Austrian contribution (28 February 2020)

UN General Assembly Special Session on Corruption
Preparatory Process
Contribution by the Republic of Austria

Austria welcomes the convening of a Special Session of the General Assembly on Corruption (UNGASS) in 2021 in order to achieve clear commitments at the highest political level, give directions and set priorities in the prevention of and fight against corruption. This should contribute to further operationalizing the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) by the future work of its Conference of the States Parties (COSP) and its subsidiary bodies.

We thank the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) for its call for contributions to the structure and substance of the draft political declaration and for leading the preparatory process to the UNGASS 2021.

The Special Session is an important opportunity to reinforce the full and effective implementation of the UNCAC. The Convention adopted in 2003 provides a holistic and comprehensive legally binding framework for the international community in fighting corruption and enhancing the Rule of Law. With 186 parties, the Convention is almost universally applied and is the bedrock of our joint efforts against corruption.

On this basis, Austria would like to propose that the outline of the Political Declaration should broadly follow the structure of UNCAC. From a substantial point of view, Austria would like to suggest that the declaration primarily addresses the following three areas:

1. **Advocacy:** The Special Session is a unique opportunity for the UN and UNODC in particular to increase public awareness and knowledge on all forms of corruption and its severe consequences. The declaration should call upon the UN and its Member States to put additional emphasis on
   i) explaining the detrimental effects of corruption on societies and the economic development of entire countries; and
   ii) communicating the UN’s activities to help Member States in fighting corruption and promoting existing programs such as the Education for Justice (E4J) initiative.

2. **Education and training:** To reduce and impair corruption on a sustainable basis, the declaration should call upon the UN and its Member States to boost efforts on education and training ranging from school curricula and youth to anti-corruption courses for both the public and private sector. Only such a preventive approach investing in education and knowledge sharing can create a lasting foundation for individual ethical decision-making, a culture of transparency and of rejection of corruption at all levels of society.

3. **Sustainable Development Goals:** All UN anti-corruption work, comprising inter alia anti-corruption training, capacity building and technical assistance should be stronger linked and coordinated with measures and programs contributing to strengthening the Rule of Law at the national and international level and to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, most notably SDG 16.
In order to make these areas operational, the Political Declaration should include, among others, the consideration of the following measures by the UN and its Member States:

- **Strengthening of UNCAC including its subsidiary organs** and UNODC as the custodian of the Convention. UNODC should be equipped with a significantly reinforced Anti-Corruption branch (currently “Corruption and Economic Crime Branch” in the Division for Treaty Affairs) with additional human and financial resources;
- UNODC, as the leading UN entity in combatting corruption, should increase coordination and cooperation with UNDP and UN DPPA in order to foster the implementation of SDG 16 and strengthen good governance and anti-corruption measures in the UN’s peacekeeping and peace-building efforts;
- To increase political attention and public awareness of UN’s anti-corruption work, UNCAC’s Conference of State Parties (CosP) should include a high-level day/segment at the opening of the CoSP and UNODC should increase cooperation with the UN DPI for this purpose;
- Consideration of the creation of a voluntary UN Anti-Corruption Trust Fund administered by UNODC to support the implementation of UNCAC globally, particularly by financing technical assistance as well as education and training projects;
- Increased cooperation of UNODC with other international and regional organisations and in particular with relevant institutions which offer anti-corruption training and education such as the International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA);
- Continuation and enhancement of UNCAC country reviews and the mandate of the Implementation Review Mechanism beyond the current second review cycle.

Furthermore, Austria welcomes and supports the idea to organize a youth forum as part of the Special Session; education and training of our youth and young professionals are the key to change the mind-sets towards corruption and corruptive practices and behaviour; our young people can make prevention happen and create a future where corruption is less widespread and detrimental.

In addition, we would also like to highlight the role of the press, civil society, academia and all other relevant stakeholders. Journalists, whistleblowers and non-profit organisations play a key role in fighting corruption and need to be included in the preparatory process and the Special Session itself.

Austria would like to underline that the Special Session should benefit from the envisaged high-level political attendance to trigger increased support for the efforts of the UN and its member States to counter corruption.

Austria looks forward to further engaging in the preparatory process led by the UNCAC CoSP and thanks UNODC for providing substantive expertise and technical support.