



**OPENING REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT THE
ANNUAL INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION HEARING AT THE UN**

Mr. Duarte Pacheco, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Distinguished Members of Parliament,

Excellencies,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the Annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations. This year our substantive discussion will focus on “Fighting corruption to restore trust in government and improve development prospects”, pertinent to the General Assembly’s 32nd special session on corruption which will be held in June.

As a fellow Parliamentarian, your crucial role at the United Nations has always been clear to me. By translating UN resolutions into effective national legislation, Parliamentarians turn our multilateral dreams into realities. And the flow of information goes both ways. Through sharing their national and local experiences, Parliamentarians help to inform Member States of the challenges and hopes of the people we serve.

Parliamentarians also play an essential role in keeping governments accountable. I thank you for all your efforts to support multilateralism here at the United Nations and in your home countries.



The General Assembly adopted the only legally binding universal anti-corruption instrument, the UN Convention against Corruption, in 2003. Member States adopted this in response to the scourge of corruption, which perverts so many of our societies, with full appreciation of its devastating effect on development, human rights, peace and security and the rule of law.

While we have come a long way since 2003, corruption remains a pervasive global challenge and continues to erode public trust and democratic institutions.

Member States furthered efforts to fight corruption through the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. SDG 16 and its targets require Member States to build effective, transparent, accountable and inclusive institutions and reduce illicit financial flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets, therefore reducing bribery and corruption.

And this year, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, our joint efforts to fight corruption take on evermore urgency. Just like corruption, the pandemic is hitting the most vulnerable – those who depend on social protection and state services – the hardest.

In response to the pandemic, governments have announced trillions of dollars of emergency fiscal measure to support their people and economies. Many of you have been instrumental in these efforts. While this



additional spending creates opportunities to Build Back Better it also creates risk. These funds have the potential to have less oversight and transparency, as they move rapidly to meet the urgent needs resulting from the pandemic. Parliaments can play a critical role in ensuring these funds are not diverted through corruption. We must ensure that corruption does not deprive the most vulnerable of medical supplies or assistance programmes.

As vaccines against COVID-19 are distributed, it is crucial that every effort is taken to ensure that corruption does not prevent or impede the equitable availability and distribution of the vaccines or at worst, the falsification of the vaccines.

The potential impact of corruption during the pandemic cannot be overstated. It could jeopardize a State's ability to respond to and recover from this crisis. Already, corruption has led to scarcity in essential protection, life-saving equipment, adequate assistance and the provision of vital services. Corruption has caused thousands of extra lives to be lost during this pandemic.

Excellencies,

Promoting gender equality is a priority of my Presidency and I welcome the discussion on gender-sensitive anti-corruption policies that you will have tomorrow.



Corrupt practices have a particularly adverse impact on the lives of women, socially, politically and economically, further widening the gender equality gap. However, the political participation of women has been shown to have a positive effect on preventing corruption. The inclusive participation of women in government and decision-making roles is a catalyst to create more prosperous and robust societies. In countries with a higher number of women engaged in all levels of government, there is greater attention to and funding for the issues that affect the lives of the citizenry. This is motivation for us all to do what we can to increase gender parity.

Distinguished colleagues,

Our efforts to combat corruption should also benefit from the FACTI Panel, which will launch its final report this month, with recommendations on how to enact reforms to counteract practices fueling financial crime, corruption, tax evasion and tax avoidance.

This year, we have a chance to advance anti-corruption efforts with the first-ever General Assembly special session against corruption in June. The special session will provide an opportunity to shape the global anti-corruption agenda for the next decade – by advancing bold and innovative approaches, scaling best practices and developing new standards and mechanisms.

I welcome your active participation on this issue. Indeed Resolution 8/14 of the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention encourages States



parties to address the role of parliaments in preventing and combating corruption in its preparatory process. Your participation, including developing and maintaining effective and coordinated anti-corruption policies, is invaluable, including for prevention. I encourage you to remain engaged on this issue and to bring forth your expertise to fight the pervasive scourge of corruption.

Thank you.