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Report of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption on its preparatory work for the special session of the General Assembly on challenges and measures to prevent and combat corruption and strengthen international cooperation

Note by the Secretary-General

Addendum

* A/S-32/1.



Our common commitment to effectively addressing challenges and implementing measures to prevent and combat corruption and strengthen international cooperation

We, Heads of State and Government, ministers and representatives of Member States and parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption,¹ are assembled at United Nations Headquarters from 2 to 4 June 2021 for the special session of the General Assembly on challenges and measures to prevent and combat corruption and strengthen international cooperation, convened in accordance with Assembly resolution 73/191 of 17 December 2018.

We are concerned about the seriousness of the problems and threats posed by corruption to the stability and security of societies, undermining the institutions and values of democracy, our ethical values and justice and jeopardizing sustainable development and the rule of law.

We highlight the 15 years of implementation of the Convention, and we recognize that corruption is a local and a transnational phenomenon that affects all societies and undermines economies, making international cooperation to prevent and combat it essential. We pledge to pursue a multilateral approach in preventing and combating corruption, and reaffirm our strong commitment to the Convention as the most comprehensive legally binding universal instrument on corruption, and to integrating it into our domestic legal systems, as necessary.

We welcome the fact that 187 parties have ratified or acceded to the Convention, thus making it an instrument enjoying a status very close to universal adherence, and in this regard we urge all States and competent regional economic integration organizations, within the limits of their competence, that have not yet done so to consider ratifying or acceding to the Convention as a matter of priority.

We reaffirm our support for the bodies created under the Convention, most notably the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption and the Mechanism for the Review of Implementation of the Convention, which are leading to important improvements and progress in the implementation of anti-corruption measures in many States parties.

We reaffirm our commitment to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,² our joint plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. We recognize that achieving the 2030 Agenda is an enabling factor for States to effectively prevent and combat corruption, while, at the same time, our efforts against corruption contribute to achieving the 2030 Agenda. We take note of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development,³ which is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda, supports and complements it, helps to contextualize its means of implementation targets with concrete policies and actions, and reaffirms the strong political commitment to address the challenge of financing, including financing for development, and creating an enabling environment at all levels for sustainable development in the spirit of global partnership and solidarity.

We pledge to prevent and combat corruption and strengthen international cooperation in a manner consistent with our obligations with regard to and respect for all human rights, justice, democracy and the rule of law at all levels, and we will uphold the purposes and principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, the fundamental principles of international law, as well as the United Nations Convention against Corruption and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime,⁴ including, inter alia, respect for the principles of sovereign

¹ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2349, No. 42146.

² General Assembly resolution 70/1.

³ General Assembly resolution 69/313, annex.

⁴ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2225, No. 39574.

equality and the territorial integrity of States and of non-intervention in the domestic affairs of other States, in our fight against corruption.

We recognize the injustice and other negative consequences caused by corruption, and reaffirm our common commitment to ending impunity for corruption offences.

We are concerned about the negative impact that all forms of corruption, including the solicitation of undue advantages, can have on access to basic services and the enjoyment of all human rights, and recognize that it can exacerbate poverty and inequality and may disproportionately affect the most disadvantaged individuals in society. We also recognize that the loss of resources caused by corruption at all levels and in all its forms, including when it involves vast quantities of assets, may constitute a substantial proportion of the resources of States, with a particularly negative impact on developing countries. This can undermine citizens' trust, have a negative impact on governance and the enjoyment of all human rights by all persons affected by corruption, including the victims of corruption, and facilitate various forms of crime.

We acknowledge that these challenges have been exacerbated by the ongoing effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

We recognize that preventing and countering corruption and illicit financial flows and recovering and returning confiscated assets, in accordance with the Convention against Corruption, can contribute to effective resource mobilization, poverty eradication, sustainable development and the enjoyment of all human rights, and we will step up our efforts in this regard. We recognize that corruption is often transnational in nature, and reiterate the need for strong international cooperation and assistance in the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of corruption offences, as well as in the recovery and return of confiscated assets in accordance with the Convention.

We stand united against corruption and acknowledge that the prevention and fight against all forms of corruption is the responsibility of all States and thus requires strong political will, the participation of society, strong, fair, effective, impartial, accountable and transparent institutions, comprehensive and balanced anti-corruption frameworks and approaches at all levels and committed enforcement by all jurisdictions in accordance with national legislative systems, as well as prevention, anti-corruption education, training, effective international cooperation and asset recovery, and we recognize the strategic importance of promoting holistic and multidisciplinary approaches to countering it in line with the purposes and principles of the Convention.

We will step up our efforts to promote and effectively implement our anti-corruption obligations and robust commitments under the international anti-corruption architecture, which we as a community have created together, and will further work towards finding synergies and common solutions. We take note of the efforts of international and regional organizations and forums in preventing and combating corruption and of the important tools to effectively prevent and counter corruption contained in the Convention against Corruption and in the Organized Crime Convention, and in other international and regional instruments, including those recalled in the preamble of the Convention against Corruption.

We note that no country is free of corruption and that, overall, while progress in preventing and combating corruption has been made, those efforts are not enough, and we commit to doing more to address remaining gaps and existing and emerging challenges and difficulties, in particular in the implementation of the Convention. Therefore, we recognize the need for our intensified efforts, sustained political commitment and decisive action, at all levels, against corruption.

Preventive measures

1. We recognize the need and reaffirm our responsibility to take urgent action to prevent corruption from occurring by putting in place preventive measures, policies and practices as outlined in chapter II of the United Nations Convention against Corruption and by strengthening practical tools, continuing to gather and share good practices and enhancing efforts and resources for education and training in the public and private sectors, while acknowledging the role of all individuals and groups outside the public sector engaged in prevention as one of the main pillars in the fight against corruption. We will promote transparency, accountability, integrity and a culture of rejection of corruption at all levels of society as a basis for preventing corruption and ending impunity.
2. We welcome the efforts of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to promote the implementation by States parties of chapter II of the Convention, on preventive measures, and invite the Office to reinforce its global outreach and information exchange in order to increase public awareness of and knowledge on preventing and combating corruption, including through public global corruption prevention campaigns, subject to the availability of extrabudgetary resources to that end. These efforts should bring together other relevant international and regional organizations with a mandate to fight corruption and should include an educational and research component and a component specifically addressing young people.
3. We will continue to implement and, where appropriate, strengthen strategies, plans, policies and practices relating to prevention to ensure that they are evidence-based and focused on addressing root causes, vulnerabilities and risk factors at all levels of society, that they are responsive to the characteristics and risks of different economic sectors, that they are inclusive and interdisciplinary, deriving from a participatory process that involves all relevant stakeholders, including, where appropriate, the private sector, and that they have a measurable direct impact on individuals, organizations and institutions and undergo regular review, and we will do so in accordance with the fundamental principles of domestic law.
4. We recognize the role of anti-corruption bodies and specialized authorities in implementing and monitoring these policies and practices, and we will grant them the necessary independence, in accordance with the fundamental principles of domestic law, to enable them to carry out their functions effectively and free from any undue influence and with integrity and accountability. We pledge to strengthen their capacity and provide them with the necessary resources to carry out their oversight functions and to facilitate strong cooperation among them at all levels.
5. We stress the role played by the supreme audit institutions and other oversight bodies in preventing and combating corruption, in particular with regard to promoting integrity, accountability, transparency and the proper management of public affairs and public property, as well as the efficient use of public resources. We will preserve, in accordance with the fundamental principles of domestic law, the independence of supreme audit institutions and other oversight bodies in order to enable them to carry out their functions effectively and free from any undue influence, and we will implement policies for the effective operation of those institutions, considering the relevant provisions of the principles and standards formulated by the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions, as appropriate, in particular with regard to ensuring the proper management of public finances and public property and in areas such as public procurement. We will ensure that the findings and recommendations contained in the reports of those institutions and bodies are adequately addressed, including through corrective action where feasible and in accordance with domestic law, to enhance the fight against corruption for the benefit of society.
6. We commit to fostering a culture of accountability, transparency, legality, integrity and fairness in the public sector, including by applying anti-corruption obligations and measures, codes of conduct and other ethical standards for all public officials, including executives and law enforcement officers, as well as prosecutors and members of parliaments and judicial bodies, bearing in mind their independence,

and those subject or exposed to high corruption risks. We will promote the development of public ethics and integrity and other related programmes for public bodies, taking into consideration their institutional characteristics and domestic legal frameworks, and provide training to public officials, ensuring that, where appropriate, public bodies have the mandate and capacity to monitor the results of such programmes.

7. We will strengthen our efforts to prevent, identify and manage conflicts of interest, including by assessing and mitigating corruption risks and through effective and transparent financial disclosure systems, with information disclosed by appropriate public officials made available as widely as possible, and we will use innovative and digital technology in this field, with due regard for data protection and privacy rights.

8. We recognize that an independent and transparent judicial system that is in line with the principles of judicial ethics, including integrity, plays a crucial role in preventing and combating corruption.

9. We will promote the role of parliaments and other legislative bodies in the management of public finances and will ensure their capacity to exercise effective budget oversight, thus ensuring their role in preventing and combating corruption, including in areas where they have a mandate for review or oversight and in accordance with the fundamental principles of our legal systems. We will build and strengthen relations between national legislatures and supreme audit institutions and other oversight bodies and encourage national legislatures to be aware of the findings of such institutions and bodies.

10. We commit to increasing transparency and accountability in the management of public finances and in government procurement, funding and contracting services to ensure transparency in government actions in the use of public funds and during the whole public procurement cycle. We commit to strengthening data-collection systems and open databases that are accessible and user-friendly, in accordance with domestic laws, and to better understanding and better enabling oversight and accountability, including by supreme audit institutions and oversight bodies.

11. We recognize that public procurement is at serious risk of corruption, including in relation to our efforts to respond to and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, and deserves focused and tailored measures for its whole cycle. We encourage, where appropriate, the inclusion of anti-corruption provisions in contracts and, when awarding public procurement contracts, will take into account whether natural or legal persons have been determined to have committed acts of corruption and any mitigating factors, as appropriate, and will consider establishing appropriate registries, in accordance with domestic law, while respecting the protection of personal data and privacy rights.

12. We recognize that Member States are responsible for ensuring transparent, free and fair elections, in accordance with domestic law and our ambition to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at the national level. We will maintain, strengthen, develop and implement measures that protect the integrity of the electoral process and promote its accountability to voters, transparency and impartiality in domestic electoral institutions and oversight mechanisms, and transparency in the funding of candidatures for elected public office, political parties and electoral campaigns, where applicable, with a view to preventing corruption, ensuring accountability, promoting good governance and reinforcing trust in public institutions.

13. We will take measures to prevent corruption involving the private sector and set and communicate high standards regarding anti-corruption policies. We will encourage ethical behaviour, anti-corruption and anti-bribery compliance efforts, integrity, accountability and transparency measures in all enterprises. We will support and promote initiatives to ensure that private sector entities are well equipped to conduct business with integrity and transparency, particularly in their relations with

the public sector, and in fair competition, and will encourage the private sector to take collective action in this regard, including through the establishment of public-private partnerships in the prevention of and fight against corruption. We commit to enforcing proportionate and dissuasive civil, administrative or criminal penalties for failure to comply with such measures, as appropriate.

14. We note the positive role of international investments and the importance of minimizing opportunities for all acts of corruption.

15. We will prevent the misuse of procedures regulating private entities and mitigate corruption risks when granting subsidies, contracts and licences and when engaging in privatization and public-private partnerships.

16. We commit to making efforts in international cooperation and taking appropriate measures to enhance beneficial ownership transparency by ensuring that adequate, accurate, reliable and timely beneficial ownership information is available and accessible to competent authorities and by promoting beneficial ownership disclosures and transparency, such as through appropriate registries, where consistent with the fundamental principles of domestic legal systems and using as a guideline the relevant initiatives of regional, interregional and multilateral organizations against money-laundering. To this end, we will develop and implement the measures necessary to collect and share such information on the beneficial ownership of companies, legal structures and other complex legal mechanisms, and we will enhance the ability of competent authorities in this regard.

17. We will take measures to prevent the financial system from being abused to hide, move and launder assets stemming from corruption, including when vast quantities of assets are involved. Those crimes undermine the integrity of the financial system, and we commit to promoting the implementation of the Convention and our respective applicable international obligations.

18. We will reinforce and enhance inter-agency cooperation at all levels to prevent individuals and companies, other legal entities, and systems used to transfer money, as well as non-regulated or unregistered financial or commercial or non-commercial entities at serious risk of being abused for corruption and money-laundering, from committing or being used to facilitate acts of corruption, and will encourage and support companies and financial institutions in this regard, including to make better use of resources already expended. We will, in accordance with the fundamental principles of domestic law, take measures to prevent corruption involving the private sector, including by promoting the development of standards and procedures designed to safeguard business integrity and promote transparency and the use of good commercial practices among businesses and in the contractual relations of businesses with States, and in accordance with domestic laws and regulations, where required, including through measures regarding the maintenance of books and records, financial statement disclosures and accounting and auditing standards.

19. We will institute comprehensive domestic regulatory and supervisory regimes for banks and non-bank financial institutions, including natural or legal persons that provide formal or informal services for the transmission of money or value, or other bodies particularly susceptible to money-laundering, in order to deter and detect all forms of money-laundering in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Convention, including when it concerns illicit financial flows. We will strengthen the capacity of financial intelligence units to receive, analyse and disseminate to the competent authorities reports of suspicious financial transactions, and we will encourage cooperation among these units at the international level for the purpose of preventing and combating the transfer of proceeds of crime.

20. We acknowledge the importance of raising public awareness regarding the existence, causes, gravity and negative consequences of corruption, and the appropriate tools available to prevent and combat it, including undertaking public information activities that contribute to non-tolerance of corruption and through education and training programmes. We commit to developing integrated, balanced

and comprehensive approaches to promoting the rule of law at all levels, including through the full and effective use of the Convention.

21. We note with appreciation the important role of civil society, academia, the private sector and the media in identifying, detecting and reporting on cases of corruption, and we will take appropriate measures, within our means and in accordance with the fundamental principles of domestic law, to promote the active participation of individuals and groups outside the public sector, such as civil society, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations and the private sector, in the prevention of and the fight against corruption and to raise public awareness regarding the existence, causes and gravity of and the threat posed by corruption. We will respect, promote and protect the freedom to seek, receive, publish and disseminate information concerning corruption. That freedom may be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided for by law and are necessary for respect of the rights or reputations of others and for the protection of national security, public order or public health or morals. We will consider inviting those individuals and groups to contribute to the development and implementation of our technical assistance programmes, at our request, and based on the needs identified for the implementation of the provisions of the Convention. To promote such participation, we will also make efforts so that the conditions are present for their effective contribution to achieving the objectives of the Convention, including the ability to operate independently and without fear of reprisal because of their efforts in that regard, in accordance with domestic law and our respective applicable international obligations.

22. We will respect, promote and protect the freedom to seek, receive, disseminate and publish information concerning corruption, and ensure that the public has effective access to information, in accordance with the domestic laws of States. We commit to increasing the transparency of decision-making processes, in accordance with the fundamental principles of domestic law, as a means to prevent and combat corruption and facilitate efficient processes, including by adopting appropriate and necessary procedures or regulations and designating and enhancing bodies responsible for facilitating access to information, as well as through the use of digital tools, open data and Internet-based portals to help make information more accessible, with due regard for data protection and privacy rights.

Criminalization and law enforcement

23. We reject corruption and will implement measures to better detect it with a view to ending impunity. We commit to criminalizing, investigating, prosecuting and adjudicating acts of corruption and related offences in the public and private sectors. We commit to having in place and enforcing effective, proportionate, dissuasive and non-discriminatory criminal or non-criminal sanctions against natural and legal persons for corruption and related offences, in accordance with domestic law and the Convention.

24. We urge States parties to adapt their legislation and regulations, pursuant to article 65 of the Convention, to comply with the relevant obligations to establish as criminal offences the bribery of national public officials, the active bribery of foreign public officials and officials of public international organizations, embezzlement, money-laundering and obstruction of justice as covered in articles 15, 16 (paragraph 1), 17, 23, 25 and 27 (paragraph 1) of the Convention and, to the degree possible, to go beyond the minimum and adopt additional measures for preventing and combating corruption. We invite States to also consider adopting measures, subject to their constitutions and the fundamental principles of their legal systems and as may be necessary, to criminalize trading in influence, the abuse of functions and illicit enrichment, that is, a significant increase in the assets of a public official that he or she cannot reasonably explain in relation to his or her lawful income, bribery and embezzlement in the private sector and concealment. We invite States to draw on the observations and best practices emanating from the Mechanism for the Review of Implementation of the Convention to guide these efforts.

25. We reaffirm our commitment to actively preventing and combating bribery and bribe-taking in all its forms, in accordance with the Convention and the provisions thereof, including by criminalizing the solicitation and acceptance of bribes and the bribery of foreign public officials and officials of public international organizations. We will implement measures as may be necessary to establish liability for legal persons as required by the Convention, also with a view to enhancing the use of good commercial practices among businesses and in contractual relations between businesses and States.

26. We will take effective measures at the domestic level to prevent, investigate and prosecute acts of corruption and related offences involving members of national parliaments at all levels in accordance with the Convention, while taking into account questions of privileges and immunities, as well as of jurisdiction, as appropriate, with a view to promoting the highest ethical standards as an essential element for maintaining public trust. We will strengthen interparliamentary dialogue and cooperation, including in coordination with the Inter-Parliamentary Union and similar organizations, as appropriate, to promote the exchange of good practices relating to legislation, review and oversight controls in the fight against corruption, and we will consider implementing those good practices in domestic law.

27. We acknowledge that one of the most effective ways to prevent and combat corruption is to uphold the independence of the judiciary and ensure effective oversight, investigatory, prosecutorial and judicial institutions that enjoy protection from undue influence and have access to all relevant information. We will ensure equal access to justice for all and maintain and, when necessary, strengthen integrity, impartiality, inclusivity, due process, fair trial rights, transparency and equality before the law in our national criminal justice systems. We recognize the contribution that multilateral commitments make to this end, as well as other documents⁵ noted in relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

28. We commit to strengthening efforts to build the capacity of law enforcement and judicial authorities for the successful investigation, prosecution and adjudication of corruption and corruption-related offences, including through training, and to allocating sufficient resources for specialized anti-corruption authorities and criminal justice institutions to more effectively investigate and prosecute these crimes.

29. We will enable effective cooperation at the domestic level, including through promoting collaboration, joint activities and information exchange among, as appropriate, anti-corruption authorities, police, investigative, prosecutorial and judicial authorities, financial intelligence units and administrative and oversight bodies, in particular supreme audit institutions, in corruption investigations and proceedings at the national and international levels, in accordance with domestic law.

30. We will provide a safe and enabling environment to those who expose, report and fight corruption and, as appropriate, for their relatives and other persons close to them, and will support and protect against any unjustified treatment any person who identifies, detects or reports, in good faith and on reasonable grounds, corruption and related offences. To this end, we will, inter alia, enable confidential complaint systems, protected reporting systems and programmes for the protection of reporting persons, and increase awareness of such measures, in accordance with domestic legal systems and within our means. We also reiterate our obligation to criminalize obstruction of justice and to effectively protect victims, witnesses and justice and law enforcement officials from potential retaliation or intimidation, use of physical force or threats.

⁵ These documents include the Universal Charter of the Judge, the Bangalore Principles of Judicial Conduct, the *Commentary on the Bangalore Principles of Judicial Conduct*, the Istanbul Declaration on Transparency in the Judicial Process and the measures for the effective implementation of the Istanbul Declaration, the Basic Principles on the Independence of the Judiciary and the Guidelines on the Role of Prosecutors. Making reference to these documents in a footnote shall not constitute a precedent for future negotiations.

31. We will strive to provide a safe and adequate environment to journalists, and we will investigate, prosecute and punish threats and acts of violence, falling within our jurisdiction, committed against them.

International cooperation

32. We bear in mind that no country can effectively combat corruption alone, that preventing and combating corruption, including complex cases such as those involving multiple national jurisdictions and vast quantities of assets, is a responsibility of all States and that promoting, facilitating and supporting international cooperation and technical assistance in the prevention of and fight against corruption, including in asset recovery, constitutes one of the main purposes of the Convention. We reaffirm the importance of international and multilateral cooperation and will afford one another the widest measure of mutual legal assistance in investigations, prosecutions and judicial proceedings in relation to the offences covered by the Convention and consistent with its provisions and other applicable international obligations. We note barriers and international challenges that are encountered by States parties and have a negative impact on international cooperation in preventing and combating corruption more efficiently and effectively while safeguarding due process. We further commit to strengthening political will and to enhancing our common endeavours to make full use of the Convention and other legal instruments to advance international cooperation in preventing and combating corruption at all levels and to afford one another relevant technical assistance in this regard, as needed.

33. We acknowledge that effective and timely communication and cooperation between competent authorities can be an important factor in curbing the cross-border movement of persons involved in the commission of corruption offences and property, which includes funds, derived from the commission of corruption offences, and can also contribute to our efforts to prevent and counter illicit financial flows derived from corruption. We will strive to eliminate the exploitation of deficiencies in our regulatory regimes and channels that may serve as incentives for the cross-border movement of these persons and such property, as well as investigate and prosecute corruption offences, when possible and consistent with domestic law. We endeavour to deny these persons and their family members, who knowingly benefit from such property, safe havens and visas, where appropriate and in accordance with domestic legal frameworks and international obligations, also with a view to strengthening international cooperation to facilitate the return of persons sought for corruption offences. To this end, we are encouraged to use and strengthen appropriate focal points to facilitate information exchange between each other, noting existing agreements, formal international forums or networks for this purpose, including the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL)/Stolen Asset Recovery (StAR) Initiative Global Focal Point Network on Asset Recovery or the new Global Operational Network of Anti-Corruption Law Enforcement Authorities.

34. We commit to adopting measures at the national level, in accordance with domestic legal frameworks and consistent with international obligations, to, where appropriate, put safeguards in place to prevent immigration and refugee protection programmes, as well as business, investment and immigration policies, from being abused by such offenders, while respecting the sovereignty of States.

35. We recognize the fundamental role of effective international cooperation in preventing and combating corruption, and to this end underline the importance of addressing, tackling and effectively responding to international challenges and barriers, in particular measures, that hinder such cooperation, and which are not consistent with the Charter of the United Nations and obligations under international law, and in this regard urge States, consistent with their international obligations, to refrain from applying such measures.

36. We will strengthen our efforts to implement, and reach the full potential of, the provisions on international cooperation in the Convention, including by urging all

States to consider concluding and effectively implementing bilateral and multilateral agreements or arrangements, including on extradition, mutual legal assistance and the return and final disposal of confiscated proceeds of offences established in accordance with the Convention, in accordance with domestic legal systems. We will afford one another the widest measure of mutual legal assistance in investigations, prosecutions and judicial proceedings, including in recovering and returning proceeds of crime, in relation to the offences covered by the Convention.

37. We recognize the significance of international cooperation and call for strengthened collaboration at the national, regional and international levels using an inter-agency approach among law enforcement, prosecutorial and judicial authorities, financial intelligence units and other competent authorities, as appropriate. To this end, we will enable effective collaboration in corruption investigations and proceedings at the national, regional and international levels, in accordance with domestic law, including through information exchange among, as appropriate, anti-corruption, police, investigative, prosecutorial and judicial authorities, financial intelligence units, central authorities responsible for mutual legal assistance, and administrative and oversight bodies, in particular supreme audit institutions.

38. We emphasize the need for reliable, high-quality, timely and effective communication and procedures, including to reduce the time required for sending requests through official channels in preparation for or during mutual legal assistance requests in criminal cases, including through secure electronic communication channels, and call upon INTERPOL and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to continue working in close cooperation and in complementarity in this regard. We endeavour to establish contact and communication between competent authorities by utilizing appropriate channels to foster cross-border cooperation in the collection and sharing of evidence and the enforcement of judicial orders, in accordance with domestic law and international obligations. We will establish and strengthen the capacity of central authorities and other competent authorities, including through sharing good practices and specialized knowledge.

39. We acknowledge the critical importance of developing and maintaining international networks of law enforcement officials to advance international cooperation for the success of corruption cases, and we note with appreciation the positive contributions made by existing multilateral institutions and mechanisms. We commit to better utilizing and strengthening international, regional and cross-regional law enforcement and, as appropriate, judicial cooperation networks as platforms among competent authorities for information-sharing and mutual legal assistance and the development and dissemination of specialized knowledge.

40. We will adequately address requests based on non-criminal proceedings, including civil, administrative non-conviction-based proceedings, as well as those related to information concerning unexplained assets held by public officials, where appropriate and consistent with domestic legal systems and applicable international obligations, with a view to, inter alia, strengthening global efforts to prevent corruption, sanctioning acts of corruption and corruption-related offences and recovering and returning proceeds of these offences in accordance with the Convention.

Asset recovery

41. We emphasize that asset recovery is one of the main purposes of the Convention and that the return of assets pursuant to chapter V thereof is a fundamental principle of the Convention and that States parties shall afford one another the widest measure of cooperation and assistance in this regard.

42. We recognize the importance of asset recovery and return in the fight against corruption and that it, inter alia, contributes to fostering sustainable development and promoting justice and the rule of law at all levels and in all States. We acknowledge the progress made thus far but are conscious that we must further improve the implementation of the measures available under the Convention for asset recovery

and return, and we will redouble our joint efforts. We encourage States parties to remove barriers to applying measures for the recovery of assets, in particular by simplifying their legal procedures, where appropriate and in accordance with their domestic law, and by preventing the abuse of such procedures while safeguarding due process. We further recognize the need for effective, efficient and responsive international cooperation in asset recovery and return and mutual legal assistance without undue delay, and we will continue to address challenges in our fight against corruption, including gaps in the implementation of the Convention.

43. We will strive to end impunity for corruption and ensure that crime does not pay by preventing, detecting and deterring in a more effective manner the transfer, conversion and concealment of property derived from the commission of corruption offences, by strengthening domestic efforts to adequately criminalize corruption offences and prosecuting those engaged in corruption and money-laundering, by taking domestic measures to investigate, trace, freeze, seize, confiscate and return such property as defined in the Convention, and by strengthening international cooperation in asset recovery. We recognize that a strong and trusting partnership between requesting and requested States, with proactive measures taken by both, is key to successful asset recovery and return.

44. We commit to strengthening reliable and timely information exchange and engaging in proactive and responsive information-sharing, in accordance with domestic legal systems, by making better use of all available instruments, as appropriate and in accordance with the Convention and domestic law, to request and provide international cooperation for the purposes of enhancing the identification, tracing, freezing, seizure, confiscation and return of the proceeds of offences established in accordance with the Convention.

45. We will strengthen the capacities of central and other competent authorities responsible for international cooperation and asset recovery, as necessary, and draw upon and improve the relevant skills of experts on an ongoing basis to enhance the identification, tracing, freezing, seizure, confiscation and return of the confiscated proceeds of crime with a view to giving effect to requests for asset recovery. We will also take such measures as may be necessary to permit competent authorities to give effect to an order of seizure and confiscation issued by a court or other competent judicial authority of another State, in accordance with the Convention as well as domestic law and regulations. We recognize the importance of confidentiality, consistent with domestic law, in conducting international cooperation regarding the identification, tracing, freezing, seizure and confiscation of the proceeds of crime.

46. We recognize the importance of measures for the direct recovery of property without prejudice to international cooperation. In this regard, we will ensure that domestic legal frameworks allow States parties to initiate legal proceedings in our courts to claim title to or ownership of property acquired through the commission of an offence established by the Convention, we will allow the recognition of other States parties harmed by an offence through judicial orders for compensation or damages, and we will take measures to enable our courts, in confiscation proceedings, to recognize the claim of another State party as a legitimate owner. We will work collectively to share information and good practices and develop further guidance in that regard, to facilitate litigation of such cases in foreign courts.

47. We commit to using the available tools for asset recovery and asset return, in accordance with domestic law, such as conviction-based and non-conviction-based confiscation, as well as direct recovery mechanisms as outlined in chapter V of the Convention, and to sharing knowledge on and continuing to discuss and develop innovative modalities to clarify and improve mutual legal assistance processes in order to more efficiently advance asset recovery proceedings and render them more successful. We recognize that the best and most adequate use of each legal remedy must be determined by the competent authorities on a case-by-case basis and is dependent on domestic law requirements.

48. We recognize that the return and disposal of confiscated property is based on cooperation between requesting and requested States, and we strive to ensure that it is done in a transparent and accountable manner by making use of the options set out in the Convention, including giving special consideration to the possibility of concluding agreements or mutually acceptable arrangements, on a case-by-case basis, for the final disposal of confiscated property, while fully respecting the principles of sovereign equality and the territorial integrity of States and of non-intervention in the domestic affairs of other States, in line with article 4 of the Convention, and to consider the Sustainable Development Goals in the use of returned assets. In this regard, we will continue to clarify or simplify legal procedures, where appropriate and in accordance with domestic law, and will explore the scope for new approaches to asset recovery, return and disposal in conformity with the Convention.

49. We recognize the importance of ensuring the effective administration and disposal of confiscated assets and, to this end, with due regard for article 4 of the Convention, within domestic legal frameworks or administrative arrangements, we will consider the various possible models of disposal and administration of confiscated proceeds of offences established in accordance with the Convention, including, where feasible, allocating such proceeds to the national revenue fund or the State treasury, reinvesting funds for special purposes and compensating victims of the crime, including through the social reuse of assets for the benefit of communities. We stress the need to preserve the value and condition of proceeds of crime pending the conclusion of confiscation proceedings, including with a view to returning these assets in the future in accordance with chapter V of the Convention.

50. When employing alternative legal mechanisms and non-trial resolutions, including settlements, in corruption proceedings that have proceeds of crime for confiscation and return, we will strengthen our efforts to confiscate and return such assets in accordance with the Convention.

51. We note that, where appropriate and unless States decide otherwise, requested States may deduct reasonable expenses incurred in investigations, prosecutions or judicial proceedings leading to the return or disposal of confiscated property, but we encourage requested States to consider waiving or reducing such expenses to the barest minimum, particularly when the requesting State is a developing country.

52. We will consolidate and expand the global knowledge and data collection on asset recovery and return through gathering and sharing information on challenges and good practices, as well as on volumes of assets frozen, seized, confiscated and returned in relation to corruption offences, and the number and types of cases, as appropriate, while ensuring the protection of personal data and privacy rights, drawing upon existing efforts, including those already under way through existing projects by the Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative, and, inter alia, those foreseen by the Global Operational Network of Anti-Corruption Law Enforcement Authorities. We recognize that access to such global knowledge and data positively contributes to the quality and efficiency of the recovery and return of proceeds of crime and supports evidence-based policymaking.

Technical assistance and information exchange

53. We acknowledge the importance of promoting, facilitating and supporting timely, sustainable, adequate and effective technical assistance for strengthening national capacities to prevent and fight corruption, and call for accelerated action at all levels and by all technical assistance providers in addressing such needs, upon request, including those identified through the Implementation Review Mechanism, by mobilizing sufficient financial assistance, technical support and other resources.

54. We recognize that multilateral and bilateral technical assistance is more effective when aligned with national anti-corruption strategies and action plans and built on their respective strengths, and therefore note the importance of coordination at the country level among donors, technical assistance providers and recipient

countries. We pledge to enhance cooperation and coordination in this regard, in order to make full use of the available means of support.

55. We pledge to strengthen country-led and country-based, integrated and coordinated technical assistance, upon request, including through and in cooperation with the United Nations, especially the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and other relevant international, regional and national organizations or entities, within their mandates.

56. We will continue to afford one another, according to our capacity, the widest measure of technical assistance, especially for the benefit of developing countries, including in the form of material support, capacity-building and training, upon request, consistent with chapter VI of the Convention, and through bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

57. We will develop and improve specific tailor-made, accessible and effective technical assistance and training programmes, which take into account the specific needs of the beneficiaries, for personnel and other professionals responsible for preventing and combating corruption, and we will promote the exchange of experiences and lessons learned, including, where appropriate and compatible with domestic law, by introducing personnel exchange programmes and joint training initiatives and by participating in specialized networks, including to enhance prevention, prosecution and international cooperation in asset recovery efforts.

58. We pledge to continue sharing information on the provision of technical assistance and needs for such assistance, including those needs identified through the Implementation Review Mechanism, and to this end will consider publishing on a voluntary basis the results in the country reports. We will continue developing and sharing with each other, directly and through relevant international and regional organizations, statistics and analytical expertise concerning corruption and information on best practices to prevent and combat corruption, as appropriate.

59. We request the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, within its mandate and existing resources, to continue to assist and support Member States, upon request, in their efforts aimed at advancing the implementation of the Convention and strengthening their capacities and institutions to that effect.

Anti-corruption as an enabler for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

60. We will strengthen our fight against corruption in all its forms and at all levels and stress that corruption is an impediment to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and an obstacle to the efficient mobilization of resources and means for sustainable development. We recognize the importance of mainstreaming transparency and anti-corruption as a cross-cutting enabler for the broader development agenda and the need to incorporate anti-corruption measures in the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.

61. We reaffirm our commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including Sustainable Development Goal 16, to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, and its targets, and will redouble our efforts to strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and significantly reduce illicit financial flows by 2030.

62. We take note of the report of the High-level Panel on International Financial Accountability, Transparency and Integrity for Achieving the 2030 Agenda.⁶

63. We underscore that the anti-corruption work of the United Nations should be strongly linked to and coordinated with measures and programmes contributing to strengthening the rule of law at the national and international levels. We invite the

⁶ A/75/810, annex.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to continue coordination and cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme to foster anti-corruption measures that enable the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

64. We underscore the particular responsibility of the United Nations system to serve as a role model in the fight against corruption by enforcing the highest standards of transparency and integrity to prevent all forms of corruption in its activities, to impose a system-wide zero-tolerance policy against corrupt practices and to ensure full and transparent investigations where instances arise and, in this regard, we invite the members of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination to review the implementation of the recommendations of the Institutional Integrity Initiative in order to ensure that their rules and regulations are fully aligned with the principles of the Convention.

65. We invite the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, as the lead entity in the United Nations system on countering corruption, to increase coordination and cooperation with the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Department of Peace Operations of the Secretariat with a view to strengthening the rule of law and anti-corruption measures in United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts.

66. We will strengthen our efforts to enhance the effectiveness of anti-corruption education and facilitate anti-corruption research and implement teaching and learning programmes with elements of integrity at all levels of education, in accordance with domestic education systems, with a view to strengthening ethical behaviour, including through the adoption of values, principles and actions that make it possible to build a fair and corruption-free society and to foster a culture that promotes respect for the rule of law and integrity. We will raise public awareness regarding the existence, causes, gravity, risks and effects of corruption through outreach programmes and in other appropriate ways and deliver training for practitioners, in accordance with the fundamental principles of domestic law, with a view to promoting the active participation of individuals and groups outside the public sector, such as civil society, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations and the media, in the prevention of corruption. In this context, we call upon all international and regional organizations concerned, such as the International Anti-Corruption Academy, to strengthen their cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, with full respect for its mandate, and other relevant United Nations entities.

67. We will continue the professional development of public officials to meet the requirements for the correct, honourable and proper performance of public functions with a view to promoting integrity, accountability and the proper management of public affairs and public property.

68. We recognize the role that technologies can play in support of anti-corruption measures, including in public procurement and with regard to asset and conflict of interest declarations by public officials to appropriate authorities, in accordance with the fundamental principles of domestic law, to promote transparency, interaction with citizens and accountability, and the importance of strengthening cooperation and the exchange of best practices on the development and application of such technologies. We will promote, while safeguarding personal data protection and privacy rights, the use of technological innovations to prevent, detect and combat corruption and facilitate digital government in this regard by leveraging technological advancements, including systems and programmes that improve the ability of the competent authorities to conduct financial analysis, such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime software goAML.

69. We will improve our understanding of the linkages between gender and corruption, including the ways in which corruption can affect women and men differently, and we will continue to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, including by mainstreaming it in relevant legislation, policy development,

research, projects and programmes, as appropriate and in accordance with the fundamental principles of domestic law.

70. We express our concern about the links between corruption and other forms of crime, in particular organized crime and economic crime, including money-laundering, and will continue to enhance our understanding and strengthen our responses to any existing, growing and potential links, and disrupt them, recognizing that corruption can often be an enabler of other transnational crimes and illicit financial flows.

71. We will safeguard sport from corruption by strengthening and further coordinating our efforts in an inclusive and impartial manner, including in the framework of the United Nations, and by enhancing cooperation between all relevant stakeholders, including sports organizations at all levels, relevant international and regional organizations and relevant domestic authorities, including law enforcement authorities, as appropriate. To that end, we will raise awareness within sports organizations and the broader sports community of the value of fairness and the gravity of corruption, promote accountability and good governance within sports organizations and facilitate the exchange of expertise, the timely dissemination of information and the sharing of good practices. We will address risks to groups in vulnerable conditions, in particular children and young athletes, posed by corruption in sport, with a view to promoting fair competition, healthy lives and principles of integrity and to creating an atmosphere of intolerance towards corruption in junior and youth sport, in accordance with domestic legal systems.

Advancing a forward-looking anti-corruption agenda and framework

72. We commit to redoubling our efforts to prevent and combat corruption and to ensuring that corruption safeguards and responses are integral elements of our recovery efforts as we respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

73. We will ensure that appropriate measures are in place to prevent and combat corruption when responding to or recovering from national crises and emergencies, while striving not to negatively impact the speed and quality of responses in such situations. In this regard, we recognize the role of supreme audit institutions and other oversight bodies and their functions in upholding policies and procedures for the management of public finances and public procurement, and the importance of partnerships between the public and private sectors and other relevant stakeholders, in accordance with domestic law.

74. We will, in order to substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms by 2030, adopt, as soon as possible, to support the achievement of this target, legislative and other measures to establish as criminal offences the acts required by the Convention, including by criminalizing solicitation and the acceptance of bribes and the bribery of national public officials and foreign public officials, and to actively enforce these measures.

75. We reiterate the central and main role of the Convention and the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention in global efforts to improve the capacity of and cooperation among States parties to effectively and comprehensively prevent and combat corruption. We therefore urge all States parties, United Nations entities, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and the general public, as appropriate, to strengthen their support for the Convention and the Conference, and for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. We endeavour to provide the Office with adequate and regular voluntary contributions to support the Implementation Review Mechanism, research and analysis, normative work and technical assistance, as well as other relevant programmes related to the prevention and combating of corruption, including relevant United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime global programmes and other related activities.

76. We reaffirm the importance of the Implementation Review Mechanism as an intergovernmental, transparent, efficient, non-intrusive, inclusive, impartial,

non-adversarial, non-punitive, ongoing and gradual process for accelerating progress in the implementation of the Convention by States parties. We commit to further harnessing its potential in identifying the good practices and challenges that we encounter in the implementation of the Convention, disseminating good practices and making efforts to address the gaps in implementation and challenges and deepen mutual understanding and trust between States parties, while also building on identified challenges in this regard.

77. We welcome the achievements of the Implementation Review Mechanism in furthering parties' efforts to fully implement their obligations under the Convention, and we urge parties to the Convention to complete their reviews under the Mechanism in a timely manner so as to conclude the first and second review cycles within their agreed period of performance. We will give due consideration to the voluntary provisions set out in the terms of reference of the Mechanism. We further commit to fully and effectively following up on the conclusions and observations from the review process, and we welcome the efforts by the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention to assess the performance of the Mechanism and adapt, where appropriate, procedures and requirements for the follow-up.

78. We welcome the creation of the Global Operational Network of Anti-Corruption Law Enforcement Authorities under the auspices of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the aim of which is to develop a quick, agile and efficient tool for combating cross-border corruption offences, to strengthen communication exchange and peer learning between anti-corruption law enforcement authorities and to complement and coordinate with existing and efficient platforms for international cooperation, such as the INTERPOL/STAR Global Focal Point Network on Asset Recovery. We encourage States to participate in and make best use of this network, as appropriate.

79. We encourage the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention to continue exploring activities, procedures and methods of work aimed at improving cooperation with relevant international and regional organizations and mechanisms and non-governmental organizations in line with the Convention and to continue making appropriate use of relevant information produced by other international and regional mechanisms for preventing and combating corruption in order to avoid unnecessary duplication of work and to facilitate and promote effective cooperation and implementation of the Convention. In this regard, we invite the secretariat of the Conference to continue ensuring the necessary coordination with the relevant international and regional organizations in the field of anti-corruption with a view to further facilitating and enhancing synergies.

80. We encourage the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in coordination with the Statistical Commission and in broad cooperation across the United Nations system, to develop and share a comprehensive, scientifically sound and objective statistical framework, grounded in methodological work and reliable data sources, to support States in their efforts to measure corruption, its impact and all relevant aspects of preventing and combating it, in order to inform and strengthen evidence-based anti-corruption policies and strategies, consistent with the Convention.

81. We will continue to consider ways in which we can improve our joint capacities to contribute to more effective and practical implementation of the Convention. We recognize the need to strengthen measures and develop new approaches to assist States, at their request, in identifying and addressing challenges and gaps and overcoming obstacles in the implementation of the Convention.

82. We also invite the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention to identify gaps and challenges in the implementation of the Convention by taking into account the results of the Implementation Review Mechanism, as well as any gaps and corruption challenges within the international anti-corruption framework, and to consider any recommendations by States parties to address the gaps and challenges identified in such a way as to improve the Convention and the implementation thereof as may be necessary. In this regard, and as a first step, we further invite the

Conference, in the future, after the conclusion of and evaluation of the findings from the second review cycle, to organize a special session of the Conference on all aspects of the asset recovery and return process, with a view to considering all options available under the Convention, including exploring possible areas for improvement to our international asset recovery framework.

83. We invite the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention to request the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to prepare a comprehensive report for the Conference on the state of implementation of the Convention after the completion of the current review phase, taking into account information on gaps, challenges, lessons learned and best practices in preventing and combating corruption, in international cooperation and in asset recovery since the Convention entered into force.

84. We encourage the Conference to conduct the necessary surveys on particular gaps, challenges, lessons learned and best practices in prevention, criminalization, law enforcement, international cooperation and asset recovery and return, to be undertaken by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

85. We commit to implementing the present political declaration and invite the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention, as the treaty body with prime responsibility for promoting and reviewing the implementation of the Convention, to follow up and build on the declaration. We commit to taking stock of the implementation of the declaration and will consider holding a follow-up special session of the General Assembly on corruption, as necessary, taking into account the outcome of the follow-up by the Conference.

86. We invite Member States and other donors to provide extrabudgetary resources for these purposes in accordance with the rules and procedures of the United Nations.
