are a vital safeguard in the fight against corruption. Many individuals and companies that the Commission has found were responsible for state capture will now be held to account.

Our anti-corruption institutions responded swiftly to fraud and corruption during the pandemic. We withdrew certain emergency procurement regulations, set up a fusion centre that brought together various law enforcement agencies, published the details of all COVID19-related contracts online and instituted extensive investigations. 224 government officials have been referred for disciplinary action and 386 cases for possible prosecution.

• Some of the lessons learned in our fight against corruption include:

1. That national anti-corruption strategies should cover all the sectors of society instead of expecting each sector to develop its own strategy. Each sector will then develop its own implementation plans emanating from the national strategy.
2. The importance of public education and awareness raising about the effect of corruption. Furthermore, promotion of ethical behaviour among citizens from a young age is critical in the fight against corruption, including formal education programmes in schools and universities on ethics and integrity.
3. The importance of periodic review of the anti-corruption strategy and anti-corruption measures and publishing such reports to increase the level of transparency in government processes.
4. Active participation of citizens, civil society organizations and the private sector is critical in preventing and combating corruption.

Many of the world’s most destructive forms of corruption would not happen without the involvement of institutions in rich countries. Illicit financial flows rob Africa of almost half the $200 billion the continent needs to meet the SDGs, more than both FDI and ODA flows put together. South Africa is of the view these harms will more effectively be challenged by harnessing the force of universal rights and responsibilities.

Our experience shows that with focused and determined effort, corruption can be reversed. South Africa provides training to the Commonwealth Africa Anti-Corruption Centre and stands ready to share our experience with other parties.

Thank you