



Economic and Social Council Special Meeting

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

2 May 2023, ECOSOC Chamber

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the importance of [SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions](#) for inclusive recovery from the pandemic and the implementation of the entire [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). Even before the pandemic, Member States were concerned about the seriousness of the threats posed by corruption and illicit financial flows to progress made in sustainable development in recent decades. They committed to “strengthening institutions for more integrated solutions” as one of the ten priority actions to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the [2019 SDG Summit \(A/RES/74/4\)](#).

“Corruption hurts the poor disproportionately by diverting funds intended for development, undermining a Government’s ability to provide basic services, feeding inequality and injustice and discouraging foreign aid and investment.”.

Kofi A. Annan, former UN Secretary-General
(Foreword, UN Convention against Corruption, 2004)

In 2019, the [Special Edition of the 2019 UN Sustainable Development Report](#) underscored that transformation of deeply rooted systems, including economic, social and political systems, governance structures and business models, could help make advances



CORRUPTION IS FOUND IN EVERY REGION

ALMOST **1 IN 6** BUSINESSES HAVE RECEIVED BRIBE REQUESTS FROM **PUBLIC OFFICIALS**

Source: UN Sustainable Development Goals Report (2022)

towards leaving no one behind. Furthermore, the Independent Group of Scientists, in their [2019 Global Sustainable Development Report](#), proposed ‘governance’ as one of the four levers of change to bring about the transformations necessary for balancing across the dimensions of sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda. The [FACTI Panel](#) highlighted the need to strengthen financial integrity to release resources that can revitalize transformative action for sustainable development. The political declaration of the “Special session of the General Assembly against corruption” in 2021 ([A/RES/S-32/1](#)) recognized that progress on the SDGs is an enabling factor for effectively addressing corruption, while anti-corruption efforts also contribute to achieving the 2030 Agenda, and reaffirmed the commitment of Member States to effectively prevent and combat corruption. During the [high-level political forum on sustainable development’s](#) (HLPF) review of SDG16 in 2021, Member States acknowledged that the world was a long way off from achieving this goal ([E/HLS/2021/1](#)). The [2021 “SDG 16 Conference”](#) held in Rome highlighted the

urgency to step up the fight against corruption in all its dimensions, building upon key international instruments such as the United Nations Convention Against Corruption and the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime. More recently, the [2022 UN Sustainable Development Goals Report](#) highlighted that, globally, almost 1 in 6 businesses face requests for bribe payments by public officials, with the incidence varying across regions.

The multiple interconnected crises across the world have deepened inequalities and increased the urgency for transformative action towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the lead up to the [2023 SDG Summit](#). Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels can help unleash the transformative power of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and its promise to leave no one behind. It can also contribute to the effective, efficient and transparent mobilization and use of resources, as envisioned in the [Addis Ababa Action Agenda for Financing for Development](#).

The President of the Economic and Social Council will convene a special meeting of the Council on “*Unleashing the transformative power of SDG16: Improving governance and reducing corruption*” on 2 May 2023. The objective of the ECOSOC meeting is to revisit the impact of corruption on the achievement of the SDGs and reflect on persistent challenges as well as emerging trends and innovation in enhancing integrity and combating corruption and furthering SDG 16. In recognition of the fact that the achievement of all SDGs, and SDG 16 in particular, requires the participation of a wide coalition of stakeholders, the meeting will bring together representatives from the public and private sectors as well as civil society, journalists and leading international expert organisations to collectively discuss how to accelerate this agenda and ensure that no one is left behind. In this context, the meeting will reflect on the role of principles such as the [principles of effective governance for sustainable development](#) (developed by the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) and endorsed by ECOSOC in July 2018), and highlight instruments, such as the [United Nations Convention against Corruption](#) and national anti-corruption tools, that can help advance anti-corruption efforts in line with national sustainable development plans and strategies.

The meeting will also inform the upcoming 4th “[SDG 16 Rome Conference](#)” hosted by Italy and co-organized with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the International Development Law Organization (IDLO) under the theme “SDG 16 as a compass for navigating intersecting crises”.

The ECOSOC Special Meeting will be organized as a three-hour meeting in person at the United Nations Headquarters on 2 May 2023. The programme will feature a panel discussion with experts, followed by interventions by Member States, UN system entities and civil society organizations. The outcome of the meeting will be an informal summary by the ECOSOC President, highlighting key messages and recommendations from the discussions.

Guidance Questions

Member States may wish to consider the following guiding questions in their interventions:

- What tools and instruments have been effective in preventing, detecting and prosecuting corruption?
- What concrete steps have countries taken to foster collaboration among all the components of national accountability systems, including parliaments, supreme audit institutions, anti-corruption agencies and the judiciary?
- What measures can support enhanced integrity in public administration, in public procurement and in the delivery of public services?
- What steps would need to be taken to effectively reduce illicit financial flows?
- What role have various stakeholders, such as civil society, private sector and media, played in enhancing transparency and accountability and combating corruption in your country?
- In what ways can the United Nations system support countries in their efforts to promote integrity, enhance transparency and accountability and reduce corruption?

ECOSOC Special Meeting

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

2 May 2023, ECOSOC Chamber

DRAFT PROGRAMME

10:00 - 10:15	Opening
10:15 - 11:15	Panel Discussion
11:15 - 12:55	Interventions by Member States and others
12:55 - 13:00	Closing