

# G20 ACCOUNTABILITY: FIT FOR PURPOSE?

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## RELEVANT G20 STATEMENTS

*“Reducing corruption remains a top priority for the G20. Corruption is at the heart of so many of the challenges the world faces. It undermines good governance, erodes the trust that people place in public institutions, corrodes decision-making, impedes economic development and facilitates organized crime. No country is immune and governments cannot tackle it alone: we need the support of business and civil society to help prevent and uncover corruption.”* **G20 Anti-Corruption Plan 2017-2018**

**“Combating corruption remains a top priority for the G20.** Preventing and fighting corruption, as well as strengthening integrity, are core to maintaining the rule of law and public confidence in our institutions, to building national and global economic prosperity, and to keeping us safe and secure.”

**G20 Anti-Corruption Action Plan 2019-2021**

**“More needs to be done.** In particular, we need to accelerate the implementation of our past commitments, which will be one of the priorities of the ACWG in the next three years.” **G20 Anti-Corruption Action Plan 2019-2021**

“Focus stronger political attention and leadership on G20 anti-corruption priorities, and use the Leaders’ communiqué to achieve greater impact, and deepen the accountability of our individual and collective actions in addressing corruption, including by setting concrete, practical commitments where appropriate, and continuing to publish an annual progress report.” **G20 Anti-Corruption Action Plan 2019-2021**

## THE CHALLENGE

The G20 set up its Anti-Corruption Working Group (ACWG) at the Toronto Summit in 2010. The ACWG’s mandate is to prepare “comprehensive recommendations for consideration by leaders on how the G20 could continue to make practical and valuable contributions to international efforts to combat corruption.” Since its establishment, the ACWG has been working on the basis of biannual Action Plans. These plans have been designed to identify priorities for action in the area of anti-corruption.

As part of the anti-corruption work, G20 countries have committed to more than 60 anti-corruption resources, including High-Level Principles, covering areas of asset recovery, asset disclosure by public officials, beneficial ownership transparency, conflict of interest, open data and integrity in public procurement. However, G20 members have only partially<sup>1</sup> implemented the various anti-corruption principles they have committed to over the years. Moreover, there is extremely limited information on what countries are doing to implement promises, leading to loss of trust from the wider anti-corruption community in the effectiveness and ambition of the G20. Additionally, corruption all too often remains an afterthought in G20 leaders’ declarations and actions.

Currently, there is no systematic approach to review the implementation of the ACWG’s action plans nor specific commitments made by G20 countries. The only available accountability mechanism is the G20 Accountability Reports. These are self-assessment reports prepared by the working group on an annual basis.

While the main goal of the annual reports is to provide monitoring and evaluation, they fall short in providing a good picture of the concrete issues addressed by the ACWG in that year as well as a fair account of how well G20 countries are doing in the implementation of their commitments. The annual reports do not provide an in depth analysis of implementation, not even in the areas identified by the working group in the action plan as priority areas. There is very limited information on what has been in fact achieved, what policy reforms have been implemented, and what the main challenges have been, it is an exemplary rather than a comprehensive report.

The ACWG recognises in its current G20 Anti-Corruption Action Plan that the existing accountability mechanisms are inadequate and that more needs to be done to accelerate the implementation of past commitments. For that, the group has committed to adapt its working methods and mechanisms. This is a unique opportunity for the Working Group to lead by example, improve its accountability and support the implementation of previous commitments.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the promise of facilitating the implementation of past G20 commitments, deepen the accountability, increasing the impact of the anti-corruption agenda,<sup>2</sup> and the [B20 and C20 requests for implementation](#), the G20 ACWG should focus on the implementation of existing G20 commitments and anti-corruption good practice and improve the accountability of its works. This could include:

- **Improve annual accountability reports:** past accountability reports have not been consistent. Different approaches are taken under

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publication/g20\\_leaders\\_or\\_laggards](https://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publication/g20_leaders_or_laggards)

<sup>2</sup> G20 2019-2021 Action Plan

different presidencies, which can have a negative impact on continuity. There should be a more formalized approach regarding how the accountability reports are prepared and the issues to be covered.

- The ACWG should clearly communicate **what it intends to achieve and by when**. The yearly work program is a unique opportunity to translate in a more clear and specific way not only the areas of work in which the ACWG will be focusing on, but also clear objectives and timeline. The accountability report should then assess what has been done and achieved under the proposed work program.
  
- **Monitoring specific anti-corruption commitments:** G20 countries should be accountable for the commitments they have assumed over the last years and show in a clear and comprehensive way the progress that has been made, the challenges that still remain and how they plan to overcome them and under which timeline. We believe that dedicated accountability reports for each of the commitments areas (High-Level Principles) are the best way to assess implementation and hold countries accountable. This approach may also be useful in identifying areas where countries need technical or other type of support. A general, combined progress report is not satisfactory for monitoring progress and leads to gaps;
  - The current bi/tri-annual action plans usually define areas of focus for actions of the working group. These more comprehensive reports could be aligned with these areas of focus and used to improve the collection of best practices, sharing of knowledge and expertise and other policy-related actions led by the ACWG. For example, for the 2019-2021 Annual Plan, the ACWG has committed to work on three areas where the G20 has made concrete commitments through the adoption of high-level principles (conflicts of interest, liability of legal persons, and beneficial ownership)<sup>3</sup>, the working group could therefore prepare specific evaluations to assess how well these principles have been implemented in each G20 country. These evaluations should provide a clear picture of what each country has done to implement each of the commitments. In cases of non-compliance, countries should report on the challenges and propose actions on how to address them, including a concrete timeline.
  
- **Improve accountability mechanisms: in the past years, the Working Group has worked on several issues and developed a wide varied of resources. Unfortunately, however, detailed knowledge on the Working Group has been limited due to the poor engagement and lack of public information.** In order to improve the G20 Anti-Corruption Working Group accountability we recommend the following:
  - **Having an effective engagement with Civil Society:**

Civil society is not just a watchdog, it includes innovators, technologists and policy experts that can help not only holding governments accountable for their commitments but also support the implementation in order to achieve the best possible results. Civil society can also contribute to increased transparency and the credible evaluation of outcomes. There is therefore room for a more meaningful engagement with civil society. Although the ACWG invites CSOs representatives to their meetings, it is time to improve the Working Group engagement with CSOs in order to ensure this effective. This could be done by:

    - Inviting NGOs and business representatives to additional parts of the Working Group meetings to provide insights and guidance on a thematic basis and not in a single short session.
    - Sharing with civil society representatives the agenda of the meeting.
    - Meeting with civil society groups in-country prior to G20 ACWG meetings. This is already the practice in some countries, where governments convene meetings with business and civil society stakeholders in-country throughout the year.
  
  - **Improve communications:** Currently, no permanent official G20 website exists. Every presidency establishes its website which is no longer updated after the end of the presidency. G20 documents are often hard to find as information is scattered through several different websites, making it difficult to civil society, the media and researchers to consult documents or inform themselves about G20 activities. Interested parties should be able to consult all G20 relevant documents in all single platform.
    - We welcomed the German presidency's initiative<sup>4</sup> to compile all existing anti-corruption commitments into one location as well as the Argentinean initiative of putting all those commitments in the G20 official website.
    - The ACWG has also committed in its Action Plan 2019-2021 to publish its work plan annual progress reports in the official G20 website. This is an excellent initiative that should be implemented since the beginning of each G20 presidency, ensuring that all the documents are easily located. Under no circumstance there should be long delays in the publication of the anti-corruption documents. We encourage all G20 host countries to publish all the G20 anti-corruption existent resources in the official G20 website.
    - **Improved cooperation and coordination:** the **G20 ACWG should step out of the G20 silo**. Corruption is not an add-on issue that can be dealt with in isolation. The G20 ACWG should consult and be consulted by other G20 Working Groups. Any high-level G20 pledge, for instance around infrastructure or investment, should incorporate and consider corruption risks and countermeasures.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=DAF/WGB/RD\(2018\)10&docLanguage=En](http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=DAF/WGB/RD(2018)10&docLanguage=En)

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.bmjv.de/DE/Themen/G20/G20\\_node.html](https://www.bmjv.de/DE/Themen/G20/G20_node.html)