

## ECOSOC Special meeting

### Unleashing the transformative power of SDG16: Improving governance and reducing corruption

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#### Opening Remarks

by

**H.E. Lachezara Stoeva, President of the Economic and Social Council**

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates and Guests,

Welcome to this Special Meeting of the Economic and Social Council on “Unleashing the transformative power of SDG16: Improving governance and reducing corruption.”

Corruption has detrimental effects on sustainable development in all countries. The costs of corruption are staggering. Corruption drains more than 5 percent of the global GDP. Of the approximately US\$13 trillion in global public spending, up to 25 percent is lost to corruption.

But the costs of corruption are not merely financial. Corruption contributes to the loss of natural resources. It exacerbates poverty and inequality, erodes trust and social cohesion, and undermines economic and political stability. Corruption disproportionately affects women, the poor and vulnerable groups, and erodes human capital.

At the mid-point in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development the urgency of accelerating implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals has never been greater. Corruption stands in our way.

Excellencies,

Progress on SDG 16 on *peace, justice and strong institutions* can unleash a virtuous circle. SDG16 is an indispensable requirement for the effective implementation of all the SDGs. In return, progress on the SDGs becomes an enabling factor for more effective responses to corruption.

Combatting corruption in all its forms (SDG 16.5) and reducing illicit financial flows (SDG16.4), including through the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), are fundamental elements of peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. SDG 16 encapsulates crucial principles for effective governance and sound anti-corruption responses, including the rule of law, transparency, access to information, accountability, participation, and inclusiveness.

We have seen significant progress in the instruments available to tackle corruption. Countries have implemented a variety of anti-corruption measures. There is more awareness about corruption and better legislative and regulatory frameworks. National anticorruption strategies are common. Local governments are involved. Corruption risks are better understood. The potential of information and communication technologies and data are being tapped. Parliaments, citizens, and civil society are engaged in monitoring corruption risks and anti-corruption responses.

But challenges are also evident. Effectively addressing corruption requires sustained anti-corruption efforts and tailored approaches that engage multiple stakeholders and combine various instruments. It is critical to strengthen monitoring and evaluation to improve anti-corruption, gather evidence of effective reforms, and report on progress on SDG 16.

The stakes have never been higher. A resolute response to corruption, anchored in SDG16, would pave the way for bringing the ambition of the 2030 Agenda closer to reality.

I hope that our discussion today will help us identify concrete solutions to promote anti-corruption practices at all levels. I am confident that our debates will provide useful inputs to the July high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF), as well as the SDG Summit.

Insights from this meeting will also provide food for thought for the upcoming SDG 16 Conference, which will take place in Rome, Italy next month, on the theme “SDG 16 as a compass for navigating intersecting crises.” The conference is co-organized by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the International Development Law Organization and the Government of Italy.

In this opening segment, I am pleased to welcome the Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Ms. Ghada Waly, and the Director-General of the International Development Law Organization, Ms. Jan Beagle, to the Economic and Social Council. They will help set the scene for this meeting. Then we will hear from our excellent panelists who will bring in the stakeholders’ perspectives. I also look forward to hearing your views and hope that we will have a vibrant discussion.

Thank you!