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Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen and thank you for allowing me to address this first Conference of States Parties. For the past 13 years Transparency International has been working towards a world free of corruption and our experience fighting this problem has brought us into collaborations with different sectors and made us into firm believers in a multi-stakeholder approach to solutions.

That is why we at Transparency International believe in and support the United Nations Convention against Corruption. But we cannot simply believe in the good intentions of a signed piece of paper. As someone who spent nineteen years leading the Canadian International Development Agency and other government agencies, I know firsthand the hurdles of politics and government. But as they say, where there is a will, there is a way. The fact that 80 countries have ratified this Convention and that you are here today tells us that there is a will. It is essential that this Conference take prompt steps to transform the Convention into real action programmes. Transparency International has developed detailed recommendations for the Conference, which are available. Our main points are the following:

Firstly, we ask you to establish an effective and efficient monitoring programme at this meeting. Much of UNCAC is not self-executing and numerous actions by national governments are necessary to implement it. Lack of action by some governments will encourage inaction by others. Experience with other Conventions demonstrates that monitoring is essential. Conventions with monitoring produce results and those without monitoring remain dormant pieces of paper. An effective monitoring programme will require a strong secretariat, a role that UNODC should serve with dependable funding from the UN budget.

Adoption of an effective monitoring programme will send a clear message that you are committed to making UNCAC work as the pre-eminent global weapon against corruption. Failure to approve a monitoring programme would undermine UNCAC's credibility.

Second: The Conference should instruct UNODC to launch a status survey early in 2007. The survey would provide benchmarks and a realistic overview to guide the 2007 Conference of States Parties. All parties should be asked to report on: the current status of implementation, plans and priorities for further implementation, obstacles and technical assistance needed to overcome such obstacles. UNODC should report on the results of the survey at the 2007 Conference of States Parties. This will provide a basis for informed decisions regarding implementation reviews in 2008-2009. Because the parties to the Convention will not convene in 2008, action at the 2007 Conference is crucial to avoid a two-year delay.

Third: Going beyond the survey, the Conference should instruct UNODC to begin pilot programs in 2007 with the aim of developing and testing monitoring methods on high priority issues. The pilot programmes should be voluntary, but participation must be diverse enough to provide meaningful results. The greatest need for a pilot programme is in asset recovery, an area where UNCAC's provisions are innovative and untested.

Reforming asset recovery procedures will be a key indicator for the success of UNCAC and that is why early action is essential.

Other issues useful for pilot programmes include procurement reform, which is a high priority for the private sector; whistleblower protection and access to information, which are a high priority for civil society.

Fourth: Implementation of UNCAC will be a challenge for many countries. The success of UNCAC will require commitments from leading donor organisations to provide adequate funding for such technical assistance. The Conference should instruct UNODC to work with leading donors such as UNDP, the World Bank, OECD-DAC, the regional development banks, major bilateral donors and private foundations, to encourage adequate funding and coordinated efforts. UNODC should then report back on technical assistance programmes to the 2007 Conference of States Parties.

Fifth: In the interest of avoiding duplication of efforts, the Conference should instruct UNODC to undertake discussions with organisations monitoring other Conventions. The objective would be to develop plans for cooperation and to take advantage of available experience and ensure best utilisation of limited resources. UNODC should report back to the 2007 Conference on these discussions.

Sixth: There are compelling reasons for making the monitoring program transparent and involving the private sector and civil society. Public demand to reduce corruption is the strongest political influence for overcoming obstacles to the politically difficult reforms required by UNCAC. Transparency brings the public interest into play.

Because corruption is always conducted secretly, it is difficult to obtain reliable information on corruption and the effectiveness of anti-corruption programmes. Therefore, information for monitoring should come not only from governments but also from civil society, the private sector and trade unions. Having multiple sources of information is particularly critical in countries with widespread corruption, where it is most difficult to implement the reforms called for by UNCAC.

Lastly: Asset recovery is essential to stop the plundering of countries and citizens' loss of faith. Governments must introduce necessary legislative and institutional changes and provide adequate resources to law enforcement agencies. This should include measures to combat money laundering and to end safe havens for stolen assets. Government authorities and financial institutions must collaborate closely to ensure the return of such assets. Asset recovery should be a transparent process open to input and monitoring by civil society.

This Conference has the power to transform UNCAC from a piece of paper into effective anti-corruption programmes. I urge you to use that power to achieve UNCAC's goals. I thank you once again for your attention and remind you that the world of people cheated, countries looted and futures stolen, are waiting for your decisions. Thank you.

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