

United Nations Sustainable Development Summit 2015

High-Level Segment

Statement by

Mr. Martin Kreutner

Dean & Executive Secretary of the

International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA)

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President,
Heads of State and Government,
Mr. Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues and Friends,

We have all witnessed today history in the making. We have seen the adoption of a comprehensive Post-2015 Development Agenda with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the 169 targets. And by achieving that, we have also witnessed the most consultative and comprehensive path, the most inclusive and illustrated process ever, reaching out to and taking onboard all relevant stakeholders of our societies, of our peoples, of the global community.

It is thus a great honour for me to be here with you on this memorable day and address the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit. Let me start by commending the Member States of the United Nations, all stakeholders involved, and – in particular – by paying tribute to the Secretary General, H.E. Ban Ki-moon, and his staff, for his leadership, his devotion, and his dedication. We have come a long way, and we have reached a point at this day, where it is fair to allow humble feelings of proudness.

However, Mr. President, we will all be judged by concrete and tangible results, in a world that is entering into turbulent times. We are facing a series of mounting, perhaps unprecedented, global challenges – economic uncertainty, huge numbers of refugees, increasing distrust among leading powers, and climate change, to name just a few. What is more, we must address these challenges at a time of declining trust in political, institutional, and corporate leadership, as well as scepticism about the ability of national and international actors to make the world a better and fairer place.

So in this context, I want to talk today about two journeys that the world must take between this summit and 2030. And I want to urge you to consider how closely interrelated they are. Ideally, it shall be rather one comprehensive avenue, one compass for actions that sets our trajectory and shines the light for the way forward.

The first one involves fulfilling an ambitious and inspiring global Agenda with 17 new SDGs, aimed at securing a better future for all human beings on this planet. And the second involves increasing our efforts to fight corruption everywhere, in all its forms.

Let me be clear: this second, anti-corruption journey is not an optional extra. Nor is it a small part of some global policy buffet, to be tasted hesitantly and then left on the plate.

On the contrary, a strong, relentless fight against corruption, with leadership from the very top, both nationally and internationally, both in the political but also in the corporate world, is essential for realizing this sustainable development Agenda of ours.

Look at our record in meeting the Millennium Development Goals. There were real achievements in reducing extreme poverty and child mortality, and increasing the number of girls going to school globally, for example. But it is no secret that corruption, at the same time, greatly hampered the fulfilment of the MDGs.

The good news is that by multiplying our anti-corruption efforts, we can make sure that the SDGs meet an even more fortunate fate.

This will be a huge task, because we are facing a formidable opponent. Corruption is an evil that knows no boundaries. It is present across all continents, all sectors and societies, and costs more than 5 per cent of global GDP; it also adds 5 to 10 per cent to any single contract in business.

Mr. President, corruption hits the world's most vulnerable people the hardest. Research suggests that in countries where more than 60 per cent of the population pay bribes to receive public services, more women die in childbirth, fewer people have access to clean water, and more young people are illiterate.

As I have said in many other high-level fora, corruption 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. Most fundamentally, it erodes trust and confidence and contributes to the collapse of societies and economies.

Encouragingly, the global anti-corruption movement has already travelled a long way since it started about 20 years ago. The OECD Anti-Bribery Convention came into force in 1999, and – having global outreach – the United Nations Convention against Corruption entered into force in 2005 and implemented a state-owned review mechanism in 2009. There is also a growing awareness, among both political leaders and the public, of corruption's devastating effects.

The International Anti-Corruption Academy, the organization I have the honour to lead, is proud to have actively contributed to the Post-2015 Development Agenda process. We have done so by repeatedly emphasizing the necessity of making good governance and the Rule of Law, including strong and stable, fair and just anti-corruption regimes, an explicit component of it.

So I am delighted to see strong anti-corruption language in the outcome document of this summit, in particular under Goal 16, which aims to “substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms,” “develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels”, and “promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all”.

Just as encouragingly, the outcome document also recognizes that an inspiring vision needs daily implementation. This is absolutely crucial if the SDGs are to become reality – and this is where anti-corruption efforts are most needed.

The anti-corruption agenda has significantly broadened its perspective since the mid-1990s. Back then, it consisted of a single pillar: criminal law and enforcement. Today, there are three more: prevention, education and awareness, and international cooperation.

IACA’s activities span all three of these additional pillars, empowering anti-corruption professionals across the globe. We are an independent intergovernmental organization with an ever-growing constituency of 64 Parties that brings together over 5 billion people, or two thirds of the world’s population. IACA also is a post-secondary educational institution that offers technical assistance, capacity-building, world-class anti-corruption programmes, and related research.

In July of this year, the Human Rights Council of the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution that explicitly recognized the negative impact of corruption on human rights and sustainable development, and the significance of anti-corruption education. In this context, it noted with appreciation the capacity-building activities and specialized curricula developed by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and IACA, respectively.

In little more than four years, IACA’s programmes and trainings have empowered professionals from about 140 countries around the world, and in the coming months we will deliver new programmes in Latin America and Africa. We also offer a Master in Anti-Corruption Studies, the first course of its kind in the world.

Nelson Mandela once said that “education has the power to change the world”. In our context, it is fair to argue that anti-corruption education has the power to help us achieve the SDGs and “transform the world”; or as Malala Yousefzai touched us all this morning by saying, “Education is hope. Education is peace.”

Mr. President, I am confident that, if we unite in a spirit of global partnership, then the fight against corruption will prevail and the SDGs will become reality, so that we successfully complete the two journeys, on one avenue, as I mentioned at the start. Investing in anti-corruption education and empowerment is the smart way towards sustainable development, safeguarding human rights, and strengthening the rule of law on the road to 2030 and beyond.

Let us thus be inspired by the vision of this new Agenda, and energized and focused in our daily efforts. On behalf of IACA and on a personal note, I pledge my full support to this summit and to the successful implementation of the SDGs.

Thank you for your attention.