



INTERNATIONAL  
ANTI-CORRUPTION  
ACADEMY

***Master in Anti-Corruption Studies***  
**Class Graduation**

Laxenburg, Austria  
7 December 2018

*Laudatio*

by the Dean of IACA

**Martin Kreutner**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

***Dear Graduates,***

Distinguished Members of  
the Board of Governors,  
the Academic Defence Committee,  
the Faculty and IACA Staff,

Excellencies and Members of the Diplomatic Community,  
The Mayor of Laxenburg,  
Representatives of IACA's partners,  
Families and Friends of the MACS Graduates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Welcome to this day of celebration!

We are gathered here, just two days before International Anti-Corruption Day, 09 December, to congratulate and celebrate students from 17 countries around the world who are graduating from IACA's *Master in Anti-Corruption Studies*, or MACS, programme.

They come from Afghanistan, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Brazil, Denmark, Egypt, Ghana, India, Malawi, Netherlands, Nigeria, Oman, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, and the United States of America.

Our graduates work in government ministries, anti-corruption commissions, international organizations, private companies, law enforcement bodies, NGOs, and academia.

And, Ladies and Gentlemen, they have successfully completed the MACS in parallel with — yes, *in parallel with* — their demanding jobs in anti-corruption and compliance.

Throughout the programme, our graduates have been supported by families, friends, and employers. Graduates, I am sure you will join me in thanking the many people who have helped you over the last two years. *Chapeau* to all of you!

Today is first and foremost a festive occasion. But a graduation ceremony is always much more than just a celebration.

It's a time to reflect, and it's the start of a new chapter in your professional lives – and consequently maybe also on your private paths.

We will soon turn the page to 2019. For sure this will be another challenging year in the anti-corruption arena, but also, I hope, a year of continued progress and development.

So today I want to highlight three big anti-corruption threats that I see over the next 12 months and beyond, and how you, as MACS graduates, can play a leading role in addressing them.

These threats are:

- first, to **critical thinking**,
- second, to the **human element**,
- and third, to **cooperation and dialogue**.

Let me start with **critical thinking**, because this to me is the very core, the very essence, of academic life.

Harvard Professor Steven Pinker in his recently published book “Enlightenment Now” states: *“More than ever, the ideals of reason, science, humanism, and progress need a wholehearted defence. [...] The Enlightenment has worked – perhaps the greatest story seldom told. And because this triumph is so unsung, the underlying ideals [...] are unappreciated as well.”* So what happened?

I strongly believe that academic discourse should be like the *agora* in ancient Greece, a meeting place where diverse views, opinions, and perspectives are freely available to everyone. And people there were allowed and encouraged to talk openly and freely, the labourer with the merchant, the nobleman with the working man, the politician with the peasant.

Only through exposure to other sides of the argument — *audiatur et altera pars* — can our critical thinking flourish. And only by constantly testing our assumptions,

using, e.g., the model of *hypothesis - antithesis - synthesis*, can we advance our understanding: may the stronger argument prevail.

Today, however, I see deeply worrying signs around the world that critical thinking is being undermined and even replaced by trendier, far less rigorous, often post-factual approaches.

I'm referring in particular to so-called overbearing "political correctness" and subsequent trends.

Let me be clear: it all began with the entirely noble intention of opposing seriously insensitive language and behaviour, and addressing historic injustices. But these days, political correctness is all too often a tool for censoring and self-censoring, for silencing the other and, in parallel, for self-immunization, and for stifling and intimidating intellectual debate: think twice or even a third time before you open your mouth! In this context, German Prof. Andreas Reckwitz in his famous book "Society of Singularities" has recently analyzed: "*While the logic of the common is connected with processes of societal rationalization and objectification, the [current] narrative of the singularity is associated with processes of social culturalization and affect intensification.*" Or as Bernhard Pörksen has stressed: "*We are transforming into an 'indignation democracy'. [...] The furore about the furore of the other has become long ago the normal case in communication*" and interaction.

The MACS programme, by contrast, Ladies and Gentlemen, strongly emphasizes critical thinking throughout, in both theoretical and practical matters. It does so through an interdisciplinary curriculum, a master's thesis, professors and practitioners from diverse cultural and geographical backgrounds, and a student body from all parts of the globe.

As MACS graduates, therefore, you have the ability, and indeed the *responsibility*, to resist these fashionable attacks on critical thinking.

I would urge you all to keep questioning your assumptions about your anti-corruption and compliance work. Stay hungry for more knowledge and for broader, deeper understanding.

Finally, and here I quote the influential philosopher Immanuel Kant, *have the courage of using your own understanding* to achieve the common good. Kant, on the question of “What is enlightenment?” answers “*Enlightenment is humankind’s emergence from its self-incurred immaturity (Unmündigkeit).*”

He argues that the immaturity is self-inflicted not from a lack of understanding, but from the lack of courage to use one's reason, intellect, and wisdom without the guidance of another. He exclaims that the motto therefore shall be *Sapere aude!* – Dare to understand!

After all, using one’s understanding is central to human existence.

This brings me to the second big threat in anti-corruption in 2019 and beyond: it is vis-a-vis the **human element**.

What do I mean by this, Ladies and Gentlemen?

My point is that we should never forget the human dimension in preventing and fighting corruption. This is especially so given the rapid advance of emerging technologies such as big data analytics, artificial intelligence, and blockchain, which will become an even bigger part of all our lives in the years to come.

For sure, these technologies have the potential to play a positive role in anti-corruption and compliance efforts, and we should welcome that. But there is a threat too: namely, the risk that they could easily be misused to oversee, scrutinize, and observe people on a 24/7 basis.

This is something we must avoid.

I firmly believe that technology-enabled efforts to fight and prevent corruption – well recognizing the great potential they carry – should stay, must stay within human rights frameworks.

Furthermore, I feel equally strongly that humans — in all their complexity and diversity — and their interactions must not be limited to a dichotomy of digital “0’s” and “1’s”, driven by self-dynamic algorithms, unforgiving machines, and eternal big data — but that humans shall be governed by humans, and human beings only.

Fortunately, human interaction is central to the MACS programme, and indeed to IACA's overall mission of empowering professionals.

I hope your studies here have shown the unique value of face-to-face classroom debate and discussion, and of direct exchanges and knowledge-sharing with your fellow students and our faculty.

This is something that purely online or distance learning programmes, for all their other qualities, simply can't provide.

So while I certainly encourage you to embrace emerging technologies in your daily work, I also urge you not to forget, yet rather uphold unwaveringly the human element.

Fighting corruption, as you know, can be a lonely task. We should not make it even lonelier by relying too much on technology at the expense of human rights and needs, and neglecting personal interaction, collective action, and friendships.

This leads me to the third threat, and one I have highlighted on many previous occasions: the growing threat to **cooperation and dialogue** around the world.

We see this in rising tensions between major geopolitical powers, dumbed-down public discourse, and the spread of fake news, to highlight just a few of the many symptoms. The result is a widespread lack of trust, and a crisis of leadership in politics, business, media, NGOs, and other sectors.

This is weakening our collective efforts to address the major challenges of today. Corruption – if we follow recent statements of the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres - is one of these trials, one which is increasingly international and cross-border in nature.

Even worse, corruption threatens to undermine the entire UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is the world's best hope for a safer and more prosperous future.



Here let me quote the former UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, who spoke to IACA students and alumni in this very hall just three weeks ago. He said: *“There is no room or time for corruption to persist and delay our efforts to fulfil the Sustainable Development Goals. We should work together to make this world a better world.”*

Graduates, I call on you, indeed on all of us, to redouble our efforts to promote cooperation in tackling corruption at the national, regional, and international level. And I call on you to be Sherpas and ‘ambassadors’ for dialogue and discourse, for international cooperation and multilateralism.

I strongly encourage you to continue benefiting from the global contacts and friendships you have made on the MACS programme. And please do take advantage of IACA’s alumni network of anti-corruption and compliance professionals in more than 150 countries, which you are about to join.

Building cooperation is easier said than done, I know. But stick to the task and don’t give up. Cooperation can lead to steady progress in the fight against corruption. And this evolution, I think, is preferable to revolution.

Yes, there are big potential threats as we head towards the third decade of this century. But I have every confidence in your abilities to address these challenges, as previous MACS graduates are doing around the world.

You are the anti-corruption and compliance leaders of tomorrow. So as you start writing the next chapter in your professional lives, think for a moment what the title of it might be.

What title would you choose? And what would you like to achieve in this new chapter?

Let me leave you with these thoughts.

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

As another MACS programme concludes, there are many people and organizations to thank, and I want to pay tribute here to as many as I can.



I will start by expressing my deep appreciation for the leadership of Elena Helmer, IACA's former Director of Academic Programmes almost to the end of this MACS class, and also my gratitude to Pawan Kumar Sinha for so ably guiding the students through to today.

Let me also praise the hard work and dedication of IACA's Academic Programmes team: Petra Susac, Khusraw Parwez (himself a MACS graduate), Alena Gustafikova, Bernadette Gilhofer, and Martin Zapata, as well as the many interns who supported the team's work.

My sincere thanks go to all the renowned academics and practitioners from across the globe, both in-house and visiting faculty, for sharing their knowledge and insights with the MACS students.

The master's thesis is a central part of the MACS, so my gratitude goes to our international academic Defence Committee for supervising the students towards the end of the programme.

We are very fortunate, indeed honoured, to have had an outstanding Defence Committee chair in Professor Peter Rosner of the University of Vienna, who as many of you know is a long-standing friend of IACA.

Professor Rosner, it's a pleasure to have you here with us today, and we very much look forward to hearing your remarks shortly.

My gratitude extends, of course, to the other distinguished Committee members: Professor Johannes Maerk, lecturer at the University of Vienna, and Professores and experts Eduard Ivanov, Pawan Kumar Sinha, and Elena Helmer from IACA.

For their valuable contributions in evaluating the master's theses, I would like to thank Professor Hans-Heiner Kühne of the University of Trier, who is also the Chairperson of IACA's International Academic Advisory Board, and Professor Ilker Ataç from the University of Vienna.

In addition to classes here at IACA's campus, the MACS programme also has off-site modules that give students an even broader educational experience. My sincere appreciation, therefore, goes to the World Bank Group Integrity Vice Presidency for



hosting Module 6 of this programme in Washington, D.C., United States of America, in January this year.

IACA seeks the broadest possible participation in all of its programmes and trainings. In this regard we are extremely grateful for the generosity of the Siemens Integrity Initiative and the Austrian Development Agency for providing scholarships that enable students from Least Developed Countries to take part in this MACS cohort and beyond. Thank you so much.

My special appreciation also goes to IACA's host community, the picturesque township of Laxenburg. Your warm hospitality and support enable us to make our own humble contribution to empowering professionals from all around the globe, and to Austria's reputation as a hub of international organizations and multilateral dialogue.

I am also particularly grateful to all IACA's staff for supporting this MACS class throughout their studies and helping us to prepare for this ceremony.

Last, and certainly not least, I hope you will join me in thanking the Klimt Quartett for their excellent musical accompaniment.

*Graduates,*

Nelson Mandela once said that "education has the power to change the world". Or, as Malala Yousafzai, another winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, has echoed: "Education is hope. Education is peace."

The MACS programme has pushed you and challenged you. I hope it has also *inspired* you to continue making a difference as anti-corruption and compliance leaders in your own countries, regions, and beyond.

However, Nelson Mandela also added that we must not rest: *"I have walked that long road to freedom. I have tried not to falter; I have made missteps along the way. But I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I*

*can only rest for a moment, for with freedom come responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not ended.”*

You graduate today with our congratulations, our admiration, and, of course, our very best wishes for all your future endeavours.

So enjoy the day, enjoy your great academic achievement and — in that spirit — ***gaudeamus igitur!***

Thank you.