

UN Efforts for Anti-Corruption
Perspectives and Examples
Kelly O'Donnell 12/2021

"Every year, trillions of dollars--equivalent to more than five percent of global GDP--are paid in bribes or stolen through corruption." UN Secretary-General António Guterres, [The Costs of Corruption](#), message for Anti-Corruption Day 2018

"Corruption is criminal, immoral and the ultimate betrayal of public trust.We must hold leaders to account....A vibrant civic space and open access to information are essential. And we must protect the rights and recognize the courage of whistle-blowers who expose wrongdoing....As an age-old plague takes on new forms, let us combat it with new heights of resolve." UN Secretary-General António Guterres, [Statement on corruption in the context of COVID-19](#) (15 October 2020)
[Short video HERE](#)

UN International Anti-Corruption Day

"Corruption is a complex social, political and economic phenomenon that affects all countries. Corruption undermines democratic institutions, slows economic development and contributes to governmental instability

Corruption attacks the foundation of democratic institutions by distorting electoral processes, perverting the rule of law and creating bureaucratic quagmires whose only reason for existing is the soliciting of bribes. Economic development is stunted because 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.

On 31 October 2003, the General Assembly adopted the United Nations Convention against Corruption and requested that the Secretary-General designate the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) as secretariat for the Convention's Conference of States Parties ([resolution 58/4](#)). The Assembly also designated 9 December as International Anti-Corruption Day, to raise awareness of corruption and of the role of the Convention in combating and preventing it. The Convention entered into force in December 2005.

Governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, the media and citizens around the world are joining forces to fight this crime. The [United Nations Development Programme](#) (UNDP) and the [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime](#) (UNODC) are at the forefront of these efforts." (quote from [Background](#))

Sustainable Development Goals

--"Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels."

[Sustainable Development Goal 16](#)

--"Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms ."

[Sustainable Development Goal 16.5](#)

--"Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels ."

[Sustainable Development Goal 16.6](#)

UN Charter, Preamble (excerpts)

WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS DETERMINED to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

AND FOR THESE ENDS to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, and to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples,

HAVE RESOLVED TO COMBINE OUR EFFORTS TO ACCOMPLISH THESE AIMS....

UN Core Competencies

“The [UN Core Competency Framework](#) (2010) outlined below, describes the skill s, attitudes, and behaviors that all UN staff are expected to have and develop. The Framework includes 17 competencies and is organized into three categories: Core Values, Core Competencies, and Core Managerial Competencies. Integrity is the first of the three Core Values and accountability is one of the eight Core Competencies. Here is a summary. --UN Core Values: integrity, professionalism, and respect for diversity. --UN Core Competencies: communication, team work, planning and organization, accountability, creativity, client orientation, commitment to continuous learning, and technological awareness. --UN Managerial Competencies: leadership, vision, empowering others, building trust, managing performance and judgment, and decision-making.”

“Integrity—Positive Indicators. Upholds the principles of the United Nations Charter. Demonstrates the values of the United Nations, including impartiality, fairness, honesty and truthfulness, in daily activities and behaviours. Acts without consideration of personal gain. Resists undue political pressure in decision making. Does not abuse power or authority. Stands by decisions that are in the Organization’s interest even if they are unpopular. Takes prompt action in cases of unprofessional or unethical behaviour.” (p. 8)

See/quote: [Integrity and Accountability for United Nations Staff: Part One—Navigating the Terrain \(March 2017\)](#) and [Part Two—Staying the Course \(April 2017\)](#). Kelly O’Donnell, UN Special ([UN Today](#))

UN Convention Against Corruption (2003)

“The United Nations Convention against Corruption is the only legally binding universal anti-corruption instrument. The Convention’s far-reaching approach and the mandatory character of many of its provisions make it a unique tool for developing a comprehensive response to a global problem. The Convention covers five main areas: preventive measures, criminalization and law enforcement, international cooperation, asset recovery, and technical assistance and information exchange. The Convention covers many different forms of corruption, such as bribery, trading in influence, abuse of functions, and various acts of corruption in the private sector. A highlight of the Convention is the inclusion of a specific chapter on asset recovery, aimed at returning assets to their rightful owners, including countries from which they had been taken illicitly. The vast majority of United Nations Member States are parties to the Convention.” (Quote from website)

UN Office on Drugs and Crime

UNODC Strategy 2021-2025 (see Strategy Summary too). An example of one of their many resources and initiatives is GRACE—Global Resource for Anti-Corruption Education and Youth Empowerment.

Ninth Session of the Conference of State Parties to the Convention Against Corruption

"The Conference of the States Parties (COSP) is the main policymaking body of the United Nations Convention against Corruption. It supports States parties and signatories in their implementation of the Convention, and gives policy guidance to UNODC to develop and implement anti-corruption activities.

The Conference was established, as per article 63 of the Convention:

To improve the capacity of States to implement the Convention;

To enhance cooperation among States in achieving the objectives of the Convention; and

To promote and review the implementation of the Convention.

The Conference meets every two years and adopts resolutions and decisions in furtherance of its mandate."

United Nations General Assembly Special Session Against Corruption (2-4 June 2021)

"Challenges and measures to prevent and combat corruption and strengthen international cooperation" (10:00-13:00 and 15:18:00 EST, everyday; livestreamed and archived on UN Web TV). Also: watch the 80 minute High-Level Supporting Event with Civil Society and UN presenters, 3 June 13:30-15:00: Addressing Corruption in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Livestreamed on UN Web TV and video archived HERE. Also note the Political Declaration was unanimously adopted on day one (18 pages; note "integrity" is included 19 times): "Our common commitment to effectively addressing challenges and implementing measures to prevent and combat corruption and strengthen international cooperation."

"The special session will provide an opportunity to galvanize the political will of governments and the international community as a whole in advancing the fight against corruption. Governments will be able to take stock of global efforts and commitments and identify solutions to common challenges in preventing and combating corruption. The special session will also contribute to driving forward the efforts of countries to fully and effectively implement the Convention, including by, *inter alia*, sharing best practices and lessons learned." (excerpt from website)

"Corruption threatens the stability and security of societies, undermines public trust and institutions, and jeopardizes sustainable development. It distorts markets, stifles economic growth and diverts funds from public services. While corruption is a global phenomenon, evidence shows that it has a disproportionate impact on certain demographics, in particular poorer communities and the most vulnerable persons..." (excerpt from website)

United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000)

"The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, adopted by General Assembly resolution 55/25 of 15 November 2000, is the main international instrument in the fight against transnational organized crime...The Convention is further supplemented by three Protocols, which target specific areas and manifestations of organized crime: the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children; the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air; and the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition.

[United Nations Development Programme—Anti-Corruption Portal](#). “The Global Portal on Anti-Corruption for Development is a one-stop-shop for information and knowledge specialized on anti-corruption for sustainable development. It aims to support the work of development and governance practitioners, anti-corruption bodies, researchers, civil society organisations, and the donor community by facilitating access to information, cutting-edge knowledge, and practical tools on anti-corruption at a global, regional, and national level.”

Note also—etc.!

[UN Global Compact](#). “At the UN Global Compact, we aim to mobilize a global movement of sustainable companies and stakeholders to...do business responsibly by aligning their strategies and operations with [Ten Principles](#) on human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption; and take strategic actions to advance [broader societal goals](#), such as the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#), with an emphasis on collaboration and innovation.”

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development—[Anti-Corruption and Integrity](#), resources, events, initiatives, etc. Example: [Annual Anti-Corruption and Integrity Forum \(Paris\)](#)

[G20 Interfaith Forum, Working Group on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions](#) (corruption is a topic)

[Interpol \(International Criminal Police Organization\)](#)

[United Nations Convention Against Corruption, Civil Society Coalition](#). “The UNCAC Coalition is a global network of over 350 civil society organisations (CSOs) in over 100 countries, committed to promoting the ratification, implementation and monitoring of the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC). Established in August 2006, it mobilises civil society action for UNCAC at international, regional and national levels. The Coalition’s office is registered and based in Vienna, Austria.” (quote from website)

See the extensive list of the Coalition member organizations [HERE](#).

[Corruption Perceptions Index 2020](#) (2021). Transparency International. (Arabic, English, French, Russian, Spanish). Highlights [HERE](#). “The index, which ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption according to experts and businesspeople, uses a scale of zero to 100, where zero is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean. Like previous years, more than two-thirds of countries score below 50 on this year’s CPI, with an average score of just 43. The data shows that despite some progress, most countries still fail to tackle corruption effectively. The top countries on the CPI are Denmark and New Zealand, with scores of 88, followed by Finland, Singapore, Sweden and Switzerland, with scores of 85 each. The bottom countries are South Sudan and Somalia, with scores of 12 each, followed by Syria (14), Yemen (15) and Venezuela (15).”

[International Anti-Corruption Conference](#)—Transparency International is secretariat, every two years.

[Global Integrity Day 9 June](#). “Global Integrity Day is a **strategic day** to promote a) cultivating lifestyles of integrity from the individual through the international levels; b) joining together to address the causes and consequences of corruption in its many forms; and c) working towards just and equitable societies marked with wellbeing for all people and for the planet. It is also a **solemn day** to consider our ways: if we are lying and/or stealing in any way big or small, then we need to stop it. If we need to right a wrong we have done, then do so. If we need to prudently confront wrongdoing, preferably in solidarity with colleagues for mutual support and greater impact, then do so. And it is a **companion day** to complement [UN International Anti-Corruption Day](#), 9 December (and vice versa). Both Days are rallying points, six months apart, for organizing events, sharing initiatives, and involving the public.”

Faith-Based Examples--[Global Integrity Network](#), [Faith and Public Integrity Network](#) etc.