

PRESS RELEASE

**Without rigorous country progress reports, UN Corruption Convention will be a "dead letter"**

**Berlin/Bali, 25 January 2008**

As nearly 140 UN Member States head to Bali to kick off a conference on 28 January about the future of the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) -the global road-map for eradicating corruption- Transparency International (TI) is advocating to ensure that governments keep their commitments and implement the convention.

TI Chair Huguette Labelle cautions that "without the development of a concrete plan to assess country progress in implementing the treaty, the convention will be nothing more than a dead letter, robbing the most vulnerable of their best chance at a better life".

Transparency International will be represented by its top leadership as well as over 30 of the organisation's national chapters and will be operating within a coalition of civil society groups including Oxfam and the Institute for Security Studies. TI and the coalition will be on hand to put pressure on governments to make concrete, action-oriented decisions, not just on a review mechanism, but on the return of assets stolen by corrupt leaders and stored abroad. Additional issues the group will focus on include technical assistance for lower-income countries to implement the convention and stronger measures to protect and engage with civil society activists and whistleblowers.

Ahead of the meeting of convention signatories, the so-called Conference of States Parties (CoSP), Transparency International released a [position paper](#) with specific technical recommendations for a long-range, phased review of country progress. The paper notes, that in a globalised world, the UNCAC offers the only global framework for cooperation on anti-corruption measures, setting out universally agreed standards for government performance.

Efforts at assessing country progress to date, through self-reporting, have been lacklustre, with barely half of signatory countries participating. "Our work has shown us that only through a transparent programme of mutual evaluation will countries take such an instrument seriously, and get serious about implementing it," said Gillian Dell of Transparency International. "That's why we're pushing for dates and concrete plans about how the states parties to the convention want to assess the success of their implementation. This meeting here in Indonesia is the moment".

Commenting on the concerns of some countries, Dell continued, "The fact is, that this is an opportunity for governments to demonstrate their accountability and their commitment to fighting corruption".

Lack of government commitment still plagues the UNCAC, for example the failure of G8 member states Germany, Italy and Japan to ratify the convention four years after signing it and despite numerous G8 summit pledges to do so. The absence of ratifications from global financial centres Singapore, Switzerland and Liechtenstein also casts doubt on their commitment to integrity in the financial market. A number of signatory countries have not even made the effort to send a representative to the Bali conference.

Beyond ratification, TI also urges the private sector, whose activities are subject to the provisions of the convention and whose interests are ultimately served by it, to actively

support the UNCAC and a strong review mechanism. Civil society involvement remains crucial to the success of the convention, in its adoption, implementation and in its review. Their participation is enshrined in the convention, but the willingness of the states parties to guarantee this is uneven, with some governments exhibiting direct hostility to citizens exercising their right to voice critical opinions.

From 28 January to 1 February, the Conference of States Parties will also feature special sessions with well-known film and music artists, civil society, private sector representatives and journalists, in addition to thematic components on issues of prevention and criminalisation of corruption offences and the enforcement of new regulation under the convention.

The risk remains high, though, that countries will remain locked in a defensive, suspicious mode, which could undermine the best chance for a global sea-change in the fight against what is, after all, a cross-border phenomenon. TI's position paper concludes that without monitoring, there is a high risk the convention will become another example of unfulfilled high expectations.

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*Transparency International is the civil society organisation leading the fight against corruption.*

**Note to editors:**

The UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) provides a comprehensive global framework for combating corruption. Adopted in 2003, it represents an international consensus on the need for collective action. The convention establishes government obligations and standards for preventing and punishing corruption, international cooperation, technical assistance and asset recovery. UNCAC has been signed by 140 countries and ratified by more than 107 governments.

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