



**Opening remarks by Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze
United Nations Under-Secretary-General
Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva
United Nations Conference on
anti-corruption measures, good governance and human rights**

**Sofitel Victoria Hotel, Warsaw, Poland
Opening Session: Wednesday, 8 November 2006, at 09:00**

**Delivered on the Director-General's behalf by Mr. David A. Chikvaidze
Chief of the Office of the Director-General**

**Prime Minister
Madam Minister
Ambassador Rapacki
Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen:**

It is a distinct honour and a particular pleasure to be with you today and to present the opening address of the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze. The Director-General was very much looking forward to being here, but a really bad case of the flu, not diplomatic, has prevented him from travelling.

Allow me first to thank the Government of Poland for co-organizing, together with the Office of the United

Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Development Programme, this important conference, with financial support from the Government of Australia.

Over the past 16 years, Poland has made considerable strides in development and in the protection and promotion of human rights. This event testifies not only to Poland's firm commitment to advancing human rights and fighting corruption within its own borders. It also demonstrates Poland's determination to share the valuable experience obtained through its own transformation and to support others, in particular through the United Nations, where the country serves as a member on the newly established Human Rights Council.

In his acceptance speech to the General Assembly, the Secretary-General-elect, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, stressed that the world will not be fully served unless peace, development and human rights, the three pillars of the United Nations, are advanced together with equal vigour. These two days of deliberation are a manifestation of Poland's commitment and ability to

contribute to forging global partnerships in solidarity that will move forward our work in these three areas. I hope that Poland's example may inspire other countries to follow the same path.

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen:

At the 2005 World Summit, global leaders reaffirmed that good governance is essential for sustainable development. In this context, they resolved to make the fight against corruption a priority at all levels. The World Bank estimates that every year, over 1 trillion US dollars is paid in bribes worldwide. This corruption drains resources from much-needed investment in health, education, infrastructure and other basic services, weakens democratic institutions, perverts the rule of law, discourages investment and aid, undercuts public confidence, feeds inequality and disenfranchises large segments of the population. Corruption is a severe obstacle to development. Only two days ago, on Monday, 6 November, Transparency International launched the 2006 Corruption Perceptions Index, which provides statistics that point to a strong correlation

between corrupt practices and poverty. Rampant corruption stunts economic growth and effectively traps millions in poverty. Defeating corruption is thus critical to achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

Corruption also poses a severe security challenge. Pervasive corruption nurtures organized crime, including trafficking in human beings and drugs, and it is associated with money-laundering and illicit international money transfers, which can be used to finance terrorist groups.

Corruption is a global problem that can be addressed effectively only through collective action. The United Nations Convention Against Corruption, which entered into force in December of last year, is a central tool at the global level. I take this opportunity to reiterate the call made by leaders at the World Summit to States that have not yet done so to consider signing, ratifying and implementing the Convention.

Corruption affects both the public and private sectors. Therefore, Governments, the private sector, civil society – and ordinary citizens – must join forces to confront it.

The importance of an inclusive, holistic approach in the struggle against corruption is reflected at this conference where all these stakeholders are represented.

In this respect, the United Nations Global Compact – an initiative launched in 1999 that brings together the private sector with United Nations entities, labour and civil society organizations – is an important avenue for combating corruption, at national and international levels. One of the ten principles of the Compact, derived from the Convention Against Corruption, stipulates that businesses should work against all forms of corruption, including extortion and bribery. The inclusion of this principle in the Compact highlights the need for action by all sectors in tackling corruption.

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Corruption has a negative impact on human rights in a multitude of ways. At the same time, principles and institutions of human rights promotion, such as transparency and accountability, are indispensable elements in successful anti-corruption strategies.

Improvement of the overall human rights situation in any country is likely to have a positive effect on the fight against corruption, as part of a virtuous cycle. On the other hand, it is also necessary that anti-corruption policies and measures do not contravene principles of human rights. Violation of human rights in the battle against corruption compromises, and eventually renders less effective, the anti-corruption effort itself.

The United Nations strives to ensure that people across the world may live in dignity, free from hunger, the fear of violence, oppression and injustice. Combating corruption while advancing human rights are key to realizing these aims. I am confident that this conference will make a significant contribution to enhancing anti-corruption efforts in full respect of, and drawing on, human rights principles. It is my hope that it will also act as a catalyst for strengthening and promoting anti-corruption activities across the world.

I am very pleased to join Director-General Ordzhonikidze in wishing you much success in your discussions over the coming two days. Thank you very much.