

**Statement to the 8th Conference of States Parties General Plenary
by Transparency International Chair Delia Ferreira Rubio
Abu Dhabi, 17-12-19**

Mr President, distinguished delegates,

My name is Delia Ferreira Rubio and I am the Chair of Transparency International.

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

At the last UNCAC Conference of States Parties, I emphasised two important points:

1. the need for a safe space for civil society to fight corruption and
2. the need for this Conference to recognise grand corruption as a specific crime that requires specific laws and procedures.

#DefendCivicSpace

With respect to civil society space – and when we speak of civil society, we include NGOs, journalists and academics –, we have seen no progress since 2017. On the contrary, the situation is much worse.

The 2019 CIVICUS report shows over 6 billion people living in countries with obstructed, repressed or closed spaces. In many countries, populations face state clampdown, violence and subversion.

The Open Government Partnership's Report found that nearly half of OGP countries had problems in each of the basic freedoms of assembly, association, and expression, as well as the fundamental rights that make transparency, participation, and accountability work.

To limit the space for civil society is the easy reaction vis-à-vis public unrest and loss of legitimacy by governments. If the growing wave of protests in recent months has something in common, it is that citizens have had enough of their voices not being heard, and of being shut out of decision-making processes that affect their lives. To restore trust and confidence, you have to work with your citizens. It is time to guarantee and protect civic space.

Civil Society's participation in the fight against corruption shall not be considered just as a decorative element in meetings. The role of civil society is crucial. In this sense, we strongly ask the UNODC to guarantee that when deciding on the country that will host the CoSP, the country commits not use visas as a way to obstruct the participation of civil society representatives and governmental delegations.

#GrandCorruption

In relation to grand corruption, we recognize the work carried out by UNODC to convene expert discussions and make expert recommendations on the subject of “corruption involving vast quantities of assets”. But recommendations are not enough, it is crucial that States parties enforce the legal and institutional mechanisms to put an end to impunity.

We ask for the topics of Grand Corruption, Beneficial Ownership Transparency, and Asset Recovery to be included on the agenda of the UN General Assembly Special Session against Corruption in April 2021.

Grand corruption is not only a problem in itself. Grand corruption is a major obstacle to the achievement of SDGs. The resources invested in SDGs without the appropriate anti-corruption framework will end in private pockets. The money that is lost because of corruption is the money lacking in fields like education, health, climate, environmental protection, poverty reduction, infrastructure etc.

Either we put an end to corruption, or the SDGs will remain as a pending agenda for ever.

To effectively fight against grand corruption, it is crucial to modify those framework conditions and incentives that facilitate the operation of these criminal networks.

The corrupt networks can easily gain access to the global financial and business sectors, hiding the proceeds of their corrupt deals across borders at the click of a mouse. Secrecy around ownership and control of legal entities makes it easy for perpetrators to hide their connection to the corrupt or criminal source of funds, and hard for law enforcement to follow the money trail.

Effective supervision and enforcement of anti-money laundering measures in these sectors is essential, so that perpetrators and enablers of corruption find it increasingly difficult to hide and launder the proceeds of corruption.

Decision-making processes need to be transparent, accountable, and participatory, to make sure policies are in the public interest, and systems are robust enough to prevent misuse of power and influence.

#Sextortion

On this occasion, we would like to add one more ask to States Parties on a subject of the highest priority to the international anti-corruption community, closely related to SDG 5.

This is Sextortion as one of the worst corruption offenses.

When sex is the currency of the bribe, evidence points towards a gender bias that particularly affects women; some women are coerced to provide sexual favours in order to receive public services, including health care and education.

To advance equal rights for women and girls, State parties should:

- Develop legislation to confront and end sextortion and ensure justice systems have the right tools to address sextortion cases.
- Collect, analyse and disseminate gender data on corruption.
- Support women's participation in public and political life.
- Include women in anti-corruption decision-making.
- Empower women to report abuse and ensure that the mechanisms to do so are gender-sensitive.

Thank you for your attention. But mainly thank you for those of you who are really fighting corruption and not just delivering nice speeches.