

We All Are But Human

or the Profound Responsibility of a Flower



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UN OHCHR

Working Group

on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations
and other business enterprises

Call for inputs:

Connecting the business and human rights and anti-corruption agendas

The United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the related 169 targets are the world's attempt to build a better future for all, introducing the global voluntary common language of the SDGs as an indivisible whole call for action by all countries, poor, rich and middle-income to promote human prosperity and pushing us all to commence to harmonize findings with understanding of the problems and opportunities posed by current and future trends in the system of law.

Within this framework, the crucial importance of anti-corruption on the construction of that better future is appreciated more than ever.

International agreements - such as the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), the G20 Anti-Corruption Action Plan, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development or recent resolutions to prohibit, prevent, detect and counter corruption underscore the need to tackle corruption and to undertake serious efforts to address it.

In the words of the Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in his statement for the 2019 International Anti-Corruption Day, "corruption affects people in their daily lives".

Everyone can be a victim of corruption. Across the board, where there are corrupt practices, there is a negative impact. With corruption, all of society suffers.

Corruption poses a significant threat to countries around the world, undermining democratic institutions, contributing to governmental instability, eroding trust, threatening the economy by eroding



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fair competition and discouraging investment and trade, disproportionately affecting disadvantaged groups by preventing social inclusion, promoting inequality and inhibiting prosperity.

Corruption is a cross cutting issue and vulnerability to it differs from sector to sector, whether public or private.

Corruption is widespread and recognised as one of the world's greatest challenges. It is a major impediment for sustainable development with a disproportionate impact on poor communities.

Corruption erodes human rights, directly, indirectly, and remotely violating them: where there is corruption, there cannot be full enjoyment of human rights.

The business and human rights theme implies to discuss corruption as demonstrated also by the addition of the 10th Principle to the UN Global Compact.

Businesses may directly and indirectly adversely impact human rights through corruption in a number of ways.

Corruption hinders the achievement of SDG 9. When lucrative contracts are up for grabs, bribery, fraud and embezzlement can plague large-scale infrastructure projects. Corruption can lead to money being stolen and infrastructure not being built or being built in a substandard way which may endanger the public.

Corruption hinders the achievement of SDG 4. Examples of corruption in education abound. As a result, educational opportunities for the poor are limited in many parts of the world.

Corruption hinders the achievement of SDG 3. In certain countries, the health system is perceived as the most corrupt sector.

Corruption hinders the achievement of SDG 14 and SDG 15.

The World Bank estimates that 20 to 40 per cent of water sector finances, in the range of USD 155 to 700 billion annually, are lost to dishonest and corrupt practices (Water Integrity Global Outlook 2016), and that the global market loses USD 10 to 15 billion annually from illegal logging.

Wildlife trade is one of the largest and most profitable forms of organised cross-border crime: the European Union (EU) estimates that the global illegal wildlife trade is worth between EUR 8 billion and EUR 20 billion annually (European Parliament, Study: EU trade policy and the wildlife trade, 2016). Corruption comes into play as traffickers often rely on bribery to move illegally harvested wildlife and timber products across international borders, contributing to global biodiversity loss and degradation of ecosystems, causing daunting environmental challenges.

Corruption affects all five pillars of sustainable development - people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership.

The SDGs offer an ambitious and compelling framework for transformation recognizing the importance of institutions to foster more resilient states and societies.

Specifically, SDG 16 aims to substantially reduce illicit financial flows (16.4), reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms (16.5), promote effective, accountable and transparent institutions (16.6), and promote inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making (16.7).

However, effective anti-corruption efforts need to recognize the full complexity of corruption - its causes and effects - to fully address the underlying structures and dynamics.

The international community has recognized that tackling corruption is vital for sustaining economic stability and growth, maintaining the security of society, protecting human rights, reducing poverty, protecting the environment for future generations and addressing serious and organized crime.



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In recognition of the global character of the threats posed by corruption, as well as the inter-linkages with the SDGs, preventing and combating corruption requires a comprehensive and multi-disciplinary approach, involving Governments, the private sector, the media, civil society organizations and the general public.

For states, it is important to align action plans for implementation of the SDGs with anti-corruption strategies.

Successfully addressing corruption requires the concerted action of both governments and businesses through multi-stakeholder processes, as well as the use of the latest technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution to capture, analyse and share data to prevent, detect, and deter corrupt behaviour. The private sector should adopt a zero-tolerance attitude towards corruption and put in place policies to promote a fair and just environment.

The media can provide checks and balances on Government and private sector involvement in corrupt practices, offering also an essential service in informing the public about the positive progress being made and giving support to those who take a stand in the fight against corruption.

The United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) underlines the importance of the active participation of individuals and groups outside the public sector, such as civil society, including non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations, in the prevention of and the fight against corruption and in raising public awareness. Many civil society organizations are working hard. As people become increasingly weary of corrupt leaders, they are demanding more accountability.

To support anti-corruption efforts, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) deliver a broad range of technical assistance. UNODC is the guardian of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, delivering technical assistance in various thematic areas such as prevention, education, asset recovery and integrity in the criminal justice system. UNODC works with Governments, international organizations, and civil society. UNDP partners with people at all levels of society to help build nations that can withstand crisis, and drive and sustain the kind of growth that improves the quality of life for everyone, including work on anti-corruption and good governance.



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