

**Address of Mr. Arjun Ahluwalia
MACS 2012 - 2014 Class Speaker**

9 December 2014

Ladies and Gentlemen, distinguished guests and colleagues,
Brothers and Sisters,

First, a thank you to the distinguished guests. Mr. Ocampo you were one of my personal heroes and inspirations through law school, so I am deeply honoured and grateful to have you speak at our graduation.

Further thanks to the very capable leadership of the International Anti-Corruption Academy, including the administration and faculty, and last but not least, the students, whom have granted me the great honour and privilege of representing them at the culmination of this extraordinary 18 month journey to the world's first professional Masters in Anti-Corruption Studies.

On a cold and frigid morning in Laxenburg in February 2013, a group of strangers were first introduced to each other, and set out together on the herculean task of studying this amorphous beast of corruption. As I reflect on this extraordinary experience nearly 2 years later - I find myself reflecting on two defining aspects.

First - the students. To those of you meeting our class for the first time - we are 26 very different individuals coming from 26 very different worlds. We are divided geographically from nearly every continent, from north and south, east and west, from developing and developed countries as well as transition economies in between.

We have amongst us: national prosecutors, senior police officers, diplomats, specialized investigators, anti-corruption agency officials, central bankers, NGO workers, civil society activists, lawyers and private sector professionals - and even one ex-professional footballer.

We have amongst us an amazing variety of special attributes, from the incredible oral skills of one prosecutor member of our class who's soaring oratory reminded us of JFK or Winston Churchill, to an NGO activist who had thrived in conflict zones, to the magnificent attention to detail exhibited by our resident central banker in her immaculate presentations, or how about our very own James Dean who rode to school on his Harley Davidson and could recite movie lines from any Hollywood movie spanning 50 years, not to mention the astounding wisdom of some of our colleagues who had over 20 years of practical experience working in diverse fields.

The students were constantly inspired by one another. Above all, the enthusiasm, passion and iron clad determination of many of our classmates in anti-corruption agencies and civil

society working in very difficult circumstances with few resources and odds stacked massively against them, marked them as true heroes in the struggle against corruption.

Second – the program. Inter-disciplinary in every sense of the word. The program was structured in a way that we, with the expert guidance of an eminent faculty, dissected, fragmented, and investigated the beast of corruption extremely methodically. We systematically dissected this beast by surgically operating on “corruption” on the operating table that was our class, using economic, political, sociological, criminological, philosophical and psychological tools. We analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. We were pulled in extreme directions and from extreme perspectives, from studying corruption from hard data and an econometric basis, to understanding the Greek philosophers’ views of Socrates and Plato, to playing with psychological theories and understanding rationalization processes, to legal, sociological and criminological theories. We surveyed this beast of “corruption” through the eyes of law enforcement, a civil servant, an NGO worker, civil society activists, the general public, the public and private sector, the victims, the perpetrators, and everything in between. Holistic to the extreme.

And what of all this pushing and pulling from discipline to discipline? And what of all this diversity of our classmates? The combination of this set of students, with IACA’s faculty and program, led to that most important goal in any educational pursuit. Those Eureka moments. With each different member of faculty, we entered their world and studied corruption from their lens and perspective – sometimes taking us very far from our comfort zone and our comfortable prejudices and view points. The lectures by the highly distinguished set of professors steadily broke down our hard-set internal prejudices and viewpoints, and forced upon us a freedom and liberalness to remain open minded and highly aware of the complexities and the nuances that are necessarily related to any study of corruption. Along with being transported completely out of the box by our professors, the mind-bending debates between students from different backgrounds invariably always led to those priceless Eureka moments. To use an American colloquial term, our minds were completely blown.

A key moment for me was when IACA had kindly invited our class to attend the Conference of States Parties for the Convention Against Corruption in Panama. I was struck by how our small class of students, brought from such diverse walks of life, was analogous to the international community, and international discourse on anti-corruption. Everything that happened here over the last 18 months is akin to watching the world debate how to combat corruption, however, we, as a class that grew together, took time to understand each other’s views, perspectives and experiences, learnt and evolved new perspectives and grew into a more cohesive group, understanding what unified us, and respecting our differences and how we could learn from each other. I submit that it is in this spirit and atmosphere that the world’s stakeholders should work together.

On a personal note – at many times through this journey, it was easy to become disheartened and frustrated given the staggering scale of corruption worldwide and the feelings of powerlessness in the face of such intimidating prevalence. However, between this diverse group of 26 students, this driven administration of IACA and the passion of our

stellar faculty – the one aspect that unites them all is their underlying and unwavering belief in principles of justice and fairness. They continually reaffirmed my faith that our work is timely and necessary, and that each of us here are not alone.

The outstanding feature of IACA is that it is a lightning rod for all those who make it a part of their life's work to combat corruption. Its most beautiful quality is that with this inaugural masters class, it has birthed an entire family, a band of brothers and sisters united in their purpose to protect the powerless from the powerful, the vulnerable from impunity, and weak from the strong. The birth of IACA and the birth of this program is a statement of intent to the world that despite our diversity and differences, we can be an additional step forward for humanity in the causes of justice, fairness and all things good.

On behalf of the first graduating class of IACA's masters in Anti-Corruption Studies – thank you to the faculty and administration, and to Dean Martin Kreutner, for creating and constructing this very necessary and very timely lightning rod, and this beautifully diverse family strongly united in its purpose to fight corruption side by side, and step by step. In the words of Antoine St Exupery in the children's classic *The Little Prince* “you become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed”. Now that we are armed with the first masters in anti-corruption on the planet, it is our primary responsibility to take forward to the world a nuanced, principled and systematic system to combat this beast of corruption.

Thank you.