

**European Union**

**UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

**Intersessional Panel Discussion on Challenges and Good Practices in the Prevention of Corruption, and the Impact of Corruption on the Enjoyment of Human Rights in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic**

**15 February 2022, 11:00-13:00**

**Statement by the European Union**

 **- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -**

Chairperson,

The European Union would like to thank the OHCHR secretariat for convening this panel discussion.

Corruption represents an enormous structural obstacle to the full enjoyment of human rights and disproportionately undermines the human rights of persons in vulnerable situations. It is a serious threat to the stability and the security of societies and undermines the principles of democracy, ethics and justice. It also threatens the rule of law, goes against principles of good governance as well as hampers realization of sustainable development goal related to building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions and of the objective to eradicate poverty.

The European Union is of the view that the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened these systemic vulnerabilities and has created fertile environment for corruption to spread.

The fight against corruption is a top priority for the European Union, both in its internal and external policies.

Inside the EU, we are looking closely at the impact of the pandemic, including through dedicated sections in the Rule of Law reports, which specifically explore anticorruption risks and vulnerabilities due to the pandemic.

The prevention of fraud, corruption, and conflict of interests are key measures integrated into the post-COVID recovery plans of each Member State to protect the financial interests of the Union. Since June 2021, the European Public Prosecutor’s Office has been operational in 22 Member States and can investigate and prosecute the perpetrators of criminal offences affecting the Union’s budget, including acts of corruption.

At the global level, aside from its 27 Member States also the EU itself is a party to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and calls for its effective implementation. UNCAC is one of the 27 conventions that Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+) beneficiary countries need to ratify and implement effectively. Last year, the EU launched its implementation review under the UNCAC, which is a tangible way to confirm our full commitment to uphold the best standards on anticorruption.

We highlight the importance for States to promote and effectively implement anticorruption obligations and robust commitments under the international anti-corruption architecture, to increase international cooperation to prevent and combat corruption, international transfer of proceeds of crime, and to promote financial transparency, accountability and integrity for sustainable democracy. We support third countries in their fight against corruption through a holistic approach based on a combination of targeted instruments. These include support for establishing a robust legal framework in line with international standards for preventing and fighting corruption, support for civil society, the media, human rights defenders, and the protection of whistle-blowers.

The EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020 – 2024 features direct, clear language on corruption, and includes concrete actions. For instance, the EU human rights dialogues with more than 40 partners worldwide represent an important avenue to discuss issues related to corruption and its negative impact on human rights.

Finally, it is worthy of note that the EU also strives to promote a safe and enabling environment for civil society organisations and improve democratic accountability of public institutions globally by investing EUR 5 M to empower civil society organisations to demand systemic change to address accountability and anticorruption deficits in 21 countries.

Thank you.