

Virtual side event of the 47<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council:

## Preventive role of human rights education in fighting negative impact of corruption

Thursday, 8 July, 13:30-14:30

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

- It is a pleasure to address this side event on the Preventive role of human rights education in fighting the negative impact of corruption. I would like to thank the Permanent Mission of Poland & the Permanent Secretariat of the Community of Democracies for inviting me to take part.
- The effect of corruption on human rights, and vis versa, are areas which come into focus in IACA's masters' programmes and our other trainings. At the International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA) we view corruption as a violation of human rights. Our masters' programmes focus on both public sector and private sector corruption and contain modules that cover both understanding the relationship between corruption and human rights, and corruption and the rule of law.
- IACA is both an international organisation and an institution of higher learning. It is the only IO mandated to focus solely on the fight against corruption. As you can imagine having a focus on anti-corruption education gives me an interesting perspective on today's topic. As I just mentioned, our programmes focus on anti-corruption education and address human right in that context. In a way we come at the issue from a different angle than the one laid out in the title of today's event. We aim to prevent human rights violations through anti-corruption education.
- Of course, both human rights education and anti-corruption education are very complementary fields and I believe that human rights education can have a strong preventative role in fighting corruption.
- Corruption itself comes in various guises. Some of these might not be illegal in all countries, because they have not been criminalised or listed as a corrupt act. Yet they

are corrupt by a wider definition and can be a detriment to society as well as violations of human rights. Examples include nepotism, conflicts of interest and clientelism. Human rights education can play a vital role in reigning in these forms of corruption by increasing pressure on governments to amend their legal instruments to align with international standards such as the UNCAC.

- The strength of the rule of law is a factor in our societies which has a direct impact on both the level and detrimental effects of corruption and the protection of human rights. Corruption and the weak rule of law have self-reinforcing mechanisms. Recognizing this relationship and understanding it through academic empirical work provides us with valuable inputs for policy making and designing our education and awareness programmes. Education programmes that focus on human rights can provide people with the tools to tackle these issues and the intersection between human rights, corruption and the rule of law.
- Another factor is 'right to information' legislation. With strong right to information laws and procedures and their actual implementation, human rights can be protected, and in turn, corruption can be fought by civil societies, journalists and private individuals. Indeed, fighting corruption individually is difficult and dangerous, and hence, IACA's programmes focus on training people in building collective action. This is a bottom-up approach which must complement the top-down and enforcement actions.
- The top-down approach also includes leading by example. Often officials indulging in corrupt acts do not realise the harm they cause to society. This is particularly the case when there is no connection to the direct victims of corruption offenses. Corruption by officials can lead to devastating consequence such as collapsing bridges, or buildings, the bursting of dams, leading to significant human and economic losses. Proper education can make officials realise that corruption is never victimless. This also brings to the fore the crucial content of UNCAC – asset recovery and return which identifies the societies themselves as victims.
- When educating people in fighting corruption and upholding human rights, and standing up for victims, there is always the fear that they may be punished for speaking up and highlighting wrongdoing. Educated and trained public officials, duly motivated, and supported by the system can make huge difference. Speak up culture can only thrive when there is a corresponding 'listen up' culture, and a responsive and accountable governance structure. Raising awareness among people through education and training, in a course designed to cover corruption, human rights, rule of law and right to information could have desired effect in both protecting human rights and controlling corruption.
- Furthermore, connecting acts of corruption to violations of Human Rights creates additional opportunities for victims of corrupt practices. They can protect their rights

in regional judicial authorities such as the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACtHPR) and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (I/A Court H.R.). These international courts also have serious impact on national judicial practice of respective states. Human rights education can raise awareness of citizens regarding existing international judicial authorities and strengthen resilience to pressure from corrupt officials.

- Before I finish, I wanted to comment on the document which motivated the organisation of this event, the Human Rights Council resolution on *The negative impact of corruption on the enjoyment of human rights*. Representing an educational institute, I am very pleased to note the prominent place education holds in the resolution. As I mentioned before, IACA addresses the intersection of human rights and corruption in its academic programmes and its tailor-made trainings. As such the Academy stands ready to support the implementation of the new resolution in any way we can. Our expertise and experience is at your disposal.
- Thank you.