

Message to the Conference on behalf of

**United Nations Secretary-General  
Mr. Kofi Annan**

on “Global Integrity in a Changing World”

Durban, South Africa, 10 October 1999

Under Secretary-General  
Executive Director  
United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention

Mr. President,  
Mr. Mayor,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning. It is my pleasure to convey the following message to this conference from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan.

Before addressing the important issue of “Global Integrity in a Changing World”, let me express, on behalf of myself and the United Nations, my thanks to the organisers and our host, the Government of South Africa for making this conference possible.

Let me start by repeating the bleak statement of Robert Klitgaard, a former professor at the University of Natal, and a widely respected expert on anti-corruption measures, which was quoted by President Thabo Mbeki in his opening statement to South Africa’s first national anti-corruption conference last November.

When, in a society, the shameless triumph, when the abuser is admired, when principles end and only opportunism prevails, when the insolent rule and the people tolerate it, when everything becomes corrupt

but the majority is quiet because their slice is waiting. When so many “whens” unite, perhaps it is time to review our activities, re-evaluate those around us, and return to ourselves.

Few will deny that this time has now arrived and that we need to think long and hard about integrity and good governance on a global level.

Today, we live in an interdependent, global village. The challenges that face humankind transcend national borders. Issues such as environment, crime, terrorism, and corruption carry no passports. They are beyond the power of any single nation to address on its own. Progress in the years ahead will require unprecedented levels of co-operation and collaboration among peoples of different cultures, religions and values. Only a global effort is capable of meeting global challenges.

It is increasingly recognised that integrity and good governance are essential building blocks for meeting the objectives of sustainable development, prosperity and peace. No two countries are precisely alike in this respect. Nevertheless, in all countries - whatever their cultural differences - good governance and integrity require the rule of law, effective state institutions, transparency and accountability in the management of public affairs, respect for human rights, and the meaningful participation of all citizens in the political processes and decisions affecting their lives.

The United Nations Secretariat and United Nations programmes and funds have supported good governance programmes in many developing countries and countries in transition. This support takes the form of analytical work, diagnostic research, assessment of needs, policy advice, technical assistance and advisory services. Support is provided to strengthen the functioning of specific institutions, such as the judiciary, parliaments and electoral bodies. We also assist with public sector financial management, privatisation efforts, information technology, civil service reforms and the empowerment of civil society organisations.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for example, believing that sustainable prosperity and stability cannot be achieved without good governance, has been increasing funds dedicated to this priority area. It now accounts for more than one third of all UNDP allocations. In 1997, UNDP convened the first ever International Conference on Governance for Sustainable Growth and Equity. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), reflecting the growing reliance of national Governments on local authorities, has focused increasingly on strengthening local capacity and promoting community participation. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) also operates a governance programme, promoting strategies for women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming.

Post-conflict situations entail particular needs. It is our view that measures to strengthen capacity for governance must permeate national and international responses to emergency situations, and should begin as early as possible.

The United Nations Centre for International Crime Prevention of the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention pays special attention to combating corruption. The Centre organises the quinquennial United Nations Congresses on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders which in the past discussed the impact of corruption on social and economic development. Next year, the Millennium Congress will deal with combating corruption in a special research workshop, the results of which are expected to be practical, allowing governments to follow up with concrete technical co-operation

9<sup>th</sup> International Anti-Corruption Conference (IACC), 10-15 October, 1999, Durban, South Africa

projects or activities.

Earlier this year, the Centre, jointly with its research arm, the United Nations Interregional Criminal Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), launched the Global Programme against Corruption. Our goal is to assist countries in building their own institutional capacity to prevent and fight the problem at the source. We hope that this programme will result in measures that will strike at the heart of corruption by providing technical co-operation to a selection of developing and transitional countries. Hungary, Lebanon and Romania have already started the implementation of national programmes on the basis of this Global Programme. We are in the process of finalising an agreement with the Government of South Africa, seeking to assist the Government in its effort to curb corruption in the criminal justice system.

Other international and regional institutions have undertaken various initiatives. The Council of Europe has established a multidisciplinary group on corruption and recently adopted a Convention on the issue. The European Union has agreed on a Protocol on Corruption. The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other regional financial institutions are taking steps to promote good governance and integrity. In February this year, United States Vice President Al Gore organised the Global Forum of Fighting Corruption and Safeguarding Integrity among Justice and Security Officials. Parallel simultaneous events focused specifically on developing countries. The effort is now truly global.

At the end of the twentieth century there are in fact few problems more global than corruption. Fighting graft in one country means better business for all countries. A recent IMF study showed that countries with extensive corruption have less of their GDP going into investment, and lower growth rates. These same countries also invest less in education, which is the best development guarantee for future generations.

A lack of integrity in the public administration undermines the basic system of checks and balances that operate in a free society. When a bureaucracy, political party or judicial system becomes infected, the results can shake the foundations of even the most advanced nations.

According to the World Bank, widespread corruption can cause the growth rate of a country to be one-half to one percentage points lower than that of a similar country with less corruption.

Corruption is not inherent to any one society. Its reach is global. Many Governments, global business and international organisations have now stopped looking the other way. The time is ending when the subject was considered to be taboo because it might embarrass people in high places or might reflect negatively on a country's image. All countries have joined together in the United Nations General Assembly and adopted an International Code of Conduct for Public Officials and a Declaration against Corruption and Bribery in International Commercial Transactions.

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While corruption is a serious world-wide phenomenon, it is especially destructive in developing countries with their delicate economic situations. It has critically hobbled and skewed Africa's development. There is no point in pretending that this is not true. Addressing the problem of corruption requires targeting both payer and recipient. We welcome the initiative of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development to reduce the scope for corruption in aid-funded procurement. We also welcome the signing of the Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions, which commits signatories to introducing legislation defining bribery and sanctions to punish it. These are important first steps, but much more still needs to be done. African Governments in particular must get tough on this issue, and make the fight against corruption a genuine priority. The costs of not doing so are very high in lost resources, lost foreign investment, distorted decision-making, and failing public confidence.

This conference, the first International Anti-Corruption Conference to be held in Africa, gives me an opportunity to reiterate 'my call to the Organisation of African Unity to devise by the next year a uniform African convention on the conduct of public officials and the transparency of public administration.

We must start working together to reinvent governance for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We must provide the framework of rules, institutions and established practices that set limits and give incentives for the behaviour of individuals, organisations and firms. Global governance requires a common core of values, standards and attitudes, a widely felt sense of responsibility and obligations — not just by individuals, but by governments, corporations and civil society organisations. The core values of respect for life, liberty, justice, equality, tolerance, mutual respect and integrity underlie the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They now need to be guiding objectives of globalisation with a human face. I am confident that this Conference will further raise the commitment among ourselves to global ethics, justice and the human rights of all people.

In that spirit, please accept my best wishes for a successful conference.