Commemoration of
International Anti-Corruption Day

Beirut, Lebanon
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Talking Points
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Excellency Mr. Ashraf Rifi, Minister of Justice and Chair of the Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network,

Distinguished Professors,

Dear Students,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be joining you today in this special event, not only because we are commemorating International Anti-Corruption Day, but also because of how we are commemorating it.

Today, in this room, we have with us more than 50 students and their professors from leading universities in Lebanon, in addition to ministers, parliamentarians, judges, and concerned representatives from the Government and civil society.

The commemoration of International Anti-Corruption Day this year holds two new distinctive characteristics:

(1) First, and on this very month, 10 years have now passed since the entry into force of the UN Convention against Corruption (the UNCAC);
(2) Second, it is the first time that we commemorate this Day after the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (the SDGs).

Lebanon ratified the UNCAC in 2009. This is a key Convention as it provides the most comprehensive and only global legal instrument against corruption. It strongly emphasizes prevention, provides guidance on how to criminalize corruption, and outlines requirements on how to enhance international cooperation and asset recovery.

The progress that Lebanon has made on implementing the Convention is considered to be very limited since its adoption in 2009. Some positive efforts can be noted over the last 3 years. Indeed, the establishment of a ministerial and technical anti-corruption committee in 2011 have led to sturdy efforts at the beginning, but have seen their pace slow down in the last years.

I would like to seize this opportunity to commend the work of the Ministry of Justice, in cooperation with key stakeholders, on areas such as asset recovery. Lebanon is indeed giving a good example worldwide on this issue.

No later than last month, in a major international anti-corruption conference in St. Petersburg, Lebanon signed Transparency International’s pledge, to increase
transparency and civil society participation in the review mechanism of the implementation of the UNCAC. It was the first Arab country to do so.

I would also like to applaud the work done by the Parliament of Lebanon - we are proud to be supporting their efforts - but also regret how the political stalemate has impeded the fruition of these efforts.

As you all know, civil society in Lebanon has played a critical role in shedding light on corruption in waste management. It continues to exercise oversight and exert pressure demanding a clean and efficient solution to this problem. I want to commend the efforts of our youth in their pursuit of a better Lebanon for all of us.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The SDGs are the most complete embodiment of the long accepted notion that good governance is critical for the achievement of development. Indeed, unlike earlier set development goals, the SDGs have dedicated a specific goal for this issue: Goal 16; on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all level.

If we look closer at this Goal, we see that its targets are directly related to corruption and include public access to information, developing accountable and transparent institutions, reducing corruption and bribery and strengthening the return of stolen assets.

Similarly to other Goals, two key questions come to mind for Goal 16: how do we achieve it, and how do we finance efforts for its achievement. An additional key question imposes itself for this particular Goal: how do we measure progress towards Goal 16?

Countries and the international development community should be prepared to take stronger steps in this direction, including the collection of available data, the generation of new data and the establishment of frameworks to analyze and use this data in a participatory manner to monitor progress.

UNDP stands ready to support Lebanon in its efforts towards achieving this Goal, and working with all concerned stakeholders to break the corruption chain.

I want to thank you all for participating in this commemoration, and wish you fruitful discussions.

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