

Third International Conference on Financing for Development

High-Level Segment

Statement by

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Mr. President,
Distinguished Heads of State and Heads of Governments,
Mr. Secretary General of the United Nations,
Ministers, Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues and Friends,

It is an honour for me to address this Third International Conference on Financing for Development and to share thoughts on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Let me start by extending a warm “Thank you!” to the people and the government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the United Nations for giving us this opportunity and for so warmly hosting us here.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is a hugely significant year in our efforts to secure a sustainable, equitable, and prosperous future for all peoples of the United Nations and all people on this globe. Future generations will hold us accountable for the success of commitments we make at this juncture in 2015, also the 70th anniversary of the United Nations. So our work in Addis Ababa this week — and at the United Nations Summit in New York in September — is vitally important.

When I consider our chances of success, I feel both optimistic and afraid.

I am optimistic that the sustainable development agenda is achievable — provided we work together to turn the tide towards greater prosperity and equity. But I am also afraid that all the SDGs — and their financing — run the risk of being severely undermined; undermined by the global scourge of corruption.

Make no mistake, this would be a tragedy — a tragedy for us and a tragedy for future generations.

Corruption is not some abstract problem. It is the antithesis vis-à-vis human rights, the venom vis-à-vis the rule of law, the poison for prosperity and development, and the reverse of equity and equality.

The financial costs of corruption are shocking enough: more than 5% of global GDP (or 2.6 trillion USD), with over 1 trillion USD paid in bribes each year, according to the World Bank. These are just the costs we can measure. But what about the unmeasurable costs of lives ruined by corruption — children whose schools are never built, critically ill patients who

don't get the medicines they need, voters whose elections are stolen by oligarchs, and all the victims of corrupt justice systems?

Quite simply and tragically, corruption is about life and death.

If future development is to be truly sustainable, then the fight against corruption must be a prominent part of the Post-2015 agenda — and in particular, its implementation.

Investing in anti-corruption education and empowering professionals is the smart way towards sustainable development, safeguarding human rights, and strengthening the rule of law. And the International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA), the organization I have the honour to lead, is fully committed to playing a central role in this common cause.

Mr. President, IACA is a unique global institution. On the one hand, it is a fast-growing international organization that brings together two thirds of the world's population by way of its constituency. At the same time, it is a world-leading educational institution that empowers anti-corruption professionals across the globe.

The idea of IACA arose at the United Nations Crime Congress in Bangkok in 2005. Five years later, in 2010, I appeared before that forum in Salvador to introduce the way to its implementation. In March 2011, the vision turned into reality when IACA became an intergovernmental organization.

Since that day, IACA has gone from strength to strength.

On the educational side, our capacity building and technical assistance programmes as well as our tailor-made trainings have already empowered more than 700 professionals from 140 countries in fighting corruption and upholding the rule of law.

As an example, last week IACA's fifth annual Summer Academy welcomed participants from more than 40 countries around the world, from Australia to Zimbabwe, from Nigeria to the United States, from China to the Russian Federation. And we plan to launch regional versions of this unique programme in Latin America and Africa in late 2015 and early 2016.

Our flagship Master in Anti-Corruption Studies (MACS) programme, the first of its kind in the world, saw its first class graduate last December. The second class is studying at IACA as I speak, and the third will start its studies in October this year. In addition, we are preparing to launch another Master's programme on private sector anti-corruption, compliance, and collective action.

All these programmes and activities generate real and lasting impact, or as one of our participants from Sierra Leone recently said, “The programme at IACA has been an absolute game-changer for me.”

As an international organization, IACA now has 64 Parties, bringing together over 5 billion people worldwide. We are an observer to the United Nations General Assembly, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and the Council of Europe’s Group of States against Corruption (GRECO). Apart from these bodies and our own Assembly of Parties, our work has been recognized by the United Nations, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Organization of American States (OAS), and many more.

Just recently, on 2 July, the Human Rights Council of the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution at its 29th regular session in Geneva. This important resolution explicitly recognized the negative impact of corruption on human rights and sustainable development, and the importance of anti-corruption education. Furthermore, it noted with appreciation the capacity-building activities and specialized curricula developed by UNODC and IACA, respectively.

Mr. President, we are gathered here in Addis Ababa this week to launch a strong global partnership for financing sustainable development, and to make sure that resources go where they are most needed.

Since IACA was established, we have paid close attention to the recommendations and implementation of the 2002 Monterrey Consensus and the 2008 Doha Declaration on financing for development. These include advancing the goals of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), which has been, and remains, the cornerstone of IACA’s work. We therefore look forward to the sixth session of the Conference of the States Parties to the UNCAC, to be held in Saint Petersburg in November this year, as an excellent opportunity to strengthen the implementation of the Convention and its Review Mechanism. And we also look forward to our own Assembly of Parties, which will convene in Vienna from 9-11 December 2015.

A relentless fight against corruption must be a key part of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the proposed SDGs.

The draft outcome document for this conference pledges “to strengthen domestic governance and institutions and to combat corruption at all levels”, and “reaffirm the importance of good governance, the rule of law, and combatting corruption”. It also refers to the role of business in preventing and fighting corruption.

But the draft says — and I have to emphasize this — that the Post-2015 Development Agenda, including the SDGs, “must be underpinned by equally ambitious and credible means of implementation”.

This focus on implementation is absolutely crucial, so let me suggest two practical steps that can help make a sustainable future a reality.

The first, as I have said, is anti-corruption education and empowerment as well as the exchange of best practices. IACA’s world-class programmes, capacity-building activities, and networks of professionals around the world, will thus further contribute to the achievement of the SDGs, as was emphasized in a resolution unanimously adopted by IACA’s Assembly of Parties in Baku in November 2014.

The second is the “Let crime pay principle”, which was endorsed in a resolution adopted by our Assembly of Parties in Bangkok in 2013 and which is also recognized by the UNCAC in its Article 62.2.(c). By giving special consideration to voluntarily allotting a percentage of the money or a corresponding value of proceeds of crime or property confiscated, Member States may contribute to IACA’s anti-corruption efforts, and, therefore, to the SDGs.

And by investing in anti-corruption education and empowerment, through organizations such as the United Nations and IACA, respectively, you can be assured that your contribution will have maximum impact.

At the start of my remarks, I said that I feel both optimistic and afraid about the prospects for sustainable development. What makes me optimistic is the transformative impact that anti-corruption capacity building, education, and empowerment can have and already has.

On an institutional and personal note, I thus pledge my full support to this conference, to the SDG Summit in New York in September, and - most importantly - to the successful implementation of the SDGs. Let us jointly stay together and work together to make this world a better and fairer place, a place with less corruption but sustainable development for all.

Thank you.