

## First meeting of the Anti-corruption Partnership Forum

Online (03 July 2024 – 3:30-6pm CET)

### *Presence online:*

- ❖ European Union (European Commission, DG HOME): Stephen Curzon (Head of Unit, Legal Affairs and Anti-corruption) with Elaine Miller, Francesco Clementucci and Mariaelisabetta Realdon
- ❖ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC): Brigitte Strobel-Shaw (Chief, Corruption and Economic Crime Branch) with Shervin Majlessi, Stefanie Holling and Tanja Santucci
- ❖ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD): France Chain (Senior Legal Analyst in the OECD Anti-Corruption Division)
- ❖ Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO): Livia Stoica Becht (Executive Secretary of GRECO), with Laura Sanz-Levia (Deputy Executive Secretary of GRECO) and Anne Weber (Senior Legal Advisor)
- ❖ League of Arab States: Maha Bakheet Zaki (Director, Legal Affairs Department)
- ❖ Africa Union (AU): Charity H. Nchimunya (Executive Secretary) with Martha Munthali.
- ❖ Organization of American States (OAS): Jorge Garcia Gonzalez (Director Department of Legal Cooperation Secretariat for Legal Affairs)
- ❖ World Bank Group: Alexandra Habershon (Program Manager, Global Lead, Anti-Corruption Governance Global Practice)
- ❖ International Monetary Fund (IMF): Luis Urrutia (Deputy General Counsel) with Emmanuel Mathias.

### *Context:*

At the 10th Conference of States Parties to the UN Convention Against Corruption in December 2023, international organizations active in the fight against corruption joined forces in a special event called [Walk the Talk: Strengthening Synergies and Coordination](#) to discuss how to strengthen collaboration and remove silos within the international anti-corruption architecture. Speakers from all organizations agreed that increased coordination and exchange of knowledge and experience could lead to improved service delivery for their respective Member States and avoid a duplication of efforts. Out of this joint event came the idea of a **jour fixe** among interested organizations to discuss and update each other on policy work, knowledge development, technical assistance delivery and country reviews. This jour fixe would take place on a regular basis once or twice a year, in a virtual format, with the objective to share information and coordinate on individual and common activities, review mechanisms and policy developments.<sup>[1]</sup>

### *Summary*

On Wednesday 3 July 2024, the first jour fixe of the newly established **Anti-Corruption Partnership Forum** took place online, co-hosted by the EU and the UNODC. The objective of the meeting was for each participating international organisation to inform each other about

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<sup>[1]</sup> [See the UNODC CoSP 10, Special Events Summary Report.](#)

their ongoing policy activities and discuss potential avenues on how to best coordinate similar efforts. The two sessions focused on: a) sharing plans and projects to increase synergies and b) exploring which primary data exist in each organisation, with a view of possible data exchange and sharing.

*In detail:*

**Tour de table – Session I (Plans and projects in the area of anti-corruption - such as policy work, knowledge development, technical assistance delivery - from July 2024 to December 2025)**

**African Union** (Charity Nchimunya) recalled the celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 2003 **African Union (AU) Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption**. This year marks the 8<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the AU Anticorruption Day, and the selected topic in focus is 'Effective whistleblowers protection mechanism: A critical tool for combating corruption'. At policy level, the AU is implementing the **Common African Position on Asset Recovery** (which was first adopted in 2020); and the **African corruption measurement tool** (that is meant to fit the specific nature and challenges encountered in corruption occurring in the African context). AU remains committed to reducing the burden for its Member States (they are signatories or parties to both the UNCAC and AU Anticorruption Convention).

**EU** (Stephen Curzon) presented the ongoing **Rule of Law cycle**, which was initiated in 2020 and, since 2022, includes recommendations for all the 27 Member States. Since 2024, the Rule of Law Report will also cover 4 enlargement countries (namely Albania, Montenegro, North-Macedonia and Serbia). The Annual **EU Justice Scoreboard** (typically adopted each June), reports on some aspects of anticorruption frameworks. In the edition of 2024, the Scoreboard indicated data on the length of solving corruption cases and on the functioning of asset declarations' mechanisms). On the policy side, in accordance with the objectives established in the Anti-Corruption Joint Communication of May 2023, the first results of a study on identifying the **areas with high risks of corruption** will be discussed in October at the **EU Anti-Corruption Network** (established in September 2023 with the participation of national authorities, independent experts and CSOs, as well as international organisations operating on anti-corruption). Once the analysis is concluded, it will feed into the development of the first **EU Anti-Corruption Strategy** (that will probably cover the period of 2025 to 2030). The EU Commission is also working on the negotiations with the European Parliament and Council of the EU towards the adoption of the proposed Directive to combat corruption (tentatively foreseen for 2025). The draft Directive aims to harmonise common definitions (also in light of international standards, including the UN and OECD conventions against corruption) and build capacity (in terms of training, competence and appropriate resources allocated) for specialised units to repress and prevent corruption.

**GRECO/Council of Europe (COE)** (Livia Stoica with Laura Sanz-Levia and Anne Weber) presented the monitoring work of GRECO. Currently, the GRECO evaluation process is at the 5<sup>th</sup> round focusing on preventing corruption and promoting integrity in **central governments (top executive functions and law enforcement agencies)**, except for Kazakhstan, which, as a recent member, is still undergoing the earlier evaluation rounds. The 6<sup>th</sup> evaluation round,

focusing on preventing corruption and promoting integrity at the **sub-national level**, will be launched in 2025. Usually, GRECO adopts around 14 to 16 evaluation and/or compliance reports per plenary meeting, and its annual calendar, including the reports under examination, is publicly available online. Similarly, the GRECO website includes all publicly available evaluation and compliance reports, as well as with respect to each evaluation round, the relevant questionnaire(s) and reference documents. In the forthcoming November 2024 plenary, there are 16 countries lined up for evaluations (primarily European countries). Countries covered by GRECO's evaluation procedures include all the Council of Europe 46 member States, plus Kazakhstan and USA. The Russian Federation and Belarus are no longer members of GRECO. The COE provides also technical assistance supporting beneficiary countries to prevent and fight against corruption more effectively by improving national frameworks and institutional capacities, introducing necessary policy and/or legislative reforms, as well as capacity building. Such assistance is available or being provided to Council of Europe member States, countries in Central Asia and jurisdictions in the Mediterranean neighbourhood (e.g. Jordan, Morocco).

**League of Arab States** (Maha Bakheet) recalled that the Arab Convention against Corruption was adopted in 2010, with so far 15 Member States (out of 22 of the Arab League) having signed and ratified it. In the past years, there have been five celebrative events since the signing of the Convention. At **policy level**, there are ongoing discussions on e.g., the impact of national anti-corruption **strategies**, use of **technologies** in preventing corruption, and increasing the role of the **private sector**. They organise annual AC events, with Chiefs of AC agencies, to discuss good practices, technical assistance needs and improve cooperation.

**OAS** (Jorge Garcia) recalled the 1996 Inter-American Convention against Corruption entered into force 2002. OAS participated in the side event at the UNCAC COSP 10 on the synergies among international anti-corruption organisations. The Inter-American Convention against Corruption includes all American States (except Barbados). The OAS Follow-Up Mechanism (MESICIC) started to be operative in 2002, and it is now in its 6<sup>th</sup> round of thematic evaluation (on the topics of **extradition, transnational bribery, favourable tax treatment, illicit enrichment and bank secrecy**). MESICIC also produces different tools such as model laws or, currently under development, indicators on whistleblower and witness protection. The Committee of Experts to the Convention provided a forum for exchanging good practices on preventing and combatting corruption. A special session on open contracting was being organized, with several other international organizations participating.

**OECD** (France Chain) informed that the OECD Working Group on Bribery (WGB) recently selected a new Chair, Ms. Kathleen Roussel, former Director of Public Prosecutions in Canada. The WGB is the group of countries Party to the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions (Anti-Bribery Convention) as well as the 2021 Recommendation of the Council for Further Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions (Anti-Bribery Recommendation). The OECD presented the monitoring activity carried out by the WGB, including recently adopted and forthcoming evaluations. All reports, as well as the calendar of evaluations, are publicly available. Participation of non-governmental stakeholders in country evaluations can be done

both in writing or by requesting to attend the on-site visits. This year, the OECD is celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention. The most relevant meetings related to anti-corruption include: WGB plenary meetings (four times per year - in March, June, October and December); meetings for law enforcement authorities (twice a year, behind closed doors, June and December); and a Global Anti-Corruption and Integrity Forum and Global Integrity Week (once a year, next one on 24-28 March). The OECD is also dedicated to working on the Istanbul Anti-corruption Action Plan (a sub-regional peer review programme in Southeast Europe and Central Asia, launched in 2003, to support anti-corruption reforms through country reviews and continuous monitoring of implementation of recommendations, which promote the UNCAC and other international standards and best practice). At **policy level**, the OECD also works on public governance aspects, such as producing Public Integrity Indicators, and discusses best practices, e.g., in the framework of the Public Integrity and Anti-Corruption (PIAC) Working Party.

**World Bank Group** (Alexandra Habershon) welcomed the AC Partnership Forum, and its efforts to stimulate convergence of actions to effectively implement obligations stemming from anti-corruption treaties, including the evaluation of their implementation. The work of the World Bank is heavily focused on practical **policy level**, by providing technical assistance in the field of anti-corruption, anti-money laundering and **asset recovery** (also with the Stolen Asset recovery – StAR initiative, in collaboration with the UNODC), in addition to the Integrity Vice Presidency (which more closely works in **investigating and sanctioning cases** of corruptive practices, and implements compliance programs by corporations doing business in the **private sector**). On 8 July, an updated report will be presented to the Board of Directors of the World Bank, concerning the work done in the anti-corruption area (such as on governance and anti-corruption; public procurement and risk management; institutional development; leveraging data and technology). An anti-corruption lab was launched, as to understand the risks of **grand corruption**, in order to complement other existing databanks, and look at proxies of corruption, beyond and prior to purely traditional evidence. Other instruments in place are the impact assessment frameworks on **beneficial ownership reforms and illicit financial flows**. A series of learning events will be launched soon as to make the point on ‘What is happening the world of corruption measurement?’. The WB is also working on the link between corruption risks and climate change financing, and in exploring the use of technology to address corruption risks in service delivery (social protection, education and housing). Additionally, anti-corruption conditionality is being scaled up in the WB lending operations, as to make the borrower commit to more clear and stringent anti-corruption reforms.

**UNODC** (Brigitte Strobel-Shaw) highlighted partnerships with Open Ownership on **beneficial ownership** transparency and with Open Contracting Partnership on **public procurement** as ways to create synergies and cross-fertilize ideas to increase impact. Work included development of non-binding guidelines, based on data collection. They are in the process of developing new **education** modules (in addition to the 25 already existing ones), which should focus on health, artificial intelligence, corruption measurement and other topics. Studies and learning events are under preparation on the following topics: state measures for corporate integrity; review of guidelines to ‘Effectively implement tools for **business integrity**’; exploring

the link between corruption and **climate change**; role of corruption in **organised crime**; and corruption entry points in **human trafficking**.

**IMF** (Luis Urrutia with Emmanuel Mathias) looks at corruption in relation to financial stability and the macro-economic impact on development. Actions in this field include: surveillance reports (also known as Article IV Reports; they are published, with recommendations if needed); transnational aspects of corruption reports (on a voluntary basis). So far, G20 countries have volunteered to have this review in place. On the lending perspective, when a country requests a loan, the IMF assess whether there are sufficient anti-corruption frameworks in place, in terms of country capacity to effectively implement the support provided by the IMF; the application of certain conditionalities is possible. On capacity development, the IMF can deliver the so called 'Governance diagnostic' (it is an assessment performed on request, with agreed recommendations to implement as to redress weaknesses, which foresees a specific action plan and timeframe), and training courses (delivered through their six regional training centres, on: impact of corruption into macroeconomic elements, anti-money laundering and public procurement).

#### **Tour de table session II (Data sources used in country reviews and possibility to exchange primary data among organizations)**

**EU:** The Rule of Law Reports are always made public, as well as the questionnaires, the replies to the questionnaires, and the written contributions from stakeholders (except for those NGOs who request non-disclosure). The EU Justice Scoreboard is also published annually. DG HOME highlighted that the draft directive on combating corruption requires Member States to collect and publish (annually, in a machine-readable manner) data related to the prevention and repression of corruption.

**AU** publishes reports, data and legislation are made available, in original language.

**GRECO** In accordance with GRECO's Statute , evaluation reports are confidential until made public. Data and responses to the questionnaires are strictly confidential and available only to the country under evaluation and to the evaluation team, such data cannot be provided to third parties. GRECO proposed the creation of an information exchange mechanism among participating organisation, aimed at drawing attention to developments (legal or political) in countries which may give rise to concern or represent a backsliding with regard to compliance with international anti-corruption standards.

**IMF** In accordance with the organisation's mandate, data related to evaluation reports are strictly confidential, and may be released only once the evaluation reports are made public. IMF suggests the creation of a mechanism to alert on the publication of own reports.

**League of Arab States** affirmed that they are working on developing a mechanism to share data. They have anti-corruption trainings in place (i.e. an academy in Egypt)

**OAS** informed that the responses to the questionnaires and supporting documents (written contributions and responses provided during on-site visits) are all made public online and are available with no restrictions.

**OECD** informed that questionnaires are not publicly available, members and observers are able to have access to that data, which remains confidential to an outside audience. It does not publish underlying legislation anymore because of practical difficulties, including complexity and capacity of translation.

**UNODC** publication of the full reports is upon States' decision, while an executive summary of the reports is public. They drew attention to the [UNODC legal library](#) with legislation received (at the time) by 182 countries (including legislation, implementing regulations, and relevant international treaties). UNODC invited other organizations to contribute legislation collected through reviews to this legal library, with a view to making the project more collaborating and ensuring the legislation was as up to date as possible. Discussion on the next phase of the IRG (implementation review mechanism) are ongoing, the next phase will likely be launched in 2026.

**World Bank** Data-tool used by the Bank are an aggregation of other publicly available primary data. Data received by countries are confidential and used for internal resource allocation. In the future, the Bank is creating a Bureaucracy lab, including public sector perception of corruption. WB has also in place an Asset recovery watch (where data is derived from statistics) and Contractual data (a large databank)

### **Conclusions and next steps**

**EU and UNODC:** this first meeting can be considered a good start and thanks go to all the participants. We were able to identify some commonalities in our planned work and projects and we should follow-up with the relevant partners to further explore synergies. Future meetings of the Partnership Forum could have a thematic focus on topics of common interest, such as beneficial ownership transparency, procurement or corruption measurement.

We carried out an inventory of primary data. Possibilities that could be explored are the following:

- Organizations will exchange more information on technical assistance in the future, e.g. EU, GRECO and UNODC
- Create a procedural channel as an option to reach out to the partnership members regarding the availability of primary data such as legislation, prior to contacting the relevant State,
- Alerting one another when relevant data or reports become publicly available,
- Setting up a common calendar for regular committee and plenary meetings and shared events or conferences (see below);
- Explore how relevant tools (for example the EU translation tool) could be made available to other international organisations, as to increase access to translated legislation of countries.
- Reflect on possible dates for the second meeting which should focus on more targeted topics.

## Annex: Upcoming meetings and events

### 2024

8 July	Launch of World Bank report on work done in the anti-corruption area
11 July	African Anti-Corruption Day
28 Aug – 6 Sept	UNCAC IRG and Working Group on Prevention
September	OAS MESICIC Committee of Experts
3 October	EU Network against Corruption
8-11 October	OECD Working Group on Bribery
15 October	UNODC Expert Group Meeting on the update of the Practical Guide on ethics and compliance
16 October	UNODC Expert Group Meetings on incentives for business integrity in public procurement
4-8 November	UNCAC IRG
18-22 November	GRECO Plenary Meeting`
21 November	3rd EU-UNODC Dialogue on Anti-Corruption
10-13 December	OECD Working Group on Bribery

### 2025

17-21 February	UNCAC IRG
11-14 March	OECD Working Group on Bribery
24-25 March (tbc)	OECD GACIF
17-19 March	GRECO Plenary Meeting
March 2025	OAS MESICIC Committee of Experts
3-6 June	GRECO Plenary Meeting
10-13 June (tbc)	OECD Working Group on Bribery
16-20 June	UNCAC IRG and Working Group on Prevention
11 July	African Anti-Corruption Day
1-5 September	UNCAC IRG, Working Group on Asset Recovery and Expert Meeting on international cooperation
7-10 October	OECD Working Group on Bribery
18-21 November	GRECO Plenary Meeting
9-12 December	OECD Working Group on Bribery
Last Q of 2025 (tbc)	UNCAC COSP 11