



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

15 August 2018

Excellency,

I am pleased to enclose herewith the summary of the High-Level Debate of the General Assembly to mark the 15th Anniversary of the Adoption of UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC). Pursuant to resolution A/RES/72/196, the summary of the discussion has been transmitted to the Conference of the State Parties to the Convention as well.

The summary contains main conclusions from the key messages expressed during the high-level opening segment along with the views shared by the panelists and Member States during the interactive panel discussions. It is my hope that these conclusions will motivate further action among all Member States, the UN system and other stakeholders to fight corruption in all its forms at global, regional and national levels.

I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to all delegations and stakeholders who participated in the event and supported it in various ways.

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

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Lajčák', written over a light blue circular stamp.

Miroslav Lajčák

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

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

New York, 23 May 2018

President's Summary

Introduction

The President of the 72nd session of the General Assembly convened a High-Level Debate of the United Nations General Assembly to mark the 15th Anniversary of the Adoption of the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) on Wednesday, 23 May 2018. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/196, the debate was organized in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and with the involvement of relevant stakeholders to highlight emerging trends and promote the effective implementation of the UNCAC. The President of the General Assembly was also invited to prepare a summary of the discussion for transmission to the Conference of the State Parties to the Convention and to all Member States.

Key Messages

The one-day High-level Debate consisted of an opening segment, a high-level segment with interventions from Member States and Observers, as well as two interactive multi-stakeholder panel discussions, the first on “Fifteen years of UNCAC implementation: Trends, achievements and challenges”, and the second on “Achieving peaceful and inclusive societies through preventing and combating corruption”. Interventions from the floor followed both interactive panels with a closing segment concluding the event. The following key messages were shared by participants throughout the High-level Debate:

Opening segment

Speakers highlighted that the fight against corruption constitutes a vital component of the international community’s collective efforts in tackling transnational crime, preventing violent conflict, building peace and security, protecting human rights and charting a path to sustainable development. They recognized increasing levels of corruption as a key driver of organized crime including human trafficking and migrant smuggling, wildlife crime, illicit financial flows, international terrorism and violent extremism.

Speakers stressed that the UNCAC – with its near-global adherence of 184 Parties – has been recognized for 15 years as the only global international framework for cooperation to prevent and fight corruption effectively. They noted that the far-reaching approach of the Convention – stretching from prevention, criminalization and law enforcement to international cooperation, asset recovery, technical assistance and information exchange – represent solid progress on which Governments, the private sector, civil society and the UN system, can and must build.

Speakers further recalled that the work that derives from the UNCAC and its effective implementation is directly linked to the achievement of the highest goals set by the international community in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda). They emphasized that tackling corruption, including bribery, and money laundering, recovering stolen assets and developing effective, inclusive and transparent institutions, are specific targets under Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16) and forms the infrastructure for the achievement of the entire 2030 Agenda.

Speakers highlighted that the UNCAC's Mechanism for the Review of Implementation has served as a powerful incentive for national anti-corruption reforms while noting that the full implementation of the Convention is needed to put an end to the threat that corruption poses to development.

High-level segment with interventions from Member States

Member States noted that corruption is a crime with complex social, political and economic transnational facets and with detrimental effects on democracy, justice, the rule of law and sustainable development. They stressed that the far-reaching approach, and the legally binding nature the Convention coupled with an effective Mechanism for the Review of Implementation - made UNCAC a unique, universal tool for developing a comprehensive response to fight corruption in all its forms.

Member States emphasized that the effective implementation of the UNCAC can support achieving targets across the whole of the 2030 Agenda including, in particular SDG 16, which recognizes the need to reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms (target 16.5) and strengthen the recovery of stolen assets (target 16.4) to achieve just, peaceful and inclusive societies. SDG 16 further recognizes that effective, accountable and transparent institutions are essential to fight corruption (target 16.6).

Member States affirmed the importance of pursuing a comprehensive approach to combatting corruption with the participation of all key stakeholders, including civil society, academia and the private sector. They shared good practices of anti-corruption efforts ranging from public administration reforms and strengthening judicial integrity to countering corruption in the private sector. Speakers noted the importance of preventing corruption (as recognized in Chapter II of the UNCAC) as well as raising awareness on the need to fight corruption through citizens' participation and public information campaigns.

Member States called for greater international cooperation and the development of coherent national policies to eradicate the corrosive effects of corruption on society. They noted the importance of developing cumulative knowledge on asset recovery – in which the UNCAC has chartered a new course in international law – by facilitating the exchange of good practices and identifying capacity-building needs and highlighted the role of the UNODC/World Bank Stolen Asset Recovery (StAR) Initiative in this area.

Member States further commended UNODC's central role in providing technical assistance to prevent, detect, investigate and sanction corruption, in promoting international cooperation against

corruption and in facilitating the recovery of proceeds of corruption, in line with the provisions of the UNCAC. They also commended UNODC for providing advisory services to Member States to build the capacity of key national institutions to combat corruption.

Panel I: Interactive multi-stakeholder panel discussion on “Fifteen years of UNCAC implementation: Trends, achievements and challenges”

During the first multi-stakeholder panel discussion, participants discussed progress that has been achieved during the past 15 years to implement the UNCAC as well as current trends and challenges. They noted that the provisions of the Convention remain as critical today as they were 15 years ago, by sharing best practices and examples of how corruption has acted as a spoiler to sustainable development in various regions.

Participants reaffirmed the need for thorough and full implementation of the Convention, highlighting that the UNCAC’s far-reaching approach - as well as the mandatory character of many of its provisions - make the Convention a unique tool for developing a comprehensive global response to countering corruption.

Participants further underscored that a comprehensive approach is required to prevent and combat corruption, highlighting the need for closer coordination and cooperation among Member States and other relevant entities in this regard. Participants noted the need for an exchange of best practices and the identification of capacity-building needs for the prevention and adjudication of offences of corruption and the timely return of stolen assets. They commended the UNODC’s central role in assisting Member States in these efforts.

Panel II: Interactive multi-stakeholder panel discussion on “Achieving peaceful and inclusive societies through preventing and combating corruption”

During the second multi-stakeholder panel discussion, participants further underscored their deep concern about the impact of corruption on the political, social and economic stability and development of societies. They shared examples of best practices and challenges posed by corruption in promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, highlighting the important role of the private sector.

Participants underlined that the UNCAC serves as the only comprehensive global legally binding instrument in the fight against corruption while calling for intensified collaboration by stakeholders ranging from international organizations to the public and private sectors, civil society and academia. They underscored that, in order to achieve a peaceful and sustainable world for all – one where democracy, justice, respect for human rights and the rule of law prevails – Member States and other stakeholders must be proactive in their approach to continuously strengthen tools to fight corruption. Participants called for a strengthened partnership with the UNODC to promote international cooperation and information exchange in these efforts.

Participants called for all relevant stakeholders to look for mutually-reinforcing opportunities to leverage global and national efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda, including the targets under SDG 16. This includes strengthening law and judicial cooperation, facilitating the exchange of

good practices, promoting training and technical assistance and providing necessary capacity building for national authorities. Speakers further underlined the need for intensified cooperation relating to the prevention and adjudication of offences of corruption and the timely return of stolen assets and called upon Member States to safeguard integrity and promote a culture of transparency and accountability in their rejection of corruption.

Conclusion

The High-level Debate offered an account of informed and constructive contributions from panelists and Member States on the concept of corruption and progress to prevent and fight it dramatic evolution since the adoption of the UNCAC. The event also provided a unique opportunity to take stock of persisting challenges to tackle corruption in all its forms at global, regional and national levels. The event allowed for the consideration of a wide range of stakeholders, including Member States, international organizations, the private sector and civil society - underlining the importance of a comprehensive, multi-dimensional and collaborative approach to finding practical and sustainable solutions to counter corruption throughout the world.