ATLANTA, USA

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PRIVATE SECTOR FORUM

THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION AGAINST CORRUPTION AT 20:

Uniting Leaders for Business Integrity

UNODC
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption

UN Convention Against Corruption 20

UNCAC AT 20:
UNITING THE WORLD
AGAINST CORRUPTION

UN Global Compact
United Nations
Global Compact

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The United Nations Convention against Corruption at 20: Uniting Leaders for Business Integrity

With support from the United States, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Global Compact (UN Global Compact) will co-organize a Private Sector Forum on the margins of the tenth session of the Conference of the States Parties (CoSP) to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) from 11 to 12 December 2023, in Atlanta, United States of America.

1. Background

Since the UN Convention against Corruption was adopted 20 years ago, much has changed for businesses and societies. More and more States have enacted laws on the liability of legal persons with incentives for corporate compliance and criminalized unethical business practices. Bribes that once used to be tax deductible now lead to hefty fines and even the dissolution of companies. The tightening legal framework brought about by the commitment of States to the full implementation of the Convention has created significant momentum for multisectoral cooperation. In 2004, the establishment of Principle Ten of the UN Global Compact began challenging companies to proactively develop strategies and policies that tackle corruption internally, externally and collectively.

Today, rising expectations from consumers, investors, governments and employees have increasingly placed business integrity at the forefront of the private sector's agenda. Environmental, social and governance (ESG) directives are adopted worldwide, raising the bar for companies to not only be more accountable, ethical, inclusive and transparent, but to also act as responsible corporate citizens, contributing to strengthening public institutions, laws and systems.

2. Rationale

Corruption persists despite virtually universal condemnation. It has a cross-cutting effect that impedes the achievement of all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Corruption weakens democracy and the rule of law, while fuelling insecurity and the neglect of human rights. For some business people, this might seem like a distant problem, but the reality is that sustainable and profitable environments are fundamental to the very viability of their enterprises. When those fundamental factors are in place, companies can spur economic innovation and development, generate jobs and income, diminish poverty and expand opportunities.

Corruption translates into profound risks for companies, from the distortion of markets and unfair competition, to increased costs, missed business opportunities, as well as legal and reputational risks. Due to the scale and complexity of the issue, neither governments nor the private sector can tackle corruption alone; in fact, major corruption cases frequently occur at the intersection between the two. As a result, a multisectoral approach is key to truly leveling the playing field by seizing the opportunities and associated benefits of a robust clean ecosystem that is fostered and implemented collectively by a committed group of like-minded stakeholders.

3. Objectives

At the Private Sector Forum, **participants will have the opportunity to:**

- Take stock of milestones achieved since the adoption of the UN Convention against Corruption and Principle Ten of the UN Global Compact, and examine their relevance today.
- Shape the global business integrity agenda based on discussions of common challenges, trends, innovative solutions and priorities in the field of governance and anti-corruption.
- Explore how to further leverage the collective action approach to drive impact across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and strengthen the ecosystem in which companies operate.
- Determine effective measures States can adopt to incentivize compliance, while ensuring misconduct is sanctioned, and how the private sector can contribute to this endeavour.
- Analyse how a company's commitment to integrity can be best demonstrated and, in turn, assessed by investors, customers and regulators, through corporate sustainability reporting and other communication mechanisms.

4. Relevance of the Private Sector Forum

Several resolutions of the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention have called on governments to strengthen measures for private sector compliance with applicable laws and regulations, and requested UNODC to provide capacity-building initiatives and new knowledge products, notably resolutions 9/1, 9/6, 6/5 and 5/6.

The political declaration adopted by the UN General Assembly at its special session against corruption in 2021 also recognized the importance of preventing corruption in the private sector. In December 2022, the General Assembly adopted resolution 77/235 calling upon the private sector to remain fully engaged in the fight against corruption and stressing the role of the UN Global Compact in this effort.

5. Launch and presentation of publications and tools

The following publications and tools will be launched at the Private Sector Forum:

- Resource Guide on State Measures for Strengthening Business Integrity (second edition)
- Updated e-learning tool for the Private Sector "Thefightagainstcorruption.org", renamed "Doing Business with Integrity"
- UN Global Compact SDG16 Corporate Toolkit for Transformational Governance

6. Organizational matters

The Private Sector Forum will be held on the margins of the tenth session of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, on 11 and 12 December 2023, in Atlanta, United States. Please register for in-person participation in the Private Sector Forum here. Please register for the online live broadcast here.

7. Who should attend the Private Sector Forum?

Participation in the Private Sector Forum will be of interest to business leaders such as CEOs, chief compliance and chief legal officers, as well as other personnel dealing with sustainability, business integrity issues and government relations. Representatives from the public sector, civil society, academia and international organizations engaging in this field are also welcome to attend.

AGENDA Day 1

Monday, 11 December 2023 — **Arrival and registration**

Opening Ceremony of the Private Sector Forum (13:00 – 13:30)

1. UNCAC at 20: Taking stock through brand new lenses. (13:30 – 14:30)

Part 1 **Sanctions and incentives: Creating a framework for business integrity**

Governments must foster environments where ethical business can thrive. This framework can be created in alignment with the UN Convention against Corruption, the Principle Ten of the UN Global Compact, the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention and other standards. Governments can use a combination of incentives to encourage and reward companies that adopt high standards of integrity, and sanctions to deter and punish those that engage in corrupt practices.

This session will explore the ideal mix of incentives and sanctions for promoting business integrity, as well as how the public and private sectors can join forces in this field, drawing insights from the new "Resource Guide on State Measures for Strengthening Business Integrity".

Coffee Break

2. UNCAC at 20: Taking stock through brand new lenses. (15:00 – 16:00)

Part 2 **The evolution of corporate anti-corruption: Expanding from compliance to integrity**

Anti-corruption programmes of ethics and compliance are key tools for companies to prevent corruption and promote a culture of integrity. This session will explore how corporate anti-corruption efforts evolved and expanded to address broader integrity challenges in recent years. Notably, this session will discuss the impact of corporate purpose and a culture of integrity in retaining talent; the evolution of the tone from the top to ethical leadership; the polycrisis and new geopolitical challenges to be considered for risk management; the use of technology to effectively implement the programmes, amongst others. Panelists will also discuss what makes a compliance programme effective and how to measure its impact.

3. UNCAC at 20: Taking stock through brand new lenses. (16:00 – 17:00)

Part 3 **Collective Action approach to drive impact across the 2030 Agenda**

As defined by the United Nations Global Compact Playbook, "Collective Action" is a collaborative and sustained process of cooperation between stakeholders. It increases the impact and credibility of individual action, brings vulnerable individual players into an alliance of like-minded organizations and levels the playing field between competitors. Companies, governments and civil society can engage in collective action to foster more ethical, transparent and less corrupt business environments by using multisectoral and cross-cutting approaches such as environment and human rights, creating synergies in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This session aims to discuss the benefits and the challenges in implementing collective action and it will showcase the efforts undertaken in this field globally.

4. UNCAC at 20: Taking stock through brand new lenses. (17:00 – 18:30)

Part 4 **Between crime and compliance: The ambiguous role of gatekeepers in the global financial system**

The laundering and hiding of proceeds of crime is a complex and evolving problem and a serious threat to both the integrity of the financial system and the rule of law. It enables criminals to conceal the origin and ownership of their illicit proceeds, and to enjoy the benefits of their illegal activities. Intermediaries such as lawyers, notaries, accountants or real estate agents are frequently involved in money-laundering schemes, either knowingly or unwittingly. They provide services that can help launderers to disguise the source and destination of their funds. Without these services, corrupt actors would have a much harder time concealing the illicit origin of their assets, which underlines the vital need for an effective response to the facilitation of money-laundering by intermediaries.

End of day 1

AGENDA Day 2

Tuesday, 12 December 2023

Welcome to the present day. (8:45 - 9:00)

A recap of the discussions of Day 1 of the Private Sector Forum will be facilitated, along with an introduction of the methodology and objectives of Day 2. While the first day consisted in tacking stock of progress made, this morning, participants will have the chance to discuss today's most pressing challenges and opportunities. On this basis, the afternoon session will focus on developing an agenda of specific priorities to be addressed in the field of governance and anti-corruption.

5. Importance of private sector anti-corruption compliance in improving supply chain integrity. (9:00 – 10:00)

SMEs play a vital role in global supply chains and are perceived as the engine of growth in many economies worldwide. However, they face significant challenges in ensuring their integrity with international standards as Corruption is regarded as one of the major obstacles, causing high costs that are difficult to sustain. This session will explore how companies can promote integrity among their stakeholders, partners, and customers, as well as the best practices of doing so. The discussion will address the potential risks and barriers that SMEs may encounter in their integrity efforts, and how they can overcome them with the support of relevant actors and initiatives, with a focus on the key role partnerships between SMEs and multinational companies could play to enhance integrity in global supply chains.

6. Investing in business integrity across the ESG agenda. (10:00 – 11:00)

Building upon guidance developed by Principles for Responsible Investment and the UN Global Compact, as well as the continuing rise in corporate sustainability reporting, this event will highlight avenues through which investment funds, including those which are State-run, can leverage their financial power to promote ethical corporate practices in line with the standards set forth by UNCAC and Principle Ten of the UN Global Compact.

Coffee break

7. Unstoppable Africa: business integrity in a US$ 3 trillion market. (11:30 – 12:30)

Africa is now positioned to be the most important driver of global business with a US$ 3 trillion market, a new frontier. Due to its burgeoning and youthful population, abundant natural resources, and a strategic geographical location that can facilitate global trade, Africa can play a major role in—and should be front and center of—renewed efforts for revitalizing the global economy. Like all regions of the world, real or perceived risks of corruption may inhibit investment. This session puts the private sector at the centre of the discussions and the solutions toward reducing the supply side of corruption and promoting business integrity, while investing in Africa.

Lunch

Tuesday, 12 December 2023

8. Expert panel on corruption and international investment. (14:00 – 15:00)

Corruption seriously impedes international investment. It negatively affects the attraction and retention of foreign investments, undermines fair competition, discourages investment and diminishes its quality. Given that the private sector is one of the main driving forces behind international investment, UNODC is convening an expert discussion to present its work in this area and discuss the main challenges and good practices identified. UNODC will also introduce two new publications entitled “Integrity in International Investment Projects – Good Practices, New Perspectives” and “Towards Building a Road of Integrity Perspectives of Business Integrity and Compliance” and present key observations from its ongoing research on corruption and investor-state disputes.

9. Lessons learned from a corruption scandal: rebuilding trust and reputation. (15:00 – 16:00)

Corruption scandals can have devastating effects on a company's reputation, performance and relationships. This session will focus on how companies can work to uphold their commitment to the fight against corruption after facing major incidents of corruption, and take steps to promote business integrity internally, externally and collectively. It will also cover how businesses can take measures to identify and address the cause of the incident to prevent future misconduct, while engaging with customers, partners and regulators to enhance transparency and accountability.

Coffee break

10. Uniting leaders for a global business integrity agenda. (16:30 – 18:00)

Business integrity is more than just complying with the law. It is about creating a culture of integrity, transparency and accountability in every aspect of the company’s strategies and operations. In this session, business leaders who have successfully championed innovative integrity practices will share their experiences. We will also discuss main challenges and opportunities for raising the bar on business integrity, together with emerging priorities in the current global context. This session will reflect on the outcomes of the different sessions of the Private Sector Forum and shape a business integrity agenda for the future.

Closing Ceremony

End of day 2

Partners

OECD
BETTER POLICIES FOR BETTER LIVES

WORLD BANK GROUP

Alliance for Integrity

ANTIQUITIES COALITION

BASEL INSTITUTE ON GOVERNANCE

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the global voice of the legal profession

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IFAC International Federation of Accountants®

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TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL
the global coalition against corruption

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Find out more about our work:
https://businessintegrity.unodc.org/
https://unglobalcompact.org/

