

“If we’re to truly beat corruption, we need to instil a culture of lawfulness today”

*By Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
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Each year, on 9 December, the world marks International Anti-Corruption Day. We treat this not only as a means to raise awareness, but also as an opportunity to showcase innovative ways that people and organizations can work together to counter this scourge.

Corruption affects each and every one of us: our healthcare suffers when funds for medical equipment are stolen; our education systems are hit when school budgets are illegally siphoned off; and our political institutions are undermined when bribes are paid and kickbacks sought.

The transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to which the world committed last year, has put efforts to fight corruption in context and has given us a new perspective. Preventing and fighting corruption is an essential investment to the infrastructure that we need to put in place to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Our challenge is to create and sustain effective, transparent and accountable institutions at all levels.

The task that we have ahead of us therefore is to develop a new norm – one where corruption is not seen as part of life, or as a part of doing business, or where impunity is accepted.

But what can we do to achieve this?

Last year, the world’s key policymakers and practitioners dealing with crime prevention and criminal justice gathered in Doha for the 13th United Nations Crime Congress. Over 5,000 people from across the globe attended the Congress which adopted the Doha Declaration, a solemn and robust commitment by the world’s Governments to promote peaceful, corruption-free and inclusive societies because they are essential to achieving sustainable development.

My office, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, has rolled out a set of concrete actions to help countries build up the institutions and put in place the measures necessary to implement the Doha Declaration and thus prevent and fight crime, including corruption.

One of the pillars of this programme is the ‘Education for Justice’ initiative which works with primary, secondary and tertiary education institutions. It looks to prevent crime through education activities and curricula which will help educators teach the next generation to understand and address problems that undermine the rule of law. We believe that the best way to achieve the peaceful, corruption-free and inclusive societies the world needs for sustainable development is to ultimately promote a culture of lawfulness.

Building respect for the rule of law, and instilling its core values among the world’s future adults directly complements our activities concerning strengthening today’s legal and institutional frameworks. As the guardian of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, UNODC works with States on a daily basis to devise responses to this crime. The Convention is the world’s only legally binding international anti-corruption instrument. With 180 States parties having ratified the convention, it is nearing universal participation and is bolstered by a peer review mechanism, where States parties assess progress towards effective implementation.

This International Anti-Corruption Day, let’s work together to build a ‘new norm’, one of respect for the rule of law and rooting out corruption.