C20 Anti-Corruption Working Group- Policy Paper 2020

Relevant G20 Commitments/Statements

“Combating corruption remains a top priority for the G20. Preventing and fighting corruption...are core to maintaining the rule of law” (G20 Anti-Corruption Action Plan 2019-2021)

“No country is immune (to corruption) and governments cannot tackle it alone: we need the support of business and civil society.” (G20 Anti-Corruption Plan 2019-2021)

“We need to accelerate the implementation of our past commitments, which will be one of the priorities of the ACWG in the next three years.” (G20 Anti-Corruption Action Plan 2019-2021)

“Focus stronger political attention and leadership on G20 anti-corruption priorities...setting concrete, practical commitments...and continuing to publish an annual progress report.” (G20 Anti-Corruption Action Plan 2019-2021)

The Context

In the midst of the coronavirus crisis, we can see clearly why equitable and sustainable global development is impossible unless we fight corruption. Healthcare and sanitation systems that have been gutted by corruption around the world mean we are unable to deal with the pandemic; while many citizens are asked to pay bribes they cannot afford for access to the care and support they need. Meanwhile huge amounts of spending in response to the pandemic needs to be accountable and well managed if it is to aid recovery. Corruption continues to cost trillions every year; and kills millions of people as a result of the exclusion, poverty and insecurity it perpetuates.

A key aim of the Saudi G20 Presidency is empowering people—particularly women and youth. This is impossible without directly confronting corruption, building accountability of governments and businesses, and supporting values-based decision-making. Civil society plays a central role in this process, which also requires, therefore, concerted efforts to push back against closing civic and political space everywhere; support for citizens that are speaking up against graft; and governance mechanisms that include citizen voices in meaningful ways.

The G20 must go much further in implementing past anti-corruption commitments, bolster accountability and demonstrate a clear commitment to this agenda going forwards. The C20 believes now is the time for the G20 to take important steps to improve accountability and fight corruption within healthcare systems. The C20 also recognizes and supports the G20 Anti-Corruption Working Group’s focus on additional key priorities, with a recognition that gender considerations should be mainstreamed within each. The C20 would like to suggest the following recommendations to improve the G20’s approach to anti-corruption.

1. **Ensure accountability and fight corruption within public health and emergency procurement in response to COVID19.**

   **Position:** The coronavirus epidemic and the global response to it has highlighted once again the importance of ensuring accountability and transparency for public resources, and in public trust of governments. Despite the urgent nature of the response to coronavirus, G20 governments must push to ensure requisite attention and oversight of procurement, relief funding and healthcare provision and integrate specific anti-corruption commitments into COVID-19 and relief-related legislation. Additional efforts should include:
• Complete transparency of all coronavirus and other health spending and emergency procurement in all countries according to open data standards, with contracts and disbursements that include relevant anti-corruption clauses and which are made fully open and accessible to the public. All contractors and sub-contractors should be required to provide beneficial ownership information;
• Oversight boards to oversee the management of and reporting on stimulus funds, and increased funding for Inspectors General and relevant government accountability offices to assist government entities with their oversight responsibilities;
• Insistence that emergency laws passed during coronavirus are not used to curtail human rights or oversight in the longer-term and are expressly temporary in nature;
• Ongoing efforts to ensure citizens and CSOs can provide monitoring and oversight of the delivery of healthcare and sanitation, and robust whistleblower protections for any healthcare workers and citizens disclosing corruption or fraud within healthcare, relief funding and procurement systems at any time.

2. Facilitate the use of and share lessons around ICTs and open data for anti-corruption

Position: While technology is just one part of any solution, the G20 governments must use technology where possible for anti-corruption efforts, to improve transparency and information-sharing, and to engage citizens in decision-making. This should include:

• Adopt and adapt financial management information systems to register emergency response funds and publish open data using standards including the Beneficial Ownership Data Standard (BODS), the Open Fiscal Data Package (OFDP) and the Open Contracting Data Standards (OCDS), to ensure the transparency of public spending;
• Support for the development and use of ICT tools to fight corruption—such as e-procurement platforms—that are as inclusive as possible, while prioritizing data privacy and security issues above all;
• Support open government principles to engage and design ICT systems in partnership with users and civil society to improve government responsiveness and preparedness to citizens; and ensure information about corruption issues is shared in understandable ways with relevant public, private and civil society stakeholders, locally, nationally and internationally;
• ICT-based communication channels, measures and systems (supplemented by offline equivalents) to facilitate public reporting of corruption offences in line with the G20 High-Level Principles for the Effective Protection of Whistleblowers and in accordance with articles 13 & 33 of the UNCAC.
• Support open government principles to engage and design ICT systems in partnership with users and civil society; and support and resource the use of systems to ensure that information is used to improve government responsiveness and preparedness.

3. Build integrity within Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

Position: Where it can be demonstrated with sufficient evidence that PPPs are clearly in the interest of citizens, have been subject to significant public scrutiny and will support social and environmental equity, G20 governments should find ways to ensure these partnerships are transparent and accountable through:

• Adoption of legal frameworks to establish or improve enabling environments for PPPs, and support for innovative PPP governance structures such as ethical councils or trusts;
• Proactive disclosure of critical information at every step of the PPP process, according to open data standards and disclosure frameworks such as the Open Contracting for Infrastructure Data Standard;
• Consistent efforts to ensure PPPs become people focused by engaging citizens around information-particularly financial data-related to projects at every stage, and through the development of accessible platforms that use citizen-generated data to improve decision-making.

4. Support the development and implementation of national anti-corruption strategies

**Position:** The C20 recommends that all governments put in place robust, far-reaching and implementable anti-corruption strategies based on multi-stakeholder consultations and with implementation arrangements that have political support and resources. These should be inclusive in every way, aligned with national development goals and should ensure a focus on implementation through the following:

• Relevant national anti-corruption bodies—along with all other government agencies—with the mandate, power, expertise and resources to ensure full implementation of anti-corruption efforts and the monitoring of results;
• Connections between national strategies and international frameworks and approaches to fighting corruption, including in particular, the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), the Anti-Money Laundering (AML) frameworks such as the Financial Action Task Force (FATF); and asset return frameworks such as the Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative (StAR).
• Public dissemination of the strategy, with reports on progress to the public in a transparent way on an annual basis against measurable goals, with clear indications of how learning will be used to improve outcomes and clear means to include civil society at every step of the process.

**Accountability of the G20**

Since the G20 ACWG was formed in 2010, there have been more than 60 commitments made by G20 governments on anti-corruption, but very few of these have been fully implemented. This is undermining trust in the G20 and calling the credibility of the process into question. The G20 ACWG should push for a more robust G20 accountability framework and place a clear focus on the implementation of existing commitments through three clear steps:

• **Improved target setting and reporting**—through work plans matched with clear goals and timelines, which are then matched with formalized, consistent annual reports on progress against targets at the country level. G20 countries should also follow-through on dedicated accountability reports for each commitment area (High-Level Principle) to allow for assessment of implementation and put in place a peer review mechanism to bolster accountability. As outlined previously, in the case of non-compliance, countries should report clearly on challenges faced, lessons learned and ways forward.
• **Greater engagement**—with civil society through ongoing consultations with CSOs in-country before the G20, sharing relevant outcome documents with civil society in a timely manner, and through deeper engagement of CSOs in G20 Working Group meetings, including through the presence of C20 representatives in all discussions. The G20 ACWG also needs to engage more closely with other G20 Working Groups to ensure that anti-corruption is considered as a cross-cutting issue.
• **Better communication**—by building on the Argentine commitment to put all G20 documents in an easily accessible page on the G20 website; publish all previous and current ACWG documents and progress reports on the website within 1 month of publication; and disseminate these reports widely through email and social media.