

Press release: UK Government unveils extensive measures to clamp down on global corruption, giving criminals “nowhere to hide”

International campaign launched to clamp down on companies where the identity of the real owners is unknown, aiming to bring to a halt the getaway vehicles of the corrupt.

£4.6 million of funding announced to support anti-corruption initiatives abroad, helping the public hold their governments to account.

The UK Government has announced wide-ranging measures to tackle corruption at home and abroad ahead of the International Anti-Corruption Conference (IACC) in Copenhagen today.

International Development Secretary, Penny Mordaunt, announced today [Monday, 22 October] wide-ranging measures to tackle corruption at home and abroad ahead of the International Anti-Corruption Conference in Copenhagen, where the UK will call on international partners to join them in tackling systemic global corruption.

The conference, the biggest of its kind with more than a thousand participants from a hundred countries, is being hosted by the Danish Government and follows the UK's [Anti-Corruption Summit](#) in 2016.

At the conference, the Department for International Development, alongside the Prime Minister's Anti-Corruption champion, John Penrose MP, will launch an international campaign to promote transparency of company ownership.

The UK Government will urge countries to follow the UK's lead and ensure every company registered in their country publicly discloses their real owner. Secret companies – companies where the identity of the owners is unknown – are a major facilitator of corruption, enabling fraud, tax evasion, organised crime and terrorist financing.

International Development Secretary, Penny Mordaunt, said:

Corruption destroys governments, economies and public services by taking money away from society and lining the pockets of ruthless criminals.

That's why we are bolstering our work on tackling corruption both here at home and in the most fragile states in the world, giving these criminals nowhere to hide.

Dealing with endemic corruption in developing nations is vital for our national security and in creating trading partners for the future. It is a win for the developing world and a win for the UK.

Ms. Mordaunt has called on countries to work together to create a new “global norm” whereby a critical mass of nations will publish who actually owns the companies that are registered in their country.

The conference will also see the Government of Ukraine sign an agreement with [Open Ownership](#), a DFID-funded organisation that is working to build a [Global Beneficial Ownership Register](#), bringing together data about who owns companies from around the world. There are already 5.3 million companies on the register. DFID is supporting Open Ownership to help governments, such as those of Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya, to implement the commitments they made to publish their own national registers of company ownership.

DFID also announced funding today aimed at furthering the UK’s world-leading work on anti-corruption and international illicit finance.

£2.6 million of support for the [International Budget Partnership \(IBP\)](#), an organisation that reports on the transparency of government budgets. This helps measure global progress on budget transparency and tackling corruption.

A £2 million contribution for the [International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions Development Initiative \(IDI\)](#), an organisation which strengthens governments’ audit institutions – particularly fragile states in Africa, curtailing corruption. This helps to transform countries into becoming the trading partners of the future, and builds on the Prime Minister’s landmark visit to Africa in August.

The announcements follow the publication of the [UK Anti-Corruption Strategy](#) in December 2017. That strategy set out how tackling corruption is crucial to UK national security, to international prosperity, and to building citizens’ trust in government.

Earlier this month, there was a further boost to the UK’s fight against corruption at home and overseas when the Court of Appeal lifted anonymity on the target of the UK’s first [Unexplained Wealth Order](#), the wife of an Azeri banker jailed for defrauding a state-owned bank. She spent £16 million in Harrods, and is now obliged to explain how she sourced that wealth.

The Court of Appeal’s decision has set a precedent which will act as a deterrent for individuals looking to use the UK as a destination for illegal funds.

Notes to Editors

1. The cost of corruption worldwide is estimated to be more than 2% of global GDP, and the World Bank estimates that over \$1 trillion is paid in bribes each year.
2. The World Bank estimated that 70% of grand corruption cases involved the use of companies with anonymous owners.

3. Unexplained Wealth Orders were introduced in 2018 in the [Sanction and Anti-Money Laundering Act](#). They give UK law enforcement the power to challenge suspected corrupt individuals who appear to have assets inconsistent with their declared incomes. They place the obligation on defendants to justify or explain their wealth.
4. During the Prime Minister's visit to Kenya in August, the UK announced a series of major new programmes to recover millions of pounds of illegal assets in developing countries. This included creating new centres of British expertise in major financial hubs and training law enforcement officials in southern and eastern Africa to improve criminal justice systems by tightening legislation and strengthening investigation techniques. This is helping to build their capacity to clamp down on serious organised crime. You can read more about this [here](#).