



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

3 May 2018

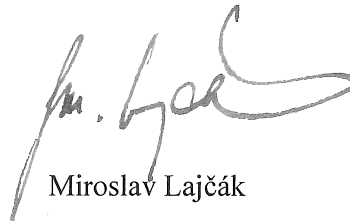
Excellency,

Further to my letter dated 29 March 2018 and, in accordance with resolution 72/196, please find attached concept note for the General Assembly high-level debate to mark the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Convention against Corruption and to highlight emerging trends and promote the effective implementation of the Convention.

Member States are informed that this debate will take place as a one-day meeting, on Wednesday, 23 May 2018, and will consist of an opening and high-level segment, two interactive panel discussions and concluding remarks by the President of the General Assembly. In accordance with resolution 72/196, a President's summary of the discussion will be prepared for transmission to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, as well as to all Member States.

I encourage Member States to be represented at the highest possible level at this meeting. Further information on the program of the event will be made available in due course. For additional details, please, contact Advisor on Legal Issues, Ms. Inga Kanchaveli at inga.kanchaveli@un.org.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.



Miroslav Lajčák

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

High-Level Debate of the UN General Assembly to mark the 15th Anniversary of the Adoption of UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC)

Emerging trends and Promoting the effective implementation of the Convention

Wednesday, 23 May 2018, Trusteeship Council Chamber

The High-Level Debate will be held pursuant to the General Assembly resolution 72/196 entitled “Strengthening the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme, in particular its technical cooperation capacity”, which includes an invitation to “*the President of the General Assembly, in cooperation with UNODC and with the involvement of relevant stakeholders, to hold, within existing resources and during the current session, a high-level debate to mark the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of the UNCAC and to highlight emerging trends and promote the effective implementation of the Convention, and to prepare a President’s summary of the discussion for transmission to the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention and to all Member States*”.

Scope and objective:

In October 2003, in recognition of the global character of the threats posed by corruption, which required a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach, the General Assembly adopted the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), signed in Merida, Mexico. The Convention is the sole legally binding global instrument against corruption, and with 183 Parties, represents a near universal commitment to preventing and combatting corruption.

Thanks to its comprehensive substantive coverage, including measures on prevention, criminalization and law enforcement, international cooperation, asset recovery, as well as technical assistance and information exchange, the Convention has become a framework and the backbone for many national and international initiatives for the prevention of and fight against corruption.

The Convention’s far-reaching approach and the mandatory character make it a unique tool for developing a comprehensive response to a global problem, thus also ensuring that unified standards are applied and consistent approaches are taken. While the letter of the Convention is legally binding on countries that have ratified or acceded to it, its values and state-of-the-art principles are indeed applicable to the widest spectrum of society. In the area of asset recovery, in particular, UNCAC has charted an entirely new course in international law.

The Convention’s main policy making body is the Conference of the States Parties, which aims at improving the capacity of and cooperation between States to achieve the objectives of the Convention and to promote its implementation, including through the Review Mechanism established in 2009. The review process generates an unprecedented amount of information and helps to identify global, regional and sub-regional trends in the implementation of the Convention, including achievements and challenges.

The high-level debate of the General Assembly to mark the 15th Anniversary of the adoption of UNCAC will bring together stakeholders that have been instrumental in the negotiations of the Convention and in advancing its effective implementation, including representatives from Member States, civil society, academia and private sector. The debate will focus on emerging

trends in the implementation of the Convention, while further promoting its effective implementation, both domestically as well as in terms of international cooperation. It will build a nexus between the efforts toward implementation of the Convention, and the work for the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, most prominently, SDG 16. It will also raise awareness of the negative impact corruption has on sustainable development, human rights, as well as the achievement of peaceful and inclusive societies.

Background:

The General Assembly has condemned corruption at all levels and in all its forms, including bribery, as well as the laundering of proceeds of corruption and other forms of economic crime.

Affecting developed and developing countries alike, corruption poses significant threats to countries around the world. It weakens institutions, erodes trust and threatens the economy by undermining fair competition and discouraging investment.

Corruption impairs economic development by diverting public funds, as well as funds intended for aid and private investment, to the accounts of corrupt officials. Foreign direct investment is discouraged and small businesses within the country often find it impossible to overcome the “start-up costs” required because of corruption.

Corruption often reaches into governments, parliaments, and the judiciary, undermining the state and its institutions. Corruption in the justice sector undermines the rule of law. Corruption also erodes the institutional capacity of government institutions as formal procedures are ignored, resources are diverted for private gain, and public officers are paid off through bribery or other means of enrichment.

Corruption has a negative impact on the enjoyment of human rights, and constitutes one of the obstacles to the effective promotion and protection of human rights, as well as to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In the public-sector, corruption affects the ability to render services, and may create discrimination in the access to public services. Corruption undermines institutions and values of democracy and may affect civil and political rights.

Corruption also facilitates and perpetuates other types of crime, as it is an enabler in all criminal markets and the links between many forms of global crime and corruption are well documented.

In the Doha Declaration adopted by the 13th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, Member States reiterated “the importance of promoting peaceful, corruption-free and inclusive societies for sustainable development, with a focus on a people-centered approach that provides access to justice for all and builds effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels” (A/RES/70/174, Annex).

The prominence given to combatting corruption in the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development was an important reaffirmation of the international community’s commitment to act against this scourge at the global level. Goal 16 includes various targets directly linked to anti-corruption efforts as it commits States to “*promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels*” (A/RES/70/1), including through combatting illicit financial flows of proceeds of corruption and money laundering, strengthening the recovery and return of stolen assets, substantially reducing

bribery and corruption, and developing effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels.

Thanks to its global reach and comprehensive nature, the UN Convention Against Corruption provides a holistic framework to address many of the targets under Goal 16, which will be reviewed in depth at the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in 2019.

The targets under Goal 16 are in line with the commitments and obligations of States, which they undertook when ratifying or acceding to the Convention, including reducing illicit financial flows of proceeds of corruption and money laundering; strengthening the recovery and return of stolen assets; reducing corruption and bribery in all their forms; developing effective, accountable and transparent institutions; and adopting preventive measures. This also includes measures to promote fair and effective justice systems, to strengthen relevant national institutions, international cooperation and capacity building.

Thus, the General Assembly High-level Debate presents a significant opportunity for Member States and other stakeholders to discuss progress and emerging trends, as well as strategies for effective implementation of UNCAC.

Format and Outcome:

This one-day High-Level Debate will consist of an opening session and a high-level segment in the morning, followed by two interactive multi-stakeholder panel discussions, and a closing segment by the President of the General Assembly. A President's Summary will be made available to all Member States and will be also transmitted to the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

The opening will feature remarks by the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Executive Director of UN Office on Drugs and Crime and other invited speakers. In a high-level segment, ministerial and other high-level participants will address their countries' achievements and efforts to accelerate the effective implementation of UNCAC.

The interactive multi-stakeholder panel discussions will include Member States representatives, as well as experts from international organizations, civil society, academia, think tanks and the private sector. Member States are encouraged to be represented at the highest level. Participants in the panel discussions are encouraged to engage interactively, while *Papersmart* services will be available to upload written statements.

The first panel will focus on *"15 years of UNCAC implementation: Trends, achievements and challenges"*, while the second panel will address *"Achieving peaceful and inclusive societies through preventing and combating corruption."*