

OSCE anti-corruption event, 18 October 2021: UK remarks

Madam Moderator, dear Excellencies,

The UK would like to thank the Swedish Chairpersonship for dedicating this year's Economic and Environmental Dimension Implementation Meeting to the theme of anti-corruption. It is a sign both of the shared understanding of the scale of the problem – and a demonstration of what can be achieved when States come together – that OSCE participating States last year successfully agreed on a [new commitment on this topic at the Ministerial Council in Tirana](#).

The fight against corruption is a fight against a pernicious and persistent crime – one that impedes prosperity, denies justice, and threatens global security.

In the UK we have sought to tackle corruption and illicit finance through a strong legislative framework, including through the [2017-22 UK Anti-Corruption Strategy](#), which sets out a vision of anti-corruption action, making over 100 fully-resourced commitments.

But there is more we can do. Corrupt actors will always look for innovative ways to exploit the public purse, and we need to continue to be alive to where our weaknesses are. That is why the UK seeks to tackle corruption through a 'whole-of-government' approach, which we do via our government-wide strategy and a government-wide joint unit.

Of course, we recognise that governments alone cannot win the fight against corruption. So, as well as a whole-of-government, we need a whole-of-society approach, with civil society, the media, NGOs, banks and the private sector all playing their part. I look forward to hearing from Transparency International and KPMG in Session 2 on the role they can play.

The anti-corruption effort must be an international one, and I would like to mention four examples where international cooperation – including through organisations like the OSCE – can help achieve results.

First, the UK's International Corruption Unit investigates foreign corruption with UK links. Since 2006, over £1.1bn of assets stolen from other countries have been frozen, confiscated or returned. And an independent evaluation has found that this is beginning to have longer-term impacts, influencing the behaviour of the corrupt elites who perpetuate these crimes.

Second, the UK is home to the [International Anti-Corruption Coordination Centre](#) is the only organisation in the world that can provide dedicated operational support to grand corruption investigations affecting developing countries; from collecting and developing intelligence from its members and associate members, to supporting the resulting investigations.

Third, we support the International Centre for Asset Recovery, which between 2017-2020 helped recover more than £100 million of stolen assets.

And finally, the effect of international information-sharing. I am pleased that in Session 3 we will get to hear from the U4 Anti-Corruption Research Centre, of which my country has been a beneficiary. Our policy officers are able to commission U4 expert support to understand the latest evidence on particular issues or programming approaches they are considering.

More generally, I am pleased to see that there is a session dedicated to promoting the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, taking into account corruption's disproportionate effect. We believe the fight against corruption is strengthened when we acknowledge this link. We were pleased that we were able to agree language on this important topic in the political declaration agreed at the recent UN General Assembly Special Session. As Co-Chair of the Group of Friends on the Environment, I would like to invite all delegations to participate in the side event at lunch time on how women leaders throughout the OSCE region play an important role in fighting corruption and conservation crime.

Madam Moderator, let me thank the Swedish Chairpersonship and Office of the Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities for their preparation of this Meeting, and I wish all of you and all of us a fruitful and enlightening conference.

Thank you.