

**UNGASS AGAINST CORRUPTION 2021  
YOUTH STATEMENT**

*Delivered by*

*Ms. Serena Ibrahim, Founder of Youth against Corruption, Lebanon  
2 June 2021*

***Deputy Secretary-General, Presidents of the General Assembly, ECOSOC and  
the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention  
against Corruption, Executive Director of UNODC, your excellencies, ladies  
and gentlemen,***

I am Serena Ibrahim, a girl born in a world where systemic corruption is a constant threat to my generation's liberty and well-being, a world in which corruption has hampered the dreams and aspirations of youth living in countries vulnerable to corruption, a world which has forced some to put their integrity for sale in order to survive.

This is what drives me to wake up every morning with a purpose to work for a future in which transparency, integrity and accountability are the norms. With the talents of a wonderful community of youth, I succeeded in founding YAC- Youth against Corruption in 2018 because it was time to act on behalf of youth who are heavily affected by corruption globally.

\*\*\*

Today, I am extremely honoured to speak on behalf of the hundreds of youth from 93 nationalities and 93 civil society organizations around the world who took part in the 2021 UNGASS Youth Forum, organized by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and held virtually from 24 - 26 May.

We came together to discuss the devastating effects of corruption on the young generations, global youth engagement in preventing and combating corruption, and to identify the recommendations we, as youth, have for your discussions over the coming days.

We call upon you, our world leaders, to prioritize the fight against corruption and ensure that citizens' well-being and equal access to basic services are top priorities in your national agendas, strategies and visions.

So, we urge you to take into consideration our ten key requests:

- **First, make education on integrity and anti-corruption a priority in national agendas.**

Courses on values, integrity and anti-corruption should be integrated into all national school and university curriculums. We need more investment in informal education for anti-corruption awareness to reach the biggest number of youth possible, in all nations. Education is the first building block of the solution!

- **Second, allow us to contribute to anti-corruption policies.**

So often we hear that youth are the future. But all of us in this General Assembly know very well that the future of youth relies on you. We recognize that the fight against corruption is an intergenerational fight that cannot be won unless it is led globally and fought locally. It is also a tough fight that requires a lot of determination and energy. We, the youth, have all these qualities and stand ready to support you in designing, implementing and monitoring national anti-corruption projects.

- **Third, invest more in innovative anti-corruption solutions.**

Traditional ways of fighting corruption have proven to no longer be efficient on their own. Leveraging emerging and innovative technologies can bring more efficiency in disrupting and preventing corruption locally and across borders. Utilizing new technologies will also add more legitimacy to young people's involvement in combating corruption.

- **Fourth, create and implement laws and policies that ensure a safe environment for youth to contribute to the future of their nations.**

This is essential to allow youth to act as whistle-blowers, watchdogs and national monitors. Youth must be encouraged to speak up without any fear of retaliation. Instead, their genuine efforts should be complimented, recognized and protected.

- **Fifth, create local, regional and global youth agencies to enhance collaboration among youth with similar values and aspirations.**

Create space and time for youth to share experiences, exchange knowledge, conduct advocacy campaigns and develop anti-corruption roadmaps at all levels.

- **Sixth, ensure judicial independence** and effective separation of powers.

Checks and balances are a crucial component of corruption-free nations.

- **Seventh, strengthen transparency and accountability mechanisms in health care procurement.**

This is especially important when dealing with COVID-19 vaccines and medical equipment.

- **Eighth, guarantee media independence and strengthen collaboration with civil society.**

Forming collective action initiatives can add considerable value to the fight against corruption.

- **Ninth, strengthen and restore trust between youth and their governmental representatives.**

One of the signs of a healthy and happy nation is having citizens who have trust in their elected officials. Unfortunately, trust has been broken in many places, and consistent efforts are needed to restore this trust. Therefore, we urge you to lead by example by holding your governments and yourselves to the highest standards of integrity, transparency, and accountability.

- Today, there is no more time for business as usual. So, **finally, we call for serious commitment to the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, and to the effective, comprehensive, and not mere technical implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC)** as well as other relevant mechanisms and best practices.

We also call for more transparency in the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism. Publishing the full country review reports is crucial to allow civil society and youth to hold their governments accountable to the commitments made.

\*\*\*

Your Excellencies, let today be the start of the biggest global intergenerational collaboration in history to put an end to the devastating effects of corruption on our nations.

Today, more than ever, we need a new discourse, a new narrative in the global fight against corruption. A serious commitment to creating a future that has zero tolerance for corruption.

Let us work together locally and globally to strengthen and rebuild trust between citizens and representatives, and create a future that protects the dreams and aspirations of youth and gives them a safe place to harness their talents and capabilities for a more sustainable and fair world!