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COMMUNICATION

on the special session of the
UN General Assembly on corruption
(UNGASS 2021)

Adopted by GRECO by written procedure closed on 25 March 2020

On 17 December 2018, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted [Resolution 73/1991 entitled “Special session of the General Assembly against corruption”](#), in which it decided to convene in the first half of 2021 a special session on challenges and measures to prevent and combat corruption and strengthen international cooperation. It was also decided that, at that special session, a concise and action-oriented political declaration be adopted, as had been agreed in advance by consensus through intergovernmental negotiations under the auspices of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption. At its eighth session (Abu Dhabi, 16-20 December 2019), the latter approved a [draft resolution entitled “Special session of the General Assembly against corruption”](#) including the modalities for its preparation and organisation, for subsequent adoption by the General Assembly. An inclusive preparatory process was opened thereafter to advance consultations on the political declaration. GRECO addresses the following comments to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

1. The Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), the anti-corruption monitoring body of the Council of Europe, welcomes the organisation of a special session of the 2021 UN General Assembly on challenges and measures to prevent and combat corruption and strengthen international cooperation (hereinafter UNGASS 2021). This can be an important event as it has the potential to pave the way for strengthened global anti-corruption efforts and co-ordination between organisations active in the field of anti-corruption in the years to come. What the global community needs now is to reflect on which transnational anti-corruption measures work, which do not, and which are promising. Resources are limited, both those of international organisations and those of member states. We therefore also need to add the perspective of effectiveness and then go on to capitalise on lessons learned to date.
2. Since its establishment over two decades ago, in 1999, GRECO has made a difference in its member states¹, covering more than 1 billion people: laws have been changed, practices improved, and institutions set up or reformed as a result of GRECO recommendations and follow-up. The Council of Europe standards (conventions and recommendations) which comprise a vast array of subjects also addressed in the United Nations Convention against Corruption, have steered and advanced the fight against corruption, in full respect of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law².
3. GRECO’s findings and recommendations have indeed been instrumental in further elaborating and applying these standards through a comprehensive catalogue of multidisciplinary measures to prevent, detect and prosecute corruption in the public and the private sectors. This has been done through an inclusive process of mutual evaluation and peer pressure, resulting in targeted recommendations for improvement, the identification of good practice and impact assessments through a compliance procedure. In doing so, GRECO has gradually become a global benchmark for anti-corruption efforts.
4. Given its long-standing and broadly recognised experience, GRECO considers it essential that the concerns and recommendations it has addressed to its member states are taken on board when identifying the issues to be dealt with by UNGASS 2021. Such issues could, in particular, refer to the prevention and the fight against corruption, in full respect of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law (e.g.

¹ GRECO members: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Republic of Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom and the United States of America. On 1 January 2020, Kazakhstan became GRECO’s 50th member State; it has not yet been subject to GRECO’s evaluation.

² In particular, the [Criminal Law Convention on Corruption](#) (ETS 173), its [Additional Protocol](#) (ETS 191), and the [Civil Law Convention on Corruption](#) (ETS 174). As well as other standards, including [Resolution \(97\) 24 on the twenty guiding principles for the fight against corruption](#), [Recommendation No. R \(2000\) 10 on codes of conduct for public officials and appended model code](#), [Recommendation 60 \(1999\) on political integrity of local and regional elected representatives](#), [Recommendation Rec\(2003\)4 on common rules against corruption in the funding of political parties and electoral campaigns](#), [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2014\)7 on the Protection of Whistleblowers](#), [Recommendation No. R \(2017\) 2 on the legal regulation of lobbying activities in the context of public decision making](#).

on the management of conflicts of interest while in service and post-employment, codes of conduct and other ethical standards, transparency in decision-making, etc.), especially in respect of members of parliament, the judiciary (judges and prosecutors), persons vested with top executive functions, law enforcement and other categories of public officials facing particular corruption risks. It is also critical to put in place measures to foster international cooperation between states and to explore the possibilities of using modern tools and technologies to prevent and detect corruption across countries, while fully protecting privacy rights and other fundamental rights, and avoiding any form of “tech-corruption”. Moreover, GRECO wishes to stress the importance of the protection of whistleblowers, in connection with the right to freedom of expression, as they play a crucial role in the fight against corruption.

5. GRECO recommendations, when effectively implemented, have proven central for member states in preventing and countering corruption. They can, as such, be used when formulating key anti-corruption principles to be reflected in the upcoming political declaration emanating from UNGASS 2021. Correspondingly, GRECO wishes to stress its readiness to contribute to the elaboration of the UNGASS 2021 political declaration and will further be prepared to cooperate with other international organisations where there is an identified added value of the activity. This is in accordance with the pledge to enhance synergies between relevant multilateral organisations responsible for review mechanisms in the field of anti-corruption³.

6. Finally, GRECO underscores the significance of making use of efficient measures and mechanisms. In this regard, GRECO stands ready to offer its expertise to contribute to and support effective implementation of the political declaration to be adopted in UNGASS 2021 in ways that may be deemed pertinent. GRECO’s own developed monitoring mechanism can serve as an efficient tool to advance anti-corruption efforts worldwide.

³ [Resolution 7/4 of the Conference of the State Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption.](#)