

Speech Cobus, Cape Town, 10 December 2007

Corruption has greased the wheels of exploitation and injustice since time immemorial. The great human tragedies of recent history – genocides and institutionalised racism – have likewise been welded to abusive political systems that twist the public trust for private gain. That is why we say today: the fight against corruption is not a footnote in the struggle for human rights.

It is the fact that the poor and marginalised are most affected by corruption that should give us pause. In brutally concrete terms, it means that those with least influence are faced with demands for bribes in the most vulnerable situations, during contact with law enforcement, health care providers or the education system. This is a direct contravention of the (Declaration for) Human Rights' principle of non-discrimination.

All humanity suffers as cabinets and boardrooms continue to fuel and/or turn a blind eye to grand corruption eroding our ability to tackle the challenges of our time: global warming, violent conflict (and) mass poverty. It is our human right to call them to account. Not tomorrow (but) today.

One billion signatures will be a small step; one billion committed with courage will be a giant leap for human dignity. I am proud to sign. I am deeply humbled to commit to the complete realization of human rights to all in our lifetime...

To see Transparency International's press release on the event, please see the news room on the TI website: http://www.transparency.org/news_room/latest_news