

# **THE FIGHT AGAINST KLEPTOCRACY**

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***Collaborative Efforts to Combat High-Level Corruption***  
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Assistant Secretary O'Brien, Acting Assistant Attorney General Friedrich, colleagues:

I am pleased to participate in this important event to advance our joint efforts to prevent and combat high-level corruption. Thank you, Patrick, for bringing together so many of our private sector colleagues who work hand in hand with us all over the world to combat kleptocracy and, indeed, all forms of corruption. I am glad to see so many non-governmental organizations represented here today and hope this event gives renewed impetus to the fruitful collaborations we have with many of you.

## ***USG and State Department Interests and Efforts***

We do not need to elaborate to this audience the high costs of global corruption and the multiple ways that corruption undermines governments, threatens economies and the well-being of citizens in every country around the world, and greases the wheels of transnational organized crime and terrorism. Fighting corruption is a high US Government priority, both on foreign policy and national security grounds.

Since no country is immune from corruption and corrupt actors respect no borders, no country can successfully fight corruption alone. The State Department, with the help of our colleagues in other agencies, collaborates with our international partners on the bilateral, regional and global levels to promote the adoption and implementation of common standards and approaches against corruption.

Whereas little more than a decade ago corruption was a taboo subject, we now regularly cooperate through frank and open channels to bring corrupt actors to justice and deny them safe haven and the fruits of their corruption.

This cooperation produced the most comprehensive treaty to date, the United Nations Convention against Corruption, or "UNCAC," which has globalized the fight against corruption. Concluded in 2003, it already has 128 States Parties. The rapid pace of ratification or accession reflects the high degree of interest in the convention. The State Department is currently leading negotiations for the terms of reference for a new review mechanism.

The Convention establishes for the first time near global agreement on the legal framework countries need to adopt to fight and prevent corruption. Now, no longer do we have one country or set of countries telling others what they should be doing to combat corruption. For the first

time we have agreed on standards, so the question becomes not what we should be doing but how well are doing in implementing our commitments and what help states parties might need.

Now that standards are in place, our focus is promoting and supporting implementation. To that end, the State Department works in three areas. We promote and participate in mechanisms that review and spur implementation of existing commitments. We support regional initiatives that promote policy dialogue and sharing of good practices. Finally, we fund technical assistance to help countries implement their commitments, including by reforming their legal frameworks and institutions and building the capacity of their officials. The Department works closely with other government agencies, along with regional and multilateral organizations, to support projects throughout the globe.

Working closely with the Justice and Treasury Departments, we have also supported implementation of UNCAC's Asset Recovery chapter, which provides a novel framework for international legal cooperation on recovery of the proceeds of corruption.

Prior to the negotiation of the UNCAC, the United States promoted the conclusion of a series of regional and subject matter-specific treaties. Each represented a significant advance in the development of multilateral standards on corruption, and the USG continues to promote their implementation. These networks provide reformers a forum in which to spur each other on, and serve as a platform for the exchange and consideration of good practices.

However, to be clear, corruption is not merely a matter for action by developing economies. Developed economies must show leadership and keep their own houses clean. We have also worked with Group of Eight partners since the 2003 Evian Summit to adopt a wide variety of commitments on G8 and individual actions to address corruption.

Finally, we also have tools to pursue individual kleptocrats, under the U.S. policy of denial of safe haven to corrupt officials, those who corrupt them, and the proceeds of their corruption. The State Department administers the application of Presidential Proclamation 7750, issued in January 2004, which establishes the authority for the U.S. to deny or revoke visas to corrupt officials and those who corrupt them, when we determine the corruption adversely affects the U.S. national interests.

### ***Role of Non-Governmental Partners***

Efforts to address corruption will never be as successful if they rely on the action of government alone. Successful reform requires the collaboration of government and civil society.

At the State Department, we maintain an active dialogue with U.S. and international non-governmental organizations on our policy initiatives and programs. In many instances their input has informed or enriched our policy formulation and implementation. In other instances, we have collaborated with NGOs to draw upon their expertise to deliver technical assistance to our partner countries.

As a matter of policy, we urge similar engagement, and the transparency that facilitates it, by other countries. In the various multilateral anticorruption fora in which we participate, we encourage sharing of information and an appropriate role for civil society groups. These principles are reflected in the UNCAC, as well.

We hope that this collaboration will continue and deepen. To that end, we welcome the dialogue that this conference is intended to facilitate. I hope that the discussions today are not only reinforcing the collaboration we have enjoyed to date, but also identifying new areas in which we can work together in our shared long-term effort to fight corruption.