

**Transparency International Statement
Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties
to the United Nations Convention against Corruption
Plenary session
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Mr President, distinguished delegates,

My name is Miklos Marschall. I am the Deputy Managing Director of the Transparency International Secretariat.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today on behalf of Transparency International.

I want to emphasise two important points in this brief intervention: the need for a safe space for civil society to fight corruption and the need for the UNCAC Conference of States Parties to recognise grand corruption as a specific crime that requires specific laws and strengthened measures.

Civil society space

Article 13 of the United Nations Convention against Corruption contains a clear and concise description of how civil society should be involved in the fight against corruption.

It recognises the good civil society brings to the table and it encourages civil society participation.

We welcome the fact that for the first time this Conference of States Parties has put relations with NGOs on the agenda. Too often we have stood outside the room. A discussion of this issue can only be a step in the right direction. It was proposed and supported by a large group of countries and we thank them for this. It is time to move this issue forward.

In too many places around the world – in countries that are parties to the UNCAC -- the space for civil society is shrinking which makes it hard and sometimes impossible for us to do the things that UNCAC recognises are vital in the fight against corruption.

Article 13 encourages governments to support civil society in many ways, We can holding public meetings to educate people about fighting corruption, we can publicise information about how government works.

We can use our expertise to help craft and implement laws in all the areas covered by UNCAC from protection of whistleblowers to how to help citizens to get access to information.

We can play an important role providing an independent check on the UNCAC review process.

But **most importantly, we speak out** against corruption

All too often if we do any of these things, we end up in jail and our organisations are closed down. This occurs in some of the 177 countries that are parties to UNCAC.

We have submitted a paper to the CoSP that details the role that civil society can and should play and how it needs protection to play its part.

UNCAC is nothing if its signatories ignore their commitments. Civil society can be a potent force in helping to ensure those commitments are honoured.

We need to be on the front line of the review mechanism: too often we are relegated to the sidelines.

Most importantly, the message I want to give you today is that it should be safe anywhere and everywhere across the globe for people to challenge and expose the corrupt. Governments must respect and protect their citizens and let them speak out free from reprisals.

Grand Corruption

The second most important point I want to make today is about the changing nature of corruption and how this must be reflected in the laws that are established to fight it.

We define Grand Corruption as the abuse of high-level power that benefits the few at the expense of the many and causes widespread harm to individuals and society. It often goes unpunished.

It has different forms according to country and context. In extreme systems the whole of government may turn into a criminal organisation with the sole purpose of personal enrichment. In these cases, high level officials may use control over legislative and regulatory powers to legalise their activities and to weaken oversight and enforcement functions.

We believe that fighting this type of corruption requires strengthening the existing legal framework and dedicated resources in recognition of the complexity and global nature of the problem.

We strongly believe that Grand Corruption is an obstacle to sustainable development and hurts the most vulnerable. We have presented to you this week [a series of recommendations](#) that we believe will strengthen the fight against the grand corruption. These include:

- enhance enforcement against bribery of foreign public officials,
- introduce public registries of who really owns companies ([beneficial owners](#)) so the corrupt can't hide their illicit assets
- exercise extraterritorial jurisdiction in instances of large scale embezzlement of state assets or other grand corruption offences and
- eliminate abuse of immunities

With our proposals on grand corruption we hope to do two things: inform the policy debate and provide a basis for future consideration for a resolution that recognises grand corruption as a serious form of corruption requiring priority action.

This would show a strong will to stop corruption no matter how powerful, how rich or how well-connected the perpetrators are.

Civil society welcomes a strong and robust debate. We all want the same thing: a world free of corruption. Only by working together can we get there.