

**CONFERENCE OF THE STATES PARTIES
TO THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION
AGAINST CORRUPTION**

**FIFTH SESSION, 25 TO 29 NOVEMBER 2013
PANAMA CITY, PANAMA**

**THE HUMAN RIGHTS CASE
AGAINST CORRUPTION**



REMARKS BY

**THE OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me to address this Conference on behalf of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

I am here today to talk about the human rights case against corruption. Corruption kills. And it hits the poor first and hardest.

Nearly **870 million people** go to bed hungry every night. Childhood malnutrition is a cause of death for **more than 2.5 million children** every year. Money stolen through corruption every year could feed the hungry **80 times** over, realizing their right to food and, in some cases, their right to life. According to a UNDP study, corruption increases the costs of providing safe drinking water and sanitation worldwide by as much as 40 per cent, meaning an additional 12 billion US dollars per year.

Amidst this waste, several studies show a negative correlation between corruption and the enjoyment of human rights. Child mortality rates in countries with high levels of corruption are about one third higher than in countries with low corruption, infant mortality rates are almost twice as high, and student dropout rates are five times as high. Resources lost to corruption are resources that could have been spent on development assistance, the eradication of poverty, education, essential medicine, and healthcare, including the prevention of **hundreds of deaths** and injuries that occur during pregnancy and childbirth **every day**.

The negative impact of corruption on the enjoyment of human rights goes beyond violations of economic, social and cultural rights. Corruption in the administration of justice fuels impunity. Rapists, murderers, traffickers, and criminals of all types may go unpunished as long as they pay bribes. This exacerbates inequalities, weakens governance and institutions, erodes public trust, and undermines the rule of law — in particular the right to a fair trial, the right to due process, and the victim's right to effective redress.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

United Nations human rights mechanisms such as the treaty bodies, special procedures and the Universal Periodic Review are becoming increasingly active in the promotion of rights-based anticorruption efforts.

The Human Rights Council held its first panel discussion on anti-corruption and human rights in March of this year. The panel stressed that efforts to combat corruption and promote human rights must go hand in hand. Its report has been circulated as an official document to this Conference. In its resolution 23/9, on the negative impacts of corruption on the enjoyment of human rights, the Council directs the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to attend this conference. It also requests the Advisory Committee of the Human Rights Council to draft a report on corruption and human rights, including recommendations for the Council and its subsidiary bodies.

The Council's Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt on the enjoyment of human rights is finalizing his report on the impact of the non-repatriation of funds of illicit origin on

human rights. The report will be considered by the Human Rights Council in March 2014. These actions illustrate growing awareness of the intrinsic links between promoting and protecting human rights and anti-corruption efforts.

Corruption works against the core human rights principles of transparency, accountability, non-discrimination and meaningful participation. However, when implemented, these principles can lead the fight against corruption. A human rights approach to anti-corruption is epistemologically sound and strategically effective. It puts people at the centre of anti-corruption efforts and responds to the demand for a social, political and economic order that delivers on the promise of “freedom from fear and want”. A human rights-based approach identifies rights-holders and their entitlements and corresponding duty-bearers and their obligations. It strengthens the capacity of rights-holders to make claims and duty-bearers to meet obligations. It makes accountability fundamental.

Ladies and Gentlemen

We must work to capitalize on the links between efforts in the fields of anti-corruption and human rights by integrating human rights into the activities of UN agencies, and other relevant stakeholders working to fight corruption. This will require greater policy coherence, the identification of common goals, and the appropriate division of tasks and responsibilities. Since both anti-corruption and the promotion of human rights call for justice, fairness and the rule of law, this cooperation will yield mutual benefits. It is with these synergies in mind that OHCHR calls upon the anti-corruption and human rights communities to work more closely together.

We look forward to the outcome of this Conference and stress that it should recognize the negative impact of the corruption on the enjoyment of all human rights, the importance of a rights-based approach to anti-corruption efforts, and the need for policy coherence and enhanced coordination in the implementation of international human rights obligations and anti-corruption laws.

In this regard, I would like to conclude by inviting you all to join me to further explore these issues at a panel discussion on The Human Rights Case Against Corruption, on Thursday, 28 November 2013, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. in meeting room NEW SESTAS.

Thank you.