



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



Group of States against Corruption
Groupe d'États contre la corruption

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Building Transparent, Accountable & Inclusive Institutions

Side Event at the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly against Corruption 2021

Join us!

2 June, 2pm (EDT)

Register at bit.ly/desacoe

PROGRAMME

2 JUNE 2PM (EDT)

Moderator: Ms. Adriana Alberti, Chief, Programme Management and Capacity Development Unit, Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government, UN DESA

| | |
|--|---|
| 14:00 – 14:06 Opening remarks | Mr. LIU Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations |
| 14:07 – 14:13 Preventing corruption by reinforcing integrity in the public sector: GRECO’s role model | Mr. Marin Mrcela, President of the Group of States against Corruption of the Council of Europe (GRECO) |
| 14:13 – 14:19 11 Principles of Effective Governance for Sustainable Development | Ms. Lamia Moubayed Bissat, Director, Institut des Finances Basil Fuleihan, Ministry of Finance, Lebanon and Member of the UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) |
| 14:19 – 14:25 Innovative Practices on Developing Effective and Accountable Public Institutions: e-Mutation, 2020 UN Public Service Award Winner | Mr. Md. Mustafizur Rahman, Secretary of the Ministry of Land, Bangladesh |
| 14:25 – 14:31 The role of the Italian Anti-Corruption Authority (ANAC) during COVID-19 | Ms. Laura Valli, Senior Advisor, Board member of the Anti-Corruption Authority (ANAC), Italy |
| 14:31 – 14:37 The role of supreme audit institutions for sustainable development | Ms. Arantxa Guillán Montero, Senior Governance and Public Administration Officer, Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government, UN DESA |
| 14:37 – 14:43 Capacity development for strengthening accountability, integrity, transparency: UN DESA’s Curriculum on Governance for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) | Ms. Anni Haataja, Governance and Public Administration Officer, Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government, UN DESA |
| 14:43 – 14:49 Concluding remarks | Ms. Hanne Juncher, Executive Secretary of the Group of States against Corruption of the Council of Europe (GRECO) |

I Event Description

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) through its Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG), and the Group of States against Corruption on the Council of Europe (GRECO) will organize a side event on the theme of “Building Transparent, Accountable and Inclusive Institutions” at the Special Session of the General Assembly against Corruption 2021.

II Objectives

The side event aims to showcase the importance of building transparent, accountable and inclusive institutions to foster effective governance, prevent corruption and gain public trust. The event will feature interventions and discussion on the experience gained to date by the organizers in strengthening integrity in the public sector, including by reflecting on specific initiatives and good practices. In this connection, UN DESA will present its **Curriculum on Governance for the SDGs and the Toolkit on Transparency, Accountability and Ethics in Public Institutions** that aim to build the capacities of governments and public servants in these areas. Participants will also hear about the United Nations Public Service Award (UNPSA) from one of its winners. **GRECO will reflect on the lessons learned from its monitoring experience and the resulting recommendations to prevent corruption and promote integrity in all three branches of government.** Implementation of such measures acquires even greater importance in times of emergency. In addition, the pivotal role of oversight bodies, in particular, anticorruption agencies and supreme audit institutions in relation to the proper management of public affairs and public property will be addressed.



III Thematic Issues

Transparency, accountability and ethics in public institutions are crucial for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and key principles such as Leaving No One Behind. SDG 16 specifically calls for building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Corruption in public institutions directly diminishes people's trust in government. As the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has recently noted **"Corruption is the ultimate betrayal of public trust."**

Corruption undermines in many different ways governments' ability to provide effective, inclusive and accountable services, particularly to vulnerable groups. It further erodes people's trust in public institutions and their compliance with rules accordingly.

Corruption also results in loss of resources with negative impacts on peace, stability, security, the rule of law, gender equality, the environment and human rights. On the one hand, the devastating consequences of corruption bear on the poor, marginalized and vulnerable people, and some types of corruption, including petty corruption, can disadvantage women disproportionately. On the other hand, curbing corruption could deliver an additional \$1 trillion in tax revenues annually across the world, or 1,25 percent of global gross domestic product – money that could instead well be used by governments to support health, education and infrastructure.¹ **Corruption can be even more damaging in times of crisis**, such as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, when speedy emergency responses may lead to the loosening of oversight and control mechanisms to provide essential lifelines to people and firms.

The United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) lays out a broad array of preventive measures, policies and practice (as outlined in its Chapter II), to promote transparency, accountability, and a culture of rejection of corruption. Indeed, prevention constitutes one of the main pillars in the fight against corruption, and particular significance is placed in fostering a culture of accountability, transparency, legality, integrity and fairness in the public sector.

Moreover, transparency, accountability and ethics in public institutions are crucial for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and key principles such as Leaving No One Behind. SDG 16 specifically calls for building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. **The 11 Principles of Effective Governance for Sustainable Development**,² endorsed by the Economic and Social Council on 2 July 2018, provide practical, expert guidance in a broad range of governance challenges associated with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including those related to accountability (Table 1).

Likewise, the effective implementation of these principles and obligations is the core objective of the political declaration resulting from the special session of the General Assembly against corruption. Peer reviews have a vital role to play in securing compliance with international anticorruption standards on a country, regional and global level.

1. International Monetary Fund (April 2019). Fiscal Monitor: Curbing Corruption. Chapter 2 (pp. 39-66), p. 43. Retrieved from <https://www.imf.org/-/media/Files/Publications/fiscal-monitor/2019/April/English/ch2.ashx> (last accessed on April 14, 2021).

2. United Nations Economic and Social Council (2018). Principles of effective governance for sustainable development. Official Records, 2018. Supplement No. 24. E/2018/44-E/C.16/2018/8, para. 31. Retrieved from https://publicadministration.un.org/Portals/1/Images/CEPA/Principles_of_effective_governance_english.pdf (last accessed on April 14, 2021).



Photo: Boggy/Canva

Since its establishment over two decades ago, in 1999, GRECO has made a difference in its member states,³ covering more than 1 billion people: laws have been changed, practices improved, and institutions set up or reformed as a result of GRECO recommendations and follow-up. **The Council of Europe standards (conventions and recommendations) have steered and advanced the fight against corruption, in full respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms.**⁴

GRECO’s findings and recommendations have indeed been instrumental in further developing these standards through a comprehensive catalogue of multidisciplinary measures to prevent, detect and punish corruption in the public and the private sectors. This has been done through an inclusive process of mutual evaluation and peer pressure, resulting in targeted recommendations for improvement, the identification of good practice and impact assessments through a compliance procedure. In doing so, GRECO has gradually become a global benchmark for anti-corruption efforts, as well as a specialized forum for the exchange of experiences and ideas.

Table 1- Excerpt from Principles of Effective Governance for Sustainable Development

| Principle | Accountability | |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| Commonly used strategies | | |
| Integrity | To serve in the public interest, civil servants are to discharge their official duties honestly, fairly and in a manner consistent with soundness of moral principle. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promotion of anti-corruption policies, practices and bodies• Codes of conduct for public officials• Competitive public procurement• Elimination of bribery and trading in influence• Conflict of interest policies• Whistle-blower protection• Provision of adequate remuneration and equitable pay scales for public servants |
| Transparency | To serve in the public interest, civil servants are to discharge their official duties honestly, fairly and in a manner consistent with soundness of moral principle. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proactive disclosure of information• Budget transparency• Open government data• Registries of beneficial ownership• Lobby registries. |
| Independent oversight | To retain trust in government, oversight agencies are to act according to strictly professional considerations and apart from and unaffected by others. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promotion of the independence of regulatory agencies• Arrangements for review of administrative decisions by courts or other bodies• Independent audit• Respect for legality |

3. GRECO members: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Republic of Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom and the United States of America. On 1 January 2020, Kazakhstan became GRECO’s 50th member State; it has not yet been subject to GRECO’s evaluation.

4. In particular, the Criminal Law Convention on Corruption (ETS 173), its Additional Protocol (ETS 191), and the Civil Law Convention on Corruption (ETS 174). As well as other standards, including Resolution (97) 24 on the twenty guiding principles for the fight against corruption, Recommendation No. R (2000) 10 on codes of conduct for public officials and appended model code, Recommendation 60 (1999) on political integrity of local and regional elected representatives, Recommendation Rec(2003)4 on common rules against corruption in the funding of political parties and electoral campaigns, Recommendation CM/Rec(2014)7 on the Protection of Whistleblowers, Recommendation No. R (2017) 2 on the legal regulation of lobbying activities in the context of public decision making.

IV Target Audience

The event is open to government officials, practitioners, and experts, the private sector and civil society organizations that are interested in the topics of integrity, transparency and accountability.

V Key Questions

- What are the main risks of unethical behavior in the public sector and corruption, particularly for the post COVID-19 recovery and why is strengthening integrity key to building back better?
- How can international standards help governments in their efforts to prevent and curb corruption?
- What can we learn from award winning initiatives on how to foster effective and accountable institutions, and ensure the inclusion of vulnerable groups?
- What role can anti-corruption authorities play in implementing and monitoring corruption prevention policies and practices? Which challenges do they face to fulfill their mandate and what assurances are needed for them to perform effectively, including through international cooperation?
- How can supreme audit institutions contribute to the implementation of the SDGs and recovery from the pandemic?
- What capacities are further needed to enhance ethics, transparency and accountability in the public sector and how can international bodies support member states in their efforts to develop such capacities?

Contacts

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Find out more at

UN Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (publicadministration.un.org)

UN Public Administration Network (unpan.un.org)

The Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) (www.coe.int/en/web/greco)