United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

IACA INTERNATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION ACADEMY

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The 2nd Global Conference on **Harnessing Data to Improve Corruption Measurement**

Conference Report

New York, 2-4 December 2025

Introduction

The Second Global Conference on Harnessing Data to Improve Corruption Measurement was held at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 2nd to 4th December 2025, bringing together over 500 participants to take stock of progress, and to advance discussions on improving corruption measurement worldwide.

The conference was convened by the United Nations Development Programme, the International Anti-Corruption Academy and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in partnership with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the World Bank, and with the participation of the African Institute for Development Policy, the Basel Institute on Governance, the Government Transparency Institute, the IMD World Competitiveness Center, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, the International Monetary Fund, the INTOSAI Development Initiative, Transparency International, the U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre, the Open Contracting Partnership, Open Ownership, the World Justice Project and the UN Global Compact. The conference brought together participants from academic institutions and civil society organizations, representatives of the private sector, and delegates from more than 100 UN Member States.

The global conference built on the political commitments made at the General Assembly's Special Session against Corruption in 2021, the Vienna Principles for a global framework on corruption measurement adopted at the 1st Global Conference on Corruption Measurement in 2023, resolution 8/10 and resolution 10/4 of the Conference of the States Parties to the UN Convention against Corruption, adopted in Atlanta in December 2023. These frameworks underscore the need for nationally owned, comprehensive and scientifically sound approaches to measuring corruption. Recognizing the complexity and multidimensional nature of corruption and the need to adopt a multi-stakeholder approach for corruption measurement, partners and participants agreed to convene this global conference on a biannual basis to provide a platform for policymakers, practitioners, scientists, academics and members of civil society to share experiences in addressing challenges of measuring corruption.

The conference and its high attendance confirm the importance of the topic of corruption measurement and the continued momentum and progress made since the first conference in 2023. Over three days, the discussions highlighted the value of data for informing policy and strengthening the existing network, while also underscoring the pitfalls of fragmentation of efforts and the ongoing need for deeper collaboration and coordination.

Background

Corruption poses a fundamental threat to sustainable development, and the stability of societies worldwide. As underscored by the General Assembly and its special session in 2021, corruption endangers the stability and security of societies, undermines the institutions and values of democracy, our ethical values and justice, and jeopardizes sustainable development and the rule of law. The far-reaching impact of corruption hinders progress across multiple dimensions, from governance and institutional integrity to economic equity and public trust, making it a critical obstacle to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

To effectively prevent and combat corruption, it is imperative to have a comprehensive and accurate picture of corruption, its associated risks and impact across all levels of institutions, sectors and society, as well as to assess the effectiveness of relevant anti-corruption policies through strategic measurement and tracking. Measuring corruption and the effectiveness of anti-corruption is therefore indispensable for identifying risks, tracking changes, informing evidence-based policymaking, and strengthening accountability.

Yet, the international community continues to face significant challenges in capturing an accurate picture of the prevalence and extent of corruption, owing to the complexities involved in measurement and the limitations of existing indices. As highlighted in the UNDP UNODC Global Progress Report on Sustainable Development Goal 16 Indicators, and further elaborated by UNDP, the U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre (U4) and the Global Transparency Initiative (GTI), corruption has been measured through administrative and legal statistics, population and user surveys on perceptions and experiences, and proxy indicators that track risks. Each method has its strengths and limitations; no single indicator can fully reflect the phenomenon, and a more complete picture emerges only through the combined use of multiple data sources.

Thus, despite these growing efforts and the increasing number of methodologies and indicators, major gaps remain. The hidden nature of corruption, its varying forms and scales, and its diverse impacts make it difficult to capture comprehensively. Nonetheless, important strides are being made by the corruption measurement community to close these gaps and strengthen the evidence base for action. The outcome of this Second Global Conference on Harnessing Data to Improve Corruption Measurement highlights the latest progress and contributions by prominent global experts.

Day 1: Taking Stock

Day 1 of the Second Global Conference on Harnessing Data to Improve Corruption Measurement took stock of progress made by the measurement community. Leading voices in corruption measurement provided input on the evolution of the field, and high-level speakers from 34 countries reaffirmed their commitment towards advancing corruption measurement. Discussions focused on both international, regional and national experiences, on recognizing and utilizing diverse methodologies and different types of data, highlighting the importance of evidence-based data and objective approach, and explored corruption measure utilizing data which intersects both private sector and public sector.

Plenary Panel: Measuring Corruption to Drive Anti-Corruption Reforms

This high-level roundtable opened the conference by taking stock of how far the global community has come—and how far it still needs to go—in measuring corruption. Bringing together leading voices from Member States, international organizations, civil society, research centers and academia, the session reflected on the methodological and technological advances that are reshaping corruption metrics, and the persistent gaps and challenges that demand renewed attention and innovation. The discussion set the stage of this global conference by looking at the current state of play and outlining the next frontier for corruption measurement worldwide. The conversation also examined what remains most lacking—from the technical capacity to the political will—required to ensure transparency, comparability, and sustained investment in corruption measurement.

What Does Progress Look Like in this Thematic Area?

Over the past 30 years, the field of corruption measurement has expanded to encompass a diverse ecosystem of measurement tools**.** From early on, there have been substantial experiential, quantifiable efforts, alongside perception-based global indices, that together have been instrumental in empirically demonstrating the profound impact of corruption on socio-economic development and governance. Decades of work have shown that there is no one superior path, index, measurement over all others, but rather provided a recognition of the necessity of methodological pluralism in order to measure a complex, multifaceted phenomenon such as corruption.

Progress throughout the decades has been substantive, and currently emerging technology is opening doors for new types of measurement, allowing for real-time data collection and introduces new possibilities for identifying corruption risks earlier and supporting preventive approaches.

Key Challenges

Despite substantive progress, significant challenges remain. Panelists noted persistent fragmentation across corruption measurement initiatives, with insufficient collaboration and coordination leading to duplicated efforts and inefficient use of resources. Competition among indices, tools and methodologies often undermines complementarity, with the result of "siloing" endeavors. Gaps in methodology and data availability were other recurring challenges discussed by speakers. Composite indicators may capture broad corruption trends, but often miss important nuances and details. Notably, there are also tensions between the desire for shared, comparable indicators on one hand and the need for context-specific measurement frameworks that remain rooted in local contexts on the other hand. Another key concern remains enforcement of corruption laws and regulations.

What's Next?

Participants emphasized the need for context-specific indicators and quality data, along with strengthened national ownership of measurement efforts. Such ownership should be accompanied by minimum safeguards to reduce the risk of political interference, including independence of ACAs and NSOs, methodological transparency, guarantees of publication, auditing, and external review mechanisms. Strong national ownership, sustained collaboration, and enabling environments free from political interference were highlighted as fundamental to effective corruption measurement and to supporting meaningful anti-corruption action more broadly.

There was broad consensus that no single, overarching index is possible – or even desirable – instead, progress depends on advancing complementarity and triangulation across tools, disciplines, stakeholders, and sources of data. Co-designing and production of measurement initiatives should be placed at the forefront, whereby actors from institutions, including anti-corruption authorities and national statistical offices, as well as civil society and academia should be involved from the outset. Embedding datasets within permanent institutions and genuinely fostering shared ownership can enhance the sustainability and long-term value of datasets.

Panelists emphasized that discussions regarding the meanings of validity and objectivity of corruption measurements should be ongoing. They noted the need for the corruption measurement community to avoid the dichotomy of "objective " [1] versus "subjective" measures and instead leverage the full range of available evidence from diverse sources of data such as official statistics, administrative records, sectoral indicators, and qualitative insights. Perception-based indices, and other "subjective" measurements provide unique insights, and continue to be considered as part of the broader corruption measurement ecosystem. Panelists highlighted that with the growing community comes a diversity and plurality of perspectives on what can be achieved or claimed through measurement, and that differing objectives and views should be acknowledged and carried into broader discussions.

Finally, panelists stressed that more focus should be paid towards corruption prevention, particularly by focusing on high-risk sectors and complex transnational forms of corruption (including digital and AI-enabled corruption).

[1] The notion of "objectivity" remains under discussion within corruption measurement and social sciences more broadly, with no existing unified definition. Participants called for further discussions surrounding this and its implications for corruption measurement.

Session 1: International and Regional Experiences to Measure Corruption: Challenges and Good Practices

The first session highlighted international and regional experiences in developing cross-country indices that provide numerical data on corruption-related risks and progress across multiple countries. While these indices are valued for their regular production and comparative potential, the session reaffirmed that most of them do not aim at measuring corruption directly, but rather capture governance conditions and processes that signal corruption risks.

The session noted that methodologies vary, with some indices relying on surveys or internal research, others on administrative data, and many combining multiple sources into composite measures. While quantitative scores dominate, some indices also provide additional documentation that helps explain the underlying drivers of corruption.

The session further highlighted challenges and limitations, including the focus on formal governance mechanisms, which can leave informal power structures, customary practices, and non-state actors less visible, despite their influence on governance outcomes.

What Does Progress Look Like in This Thematic Area?

There has been a growing shift from perception-based to evidence-based corruption measurement, providing more robust tools for understanding corruption. There has also been an increasing sophistication and institutionalization of data collection mechanisms. Mature data processes are combining data from different sources with peer review systems, and triangulating findings with academic, legal, and social media sources. Multi-country comparability has also improved, with increased use of cross-country comparisons to identify patterns and to understand variation in anti-corruption performance over time.

Digitalization and e-citizenship have seen incremental progress, improving access to government information, an essential component of transparency and citizen oversight.

There has been a tangible policy impact in several countries, with the tools presented in the session having already influenced reforms in diverse contexts.

Key Challenges

Collecting reliable data remains a persistent challenge particularly in fragile or restricted environments. This severely limits the accuracy and completeness of data, and can also hinder efforts to disseminate results from surveys. In many contexts, financial constraints, particularly limited funding for long-term indicator maintenance presents a challenge for ensuring robust documentation, updating of methodologies and ensuring longitudinal consistency. Another barrier towards progress is the lack of global standards in critical domains, such as judicial independence, which can hamper the accuracy of corruption analysis. Finally, panelists noted a persistent issue of implementation gaps, where corruption persists despite extensive regulation.

What's Next?

Panelists recommended that national data generation capacity should be strengthened and emphasized the need for country-level data collection. This could help overcome the reliance on perception-based questionnaires as well as compensate for missing global indicators.

In addition to strengthening national capacity, panelists encouraged harmonization of standards and cross-country learning, for example by expanding peer-learning platforms to replicate successful reforms in other contexts. Targeted support for countries with low digital capacity could significantly improve transparency, accessibility and citizen oversight, thus prioritizing investments in digitalization and e-governance tools should be considered. Funding and institutional support for indicator development should also be increased, as sustained financing is needed to ensure methodological robustness and consistency – especially for institutions producing comparative, longitudinal indicators. Panelists also suggested that focus should be paid towards improving communication strategies and government engagement in order to disseminate indicator results wider. Specifically through more accessible reporting, regular publication cycles and the early involvement of governmental actors can facilitate greater uptake and policy implementation.

Session 2: Under the Surface - Harnessing Survey Data to Explore Corruption Beyond Perceptions

This session examined how population surveys can move corruption measurement beyond simple perceptions by integrating experience-based indicators, that are sector-specific. Speakers showcased their respective national experiences (Colombia, Korea, Nigeria, and a Canada-Switzerland comparative project) implementing surveys not only to capture experiences of corruption but also to measure its modus operandi, costs and broader impacts on institutional trust, satisfaction, and public sector integrity.

The session's overarching objective was to demonstrate how sound measurement tools can detect corruption risks more accurately, support targeted reforms, and strengthen accountability across government institutions.

What Does Progress Look Like in This Thematic Area?

Panelists noted tangible progress in corruption measurement across their respective contexts. There has been a shift from perception-only measurement towards experience-based measurement as seen in Member States (ex. Nigeria[2]). Progress was also observed in the ability to build a "mixed evidence" architecture, integrating survey and administrative data, as illustrated by the composite integrity measurement developed in the Republic of Korea.

Similarly, panelists highlighted increasing analytical sophistication, marking a shift from merely "counting" corruption -bribery- to understanding its relationship with trust, satisfaction, and institutional legitimacy. Measurement instruments are also increasingly expanding and systematic as we can see in various Member States (ex. Colombia[3]).

Panelists presented evidence that systematic use of results can drive reforms across sectors and support the creation of anti-corruption and transparency units and national integrity strategies (ex. Canada and Switzerland).

Key Challenges

Political sensitivities and resistance towards uncomfortable findings present barriers towards effective corruption measurement.

Participants noted that resource constraints and weak institutionalization continue to hinder progress, particularly due to the lack of predictable financing for conducting dedicated corruption surveys. Corruption surveys that depend on external funding or partner support are especially vulnerable.

 [2] Evidence from Nigeria shows a successful adaptation of experience-based household corruption surveys, reaching 33,000 households, representing a qualitative leap in credibility and policy usefulness.

[3] The National Administrative Department of Statistics of Colombia conducts a political culture surve (over 64,000 citizens) every two years, as well as a yearly survey of civil servants at national and sub national levels

Methodologically, the perception/experience gap poses issues for accurate measurement, whereby for instance, heavy media coverage may cause perceived corruption to be high, while experienced corruption is low, causing a bias and a limitation to survey results. Panelists also noted how current measurement tools often under-capture complex corruption such as corruption cases of state-owned enterprises (SPEs) or transnational corruption (ex. foreign briberies), especially when surveys are asking for illegal or unethical behavior.

What's Next?

Panelists outlined a path forward that involves embedding corruption measurement within national statistical systems, linking metrics to concrete incentives and sanctions, and expanding the toolbox to include administrative data, business surveys, and new technologies.

Embedding corruption measurement within established national statistical systems was seen as a viable pathway to ensuring sustained, domestically owned measurement, particularly, where stand-alone corruption surveys are not feasible.

Session 3: When Business Meets Government- Bribery & Procurement Integrity

Session 3 explored the intersection between private sector and government through the lens of corruption measurement, focusing on public procurement integrity and business experiences with bribery. Drawing on global approaches to corruption measurement, the session showcased key trends, sectoral variations, and methodological choices that shape current developments in bribery and procurement integrity.

The session also focused on the value of disaggregated analysis. Firm-level data allows for both cross-country comparisons and within-country insights, revealing significant variation across regions and sectors. In some cases, this variation points to positive local practices and opportunities for learning, rather than uniform national patterns of risk. Experiences from other survey-based domains show that socially or politically sensitive attitudes are often underreported in real time, with clearer patterns only emerging after the occurrence of briberies. This reinforces the need for cautious interpretation and triangulation when working with governance-related data.

Public procurement emerged as a critical governance space due to its scale and its exposure to corruption risks. At the same time, firm-level data on business experiences with informal payments provided important insights into how corruption is experienced in practice. Participants noted that while measurement approaches have become more sophisticated and comparable, corruption remains widespread in many contexts, particularly in lower-income countries.

What Does Progress Look Like in This Thematic Area?

The expansion of procurement datasets, increased digitalization of procurement systems, and the development of standardized, comparable indicators have significantly improved the ability to monitor risks, identify patterns, and track change over time. Real-time analytics are increasingly used by procurement authorities to support oversight and preventive action. Key country examples (ex. Dominican Republic[4]) were highlighted during the session.

Another key area of progress is the growing use of indirect indicators, or “red flags,” to identify potential vulnerabilities in procurement processes. While these indicators do not constitute proof of corruption, they can provide actionable signals that help prioritize scrutiny and guide institutional responses to systemic inefficiencies.

 [4] In the Dominican Republic, procurement authorities use real-time risk analytics based on a set of indicators, including large contract awards. These tools are embedded in daily procurement operations at the local level and have contributed to increased competition in public tenders, strengthened oversight and increased public trust.

A methodological insight, discussed during the session, was the importance of avoiding explicitly sensitive terminology when measuring corruption. In this context, the session drew an example from the World Bank Enterprise Surveys, which illustrated how carefully designed survey instruments can improve data quality. Rather than asking directly about "corruption" or "bribery," which can discourage honest responses or introduce bias, the surveys successfully relied on simple, intuitive questions about concrete business experiences, such as expectations of informal payments in specific interactions. This design choice, combined with careful interviewer training,can help minimize interpretation and bias, and has proven effective in generating comparable and credible data across countries and sectors.

Key Challenges

Many countries lack fully digital procurement systems, and reporting requirements vary widely. Data is often fragmented across institutions and systems, making comprehensive analysis of corruption risks in procurement more challenging.

Capacity constraints are another persistent challenge. Even where digital systems exist, data quality is undermined by errors in data entry and limited analytical capacity. This underscores the importance of investing not only in systems, but also in the people who operate them. Without sustained training, incentives, and feedback mechanisms, improved infrastructure does not automatically lead to better data or stronger integrity.

Measurement in sensitive areas remains complex. Survey-based approaches must navigate issues of underreporting, social desirability bias, and mistrust. While red-flag indicators are valuable for identifying vulnerabilities, their indirect nature can complicate interpretation and communication, particularly when stakeholders expect definitive conclusions. Differences in regulatory frameworks, procurement market size, and spending patterns further challenge comparability, requiring careful and transparent data cleaning and methodological choices.

What's Next?

Participants emphasized that future progress depends on consolidating and strengthening the foundations of corruption measurement. Improving data quality was identified as a priority, including sustained capacity building for those who collect and manage data, consistent resourcing, and feedback loops that support continuous improvement. Measurement tools should be designed with the involvement of relevant stakeholders from the outset to ensure usability, ownership, and long-term sustainability.

Standardization was seen as essential for scaling impact. Indicators must be comparable, actionable, feasible, and objective. The use of a common set of red flags, such as missing tender publication, single bidding, suppliers registered in tax havens, contract modifications, and non-open procedures enables tools and methodologies to be applied across contracts, sectors, countries, and over time.

Finally, participants stressed that high-quality procurement data depends on further digitalization of procurement systems. With a substantial share of countries still lacking fully digital systems, expanding digital procurement remains a critical next step. However, digitalization must be accompanied by governance reforms, institutional capacity, and clear accountability mechanisms to ensure that better measurement leads to stronger integrity, more competitive markets, and increased trust at the intersection of business and government.

Day 2: Innovation, Emerging Methodologies and Multistakeholder Approaches

Day 2 focused on how innovation, emerging methodologies, and multi-stakeholder approaches are reshaping the measurement of corruption and the design of anti-corruption interventions. Across the sessions, discussions highlighted a clear shift away from one-size-fits-all solutions toward more targeted, data-driven, and context-sensitive approaches. Participants explored how new tools, institutional reforms, and collaborative frameworks can strengthen integrity, improve accountability, and translate measurement into meaningful actions.

Session 4: Building Integrity: Tackling Corruption Risk in Public Service Delivery and Infrastructure

Session 4 examined how corruption risks manifest in key sectors of public services and infrastructure and how anti-corruption can be strengthened through data, innovation, public audit, access to justice, and cross-sector collaboration. Drawing on experiences from health, construction, trade, maritime transport, public procurement, and digital governance, the discussion showcased practical approaches to identifying corruption risks and improving anti-corruption efforts in public-sector systems with specific country examples (ex. Albania, Mongolia, Bhutan[5] and Nigeria).

The session highlighted that corruption in public services is not an abstract or distant phenomenon, but one that directly affects citizens' everyday interactions with the state. Participants emphasized that while corruption prevention often receives less political attention than enforcement, it plays a critical role in safeguarding public resources and institutional legitimacy. Speakers introduced innovative initiatives which includes data on rule of law index by world justice project, survey to supreme audit institutes by INTOSAI-IDI, data on the briberies at global ports at the maritime anti-corruption network and as well as methodology and data by infrastructure transparency initiative that records project-based integrity in infrastructure and construction. Across contexts, speakers underlined the importance of embedding integrity into daily operations rather than relying on isolated initiatives or one-off reforms.

 [5] https://www.acc.org.bt/national-integrity-assessment-nia-2022-2/

What Does Progress Look Like in This Thematic Area?

Progress in this thematic area is reflected in the growing use of digital tools and data-driven approaches to integrity. Across multiple contexts, digitalization has reduced discretionary power in service delivery while creating new opportunities for accountability. Countries are expanding online public services, strengthening public audits, and developing more advanced tools for corruption-risk prediction and integrity assessment. These digitalization efforts also include the expansion of e-government platforms, increased transparency through the publication of contracts and expenditures, and the use of AI and machine-learning tools to detect anomalies in public procurement.

Addressing these challenges requires not only stronger systems, but also more targeted, sector-specific approaches to corruption prevention. Sector-focused integrity frameworks, particularly in high-risk areas such as construction and the maritime sector, have proven more effective and resilient than broad, horizontal integrity plans. The Maritime Anti-Corruption Network, for example, supports integrity in ports through incident reporting and engagement with authorities.

Further advances include better aptitude in measuring and understanding rule of law frameworks, through initiatives such as the World Justice Project´s Rule of law index, which examines several key dimensions such as constraints on government power, judicial independence, absence of corruption in public institutions, protection of fundamental and property rights and government transparency, measuring how the rule of law is experienced in everyday situations.

Key Challenges

Despite clear advances, participants noted that corruption remains deeply embedded in everyday public-service interactions. One recurring challenge is that prevention work is inherently less visible than enforcement, making it politically less attractive and harder to sustain. Governments are often evaluated by corruption scandals rather than by the systems they build to prevent corruption from occurring in the first place.

Data-related challenges were also prominent. Limited data availability, inconsistent reporting, and uneven data quality constrain effective analysis and comparison. In many contexts, audits remain incomplete, financial statements are missing or poorly standardized, and transparency obligations are unevenly applied across sectors. Even where data exists, institutional capacity for advanced data analytics is often limited. Participants cautioned that while AI and digital tools hold promise, they depend on credible data and must be carefully designed to support and not replace human judgements.

Sector-specific vulnerabilities further compound these challenges and adversely affect the quality of service delivery. The construction sector was raised as an example of how corruption can impact building standards and material quality, leading to costly remediation and long-term losses. This reinforces the need to move beyond generic integrity frameworks and adopt sector-specific approaches that address distinct risk profiles.

What's Next?

Future progress depends on embedding integrity into all public-sector systems, making it an integral part of daily institutional operations rather than an add-on or mere compliance exercise. Participants stressed the importance of expanding integrity assessments across both public and private sectors, using tools that can identify corruption hotspots and capture actual experiences.

Public audits were identified as a critical leverage for accountability, but only if audit findings are consistently reported, quantified, and communicated. Strengthening transparency mechanisms, improving follow-up, and ensuring comparability across sectors were seen as essential next steps.

Finally, speakers underlined that no single institution or dataset can address corruption alone. Progress requires collaboration between government, civil society, academia, the private sector, and international actors. While data and measurement can inform action, impact ultimately depends on how evidence is translated into collective decision-making and reform, supported by strengthened digitalization and sustained investment in data and institutional capacity.

Session 5: Measuring Effectiveness of Anti-corruption Agencies

Session 5 examined the importance of measuring the effectiveness of anti-corruption agencies (ACAs) as a central component of the fight against corruption. The discussion focused on how effectiveness of ACAs can be measured using international norms as useful benchmarks, performance indicators for each function within an ACA and outcome indicators such as reduction of corruption, tolerance of corruption and public trust in ACA. Participants explored new empirical approaches to measurement of ACA effectiveness, including comparative statistics, integrity assessments, corruption-mapping initiatives, and household surveys on public trust.

Speakers shared national experiences with strengthening ACA effectiveness, highlighting the role of operational independence, adequate resources, institutional oversight, and engagement with citizens. The session also introduced a new research methodology developed by the International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA), initial findings from comparative research across 50 ACAs and a new global dashboard providing systematic and evidence-based assessments of effectiveness by ACAs for ACAs.

What Does Progress Look Like in This Thematic Area?

Progress in this thematic area is reflected in the growing recognition that the effectiveness of anti-corruption agencies must be measured empirically rather than assumed. Participants highlighted the need to assess and further strengthen operational independence, develop clearer performance indicators, and collect more data to measure both institutional capacity and public trust.

National experiences illustrated how concrete institutional reforms at ACAs can lead to measurable improvements. Speakers highlighted various examples from Brazil, Côte d'Ivorie, Malaysia and Senegal. The example of reforms in Malaysia to secure investigative independence underscored that independence must be built through sustained institutional reform, and it is critical to gain public trust.

Progress is also evident in the expanding body of analytical and comparative research. Corruption-mapping initiatives, integrity assessments, and cross-country comparisons of agency performance have strengthened understanding of what enables ACAs to function effectively.

Key Challenges

The lack of reliable, comprehensive, and comparable data continues to be a key constraint in measuring the effectiveness of ACAs. Few ACAs cooperate closely with National Statistical Offices to collect primary data on corruption experience, tolerance of corruption and public trust in the ACA. Many agencies operate in complex environments characterized by limited statistical capacity, fragmented information systems, and weak data standardization complicating systematic measurement even where political will is present.

Although international norms emphasize operational autonomy, many agencies continue to operate under constraints shaped inadequate legal frameworks, limited resources, and insufficient international cooperation. Low levels of cross-border collaboration, particularly in asset recovery, were identified as a persistent obstacle to effectiveness.

Public trust also emerged as a challenge. Trust remains fragile where agencies are perceived as lacking independence or effectiveness, yet it is critical for encouraging citizens to report corruption. Building trust requires not only legal authority, but visible results, timely case handling, and sustained engagement with civil society.

What's Next?

Looking ahead, participants emphasized the importance of strengthening measurement frameworks through regular and comparable data collection. Repeating surveys over time and collaborating with national statistical offices are essential steps for establishing baselines and tracking change, allowing agencies to rely on evidence rather than assumptions when refining policies and practices.

The panelists also stressed the need to strengthen international cooperation, particularly in sharing research findings, methodologies, and data across agencies. Integrity assessments were identified as a valuable tool for understanding whether institutions have appropriate procedures in place, identifying internal challenges, and analyzing the broader context in which agencies operate.

Overall, the discussion emphasized that measuring effectiveness is not an end in itself, but a tool to strengthen institutional integrity, improve performance, and rebuild public trust. Achieving this will depend on sustained investment that safeguards independence and strengthens data systems and transparency, enabling anti-corruption agencies to fulfil their mandates effectively.

Session 6: Application of AI and Machine Learning in Measuring Corruption

Session 6 highlighted how corruption measurement should harness emerging technologies, including AI and machine learning, to strengthen monitoring, enhance oversight, and provide early warnings of integrity risks. Over the past two decades, these technologies have reshaped governance systems, offering powerful capabilities to detect fraud, trace illicit financial flows, improve procurement oversight, and identify corruption risks in real time. The session showcased practical applications of AI and machine learning in preventing and addressing corruption, while examining the ethical, technical, and operational challenges that accompany their use—particularly in contexts with limited data or weak digital infrastructure. The panel explored current practices, implementation barriers, capacity needs, governance safeguards, and opportunities for greater collaboration in leveraging AI for corruption measurement.

What Does Progress Look Like in This Thematic Area?

The demand for AI systems is experiencing significant growth with a rapid increase in adoption rates and user numbers across different corruption domains as well as geographical regions. Examples shared by the panel demonstrated how AI is being used to measure corruption in diverse areas such as integrity in public procurement, construction oversight, and the detection of illegal dumping sites – although the breadth and depth of AI functionality varies significantly across these.

Technologically, in the span of a few years, the types of AI being applied has changed significantly from applications that use ML and Natural Language Processing to Large Language Models (LLMs) Agentic AI systems that use LLMs and Small Language Models (SMLs).

Tools have in many cases, moved from planning to pilot stages, and towards being scaled for broader implementation. Increasingly AI is being applied not as an isolated project, but as a tool which covers several different data sources and systems (ex. ALICE in Brazil).

Key Challenges

Rapid progress is accompanied by a range of challenges related to the use of AI systems in anti-corruption efforts, including technical and resource constraints, as well as ethical and privacy concerns. As in many other areas of corruption measurement, data quality and accessibility remain limited. Available data may be incomplete, inaccurate, or affected by bias and missing values, while overall access to data remains low and practices for data and model sharing vary significantly. In the absence of reliable data and sufficiently large datasets, the meaningful implementation of AI systems remains challenging.

A key challenge identified by panelists was the siloing (and sandboxing) of AI and anticorruption efforts within institutions, leading to efforts to reinvent the wheel, ultimately impeding progress and wasting resources. Another challenge is the sustainable uptake and application of AI tools, with many initiatives remaining in pilot or proof of concept stages due to lack of continued funding.

Corruption is hard to define operationally, leading to difficulties for AI models to accurately detect corruption, such as false positives. There is also a broader risk of bias, and the unintended use of protected traits, as AI is often trained on biased datasets with regional and linguistic imbalances. Models might also use protected traits (i.e., stereotypes), even without the knowledge or intent of developers and users.

Another key challenge is addressing privacy concerns, particularly the balance between ensuring transparency of models and data and maintaining the secrecy of anti-corruption authorities' investigative methods. While insufficient transparency can erode public trust, excessive transparency may compromise the effectiveness of investigations or reveal sensitive methods.

What's next?

Panelists emphasized the importance of establishing formal cooperation mechanisms to share code, risk typologies, and model evaluation results, as well as actively engaging local communities in data generation and problem definition to ensure solutions meet context-specific needs.

Knowledge sharing and transfer should be facilitated by involving partners and end-users in co-development of methodologies, as well as the setting of scoped, measurable targets. Stakeholders should involve independent experts in order to maintain impartiality of AI tools and reduce the risk of politicization. Further recommendations include using the use of shared tools and reduce the risk of politicization. The use of shared tools and repositories, promote open-source code and models, and prioritize collaboration to avoid duplicating efforts and "reinventing the AI-wheel". To contribute to this, UNDP is currently developing a compendium of AI in anti-corruption, featuring use cases and analysis of current use of AI towards anti-corruption efforts globally.

AI in anti-corruption requires principle-based governance, firmly rooted in human rights. The panelists highlighted several next steps, including prioritizing privacy by design in model development, establishing and enforcing a minimum baseline for transparency, maintaining the integrity of investigative processes, and creating data governance councils to ensure continuous oversight. They also called for further investment in data governance and for exploring minimum data standards. Continuous refinement of models and indicators remains essential to ensure that outputs are robust, transparent, and aligned with established standards and objectives, particularly as corruption dynamics and institutional needs evolve. In parallel, long-term sustainability should be planned from the outset by allocating resources for maintenance, monitoring, and regular updates beyond initial project phases.

Moreover, strengthening institutional and human capacity remains essential. This includes enhancing AI-related skills and expertise within the public sector to enable the effective use of AI systems. At the same time, risk awareness should be promoted across organizations, supported by a risk-based approach to understanding AI models and ensuring that leadership is equipped to assess key trade-offs, including the costs and benefits of adopting AI tools.

Session 7: Measuring IFFs, Illicit Markets, and Tax Evasion

Session 7 focused on the challenges of measuring illicit financial flows (IFFs), an area made particularly complex by the wide range of activities they encompass. IFFs can stem, among others, from tax evasion, trade misinvoicing, corruption, illegal markets, organized crime, and exploitation-related practices, each of which raises distinct definitional and methodological issues. Taken together, this diversity makes comprehensive and comparable measurement especially difficult.

The session brought together institutions at the forefront of methodological development to discuss data-driven approaches, practical constraints, and efforts to promote more standardized and policy-relevant measurement frameworks. Speakers shared experiences in developing and applying innovative methods to estimate the scale of IFFs and their implications, as well as how they translate insights into institutional reform and evidence-based policy action.

What Does Progress Look Like in This Thematic Area?

In recent years, there has been significant progress in improving conceptual clarity and methodological foundations for measuring IFFs. International organizations such as UNODC and UNCTAD have developed harmonized definitions and frameworks that distinguish between illegal flows, harmful but technically legal practices, and broader cross-border profit movements. These frameworks have gained increased acceptance among Member States and now underpin measurement efforts in several regions.

Methodological advancements have also strengthened the evidence base. UNCTAD's tools for assessing trade misinvoicing, profit-shifting, and offshore wealth, as well as UNODC's work on estimating criminal market proceeds, such as those related to drug trafficking, provide more standardized and replicable approaches. Meanwhile, composite indices such as the Global Organized Crime Index, the Basel AML Index, and the Financial Secrecy Index offer complementary structural perspectives on vulnerabilities, institutional resilience, and the political economy context of IFFs.

Another area of progress is beneficial ownership transparency. Nearly one hundred countries now maintain beneficial ownership registers, and organizations like Open Ownership have developed evaluation frameworks and case studies that show how these systems can reduce corruption risks in procurement, licensing, and the extractives sector. Across the board, there is also more use of administrative, micro-level, and cross-sector datasets, which enable better analysis of IFF dynamics, including the harms generated by illicit markets rather than only the monetary value of flows.

Key Challenges

Persistent data gaps across countries and sectors are a central obstacle, particularly because illicit financial activities are frequently cross-border and cannot be captured through national statistics alone. Inconsistent definitions, fragmented data systems, and uneven statistical capacity continue to undermine comparability and accuracy.

Structural opacity within global financial and trade systems further facilitates IFFs. Complex corporate structures, secrecy jurisdictions, permissive tax regimes, free trade zones, and emerging instruments such as crypto assets create environments that are easily exploited. The role of public officials in enabling illicit financial flows, weakening enforcement and undermining reform efforts was discussed as a major challenge.

Institutional and capacity constraints also remain significant. Effective IFF measurement requires coordination across customs, tax administrations, financial intelligence units, law enforcement, justice institutions, and national statistical offices - coordination that is often lacking. Some widely used global indicators rely heavily on perceptions rather than empirical evidence, which can lead to misinterpretation and sensitivity to methodological changes. Overall, the complexity of the IFF ecosystem, combined with political sensitivities, makes systematic measurement difficult.

What's Next?

Stronger national coordination mechanisms linking relevant authorities were identified as essential, alongside enhanced regional and international cooperation to address the cross-border nature of IFFs. Shared data platforms and improved interoperability standards could help overcome existing information silos.

Improving access to beneficial ownership data was a recurring recommendation. Anticorruption agencies and regulators need timely and meaningful access to ownership information to detect abuse of corporate vehicles and inform enforcement. Addressing structural enablers, such as loopholes in company law, tax incentives that encourage avoidance, and weaknesses in free trade zones, will be crucial for long-term impact.

Capacity-building remains critical, particularly for countries preparing financial integrity evaluations or seeking to exit grey-listing. Technical assistance should support the implementation of internationally agreed methodologies and help national authorities interpret results in ways that strengthen governance.

Day 3 : Looking Ahead: the Future of Corruption Measurement

Day 3 turned towards discussing the future of corruption measurement, featuring sessions on fueling anti-corruption strategies for next-generation corruption analytics, measuring the effectiveness of anti-corruption measurements, and bringing the whole conference together in a final discussion on the overarching future of corruption measurement. Insights reflect the need to build systematic and context-specific understanding of corruption, moving beyond case-counting to capture how corruption functions and the impacts it has across society, and generating more nuanced data to provide a stronger foundation for policy-relevant analysis.

Session 8: Fueling Anti-Corruption Strategies: Building Sound Statistics for Next-Generation Corruption Analytics

Session 8 examined the adoption and practical implementation of the UNODC Statistical Framework to measure corruption, focusing on how pioneering countries such as Colombia, Dominican Republic and Kenya, are operationalizing its principles through the active engagement of anti-corruption authorities and National Statistical Offices. The session showed how the framework provides a comprehensive foundation for building smarter and better-coordinated data ecosystems to monitor corruption trends, anti-corruption initiatives using direct, and indirect indicators, including risks and state response.

The discussion highlighted how these countries are leveraging the framework to establish robust national information systems, enhance the quality and comparability of corruption statistics, and generate actionable evidence to inform, evaluate, and adjust anti-corruption policies. Participants shared experiences from piloting the framework and addressed key challenges in integrating diverse data sources and institutional cooperation, while identifying strategies to build technical capacity and foster collaboration to translate measurement efforts into actionable anti-corruption insights at both national and international levels.

What Does Progress Look Like in This Thematic Area?

Participants emphasized that significant progress has been made in strengthening national data ecosystems to support transparency, accountability, and evidence- based anticorruption strategies. Countries such as Colombia the Dominican Republic, and Kenya have begun operationalizing the UNODC Statistical Framework. They are mapping all available data at the national level, selecting priority indicators, and building multi-agency coordination mechanisms involving national statistical offices, anti-corruption bodies, prosecutors offices and all relevant stakeholders. The development of a practical implementation guide by UNODC and the United Nations Statistics Division, now under global consultation, has further accelerated these efforts by offering standardized definitions and methodologies. Speakers underscored that this harmonized approach is helping countries move beyond perception-based measures to generate more reliable, context specific data on different types of corruption, preventative measures and the environment to prevent and address corruption. The welcoming of the framework by the United Nations Statistical Commission and the 10th Conference of the State Parties in 2023, and its translation into multiple languages, reflects growing global ownership and the recognition that systematic corruption measurement is feasible when grounded in national priorities and coordinated institutional action.

Key Challenges

Despite this progress, several challenges remain. Many countries continue to face fragmented data landscapes in which institutions collect information using different standards, formats, or definitions, making integration and comparability difficult.

Capacity constraints were frequently noted, with agencies varying significantly in technical readiness, digital infrastructure, and data quality assurance systems. Legal and institutional limitations also impede implementation, for example confidentiality rules that restrict data sharing across agencies or outdated policies that do not support interoperable information systems.

The scale and complexity of the 145 indicator UNODC framework can overwhelm institutions, especially when anticorruption agencies and statistical offices are expected to collect new types of data in addition to their core responsibilities. Participants further highlighted the risk of overburdening investigators, prosecutors, and other officials if data collection is not embedded into existing workflows.

In many contexts, corruption specific administrative data remain sparse, requiring new systems for risk assessments, incident reporting, and sectoral monitoring. These challenges underscore the need for sustained political commitment and long term capacity building.

What's Next?

Participants identified several avenues for strengthening future implementation. A clear priority is to further institutionalize cooperation between anticorruption authorities and national statistical offices through formal data sharing agreements, technical round tables, and integrated planning mechanisms. Countries were encouraged to harmonize definitions and methodologies to enhance data comparability and ensure consistent interpretation across institutions and borders.

The panelists emphasized the need to prioritize a manageable subset of indicators aligned with national anticorruption strategies, legal frameworks, and development plans, thereby allowing institutions to scale up gradually as capacity improves. Continued technical assistance from UNODC, the United Nations Statistics Division, and regional partners, particularly in digitalization, risk indicator analysis, and quality assurance systems, was seen as vital.

Participants also stressed the importance of using indicators to inform concrete policy responses, such as identifying high risk administrative processes, improving internal controls, and strengthening sector specific integrity measures. Embedding data collection into routine institutional processes, rather than treating it as an additional burden, was presented as essential to ensure sustainability.

Session 9: Measuring the Effectiveness of Anti-Corruption Measures

Equally important to the measurement of corruption itself is the tracking of effectiveness and impact of anti-corruption measures. Measuring effectiveness is crucial to ensure that policies and interventions achieve their intended goals of reducing corrupt practices, strengthening institutional integrity and increasing public trust in institutions. Systematic assessments of impact and effectiveness allow governments and non-governmental stakeholders to understand what works, adapt approaches based on data and evidence, and allocate resources efficiently. By basing anti-corruption efforts on measurable results, countries can move from reactive enforcement to proactive prevention and continuous progress and improvement.

Many States lack tools and methodologies to meaningfully measure effectiveness of their anti-corruption measures. At the same time, almost all States participate in one or more peer review mechanisms under the major global anti-corruption instruments such as the United Nations Convention against Corruption, the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention and Inter-American Convention against Corruption. While some of these mechanisms have specific methodologies to assess and track the effectiveness of measures, overall, the data produced by these reviews could be used to effectively measure progress in anti-corruption at national level. During this session, panelists and audience discussed methodologies and tools used to measure effectiveness of anti-corruption measures, and the role that peer review mechanisms play in this regard.

What Does Progress Look Like in This Thematic Area?

There is growing consensus among practitioners and international organizations that effectiveness assessments are important instruments to track progress over time, inform policy adjustments and technical assistance, support advocacy, and strengthen transparency and public trust.

By tracking progress in anti-corruption and focusing on outcomes and behavioural change rather than outputs such as numbers of prosecutions or convictions, States can shift from reactive enforcement toward proactive, data-driven prevention, while recognizing that anti-corruption success must be assessed within specific institutional, political, and economic contexts.

International and peer-review mechanisms have made notable progress in operationalizing effectiveness assessments. Monitoring frameworks such as the OAS MESICIC or the OECD ACN increasingly examine practical implementation, using case based evidence, stakeholder engagement, and longitudinal analysis to identify risks and reform gaps. Similarly, the IMF has developed structured approaches to assess macro-critical corruption, linking governance weaknesses to economic performance and core state functions through programmatic benchmarks and reforms.

Key challenges

A central challenge lies in defining what "effectiveness" means in practice, and what it should not be mistaken for. Measuring effectiveness is complex because anti-corruption impacts often materialize over the medium to long term, while traditional indicators are slow to respond and poorly suited to capturing causal links between specific measures and observed outcomes. A primary challenge lies in concrete attribution: tracing observed changes back to particular reforms remains methodologically complex, especially incentives for reform.

Capacity constraints, particularly in fragile contexts, further limit data availability and quality. While measurement can target the frequency of corrupt transactions, a reduction in systemic corruption or the economic impact of corruption is more difficult to capture.

The discussion also highlighted that effectiveness cannot be adequately captured through existing indices, which are often perception-based and difficult for governments to influence directly. In some cases, increased enforcement or transparency can paradoxically worsen scores, undermining incentives for reform. This underscores the limits of relying on single indicators and the risk of misinterpreting results.

Way forward

Going forward, effectiveness measurement should be grounded in clear theories of change, with a strong focus on outcomes, behavioral shifts, and institutional performance rather than formal compliance alone. States and other stakeholders should avoid over-reliance on single indices and instead use combinations of qualitative and quantitative indicators tailored to national contexts.

Time horizons must be explicitly incorporated into assessments, recognizing that meaningful anti-corruption impacts often take years to materialize. Short- and medium-term proxy indicators, such as changes in processes, incentives, and institutional practices, can help bridge this gap. International organizations and IFIs can play a critical enabling role by: supporting regular, institutionalized effectiveness assessments; providing methodological guidance and capacity-building; leveraging peer review data to inform national policy adjustments and resource allocation;

promoting transparency, civic space, and structured engagement with non-governmental stakeholders, and finally, effectiveness assessments should be framed as tools that help governments and other stakeholders understand what works, where gaps remain, and how reforms can be adapted over time to achieve tangible improvements in governance, economic performance, and public trust.

Session 10: Future Direction of Measuring Corruption

The final session of the 2nd Global Conference on Harnessing Corruption Measurement brought together an array of experts to discuss the overarching future of corruption measurement and anti-corruption efforts. The discussions centered around recent innovations in corruption research, the strengths and limitations of existing global indicators, ways of fostering public trust and accountability, as well as expressed hope in the growing diversity of measurement tools that are being used to capture different forms of corruption. Participants noted that corruption measurement has become more specialized and analytically sophisticated, moving beyond single indicators and increasingly towards a pluralistic landscape of complementary data sources and measurement instruments, with a central insight being that there is both need, and appetite for new generations of indicators that are objective, actionable and sensitive to context. The session also focused on methodological and institutional constraints that shape what can be measured, and who measures.

What Does Progress Look Like in This Thematic Area?

Participants noted that overall progress in the corruption measurement space has been immense, with innovative practices and tools emerging across different research streams and corruption areas. A major area of progress is the increasing recognition that multiple indicators are not only desirable, but necessary, as no single measure can adequately reflect the diverse and context-specific nature of corruption. Conceptualizing indicators as complementary rather than competing represents a significant step forward, as it moves the focus away from tool comparison toward the purposeful selection and combination of indicators aligned with distinct analytical and policy goals. By differentiating between types of corruption and examining how they operate across sectors and institutions, these approaches generate more nuanced data and provide a stronger foundation for policy-relevant analysis.

Progress is also evident in the recognition of the need to increase the quality, availability and use of diverse data sources. These include population, business or sector specific surveys, administrative and service-delivery data, media content analysis, and integrity assessments. Triangulation across these sources was widely recognized as a major development, strengthening credibility and enabling more robust interpretation.

Another area of focus was the increased employment of data-driven approaches by ACAs in building public trust[6] . Public engagement is further reinforced through social media and periodic media briefings, through dedicated platforms that are used to educate citizens about corruption and through actively involving citizens in data collection. Steps taken by ACAs towards building public trust and engagement illustrate the necessity of fostering feedback loops between data, accountability, and institutional reform.

Key Challenges

A central challenge for both measurement and reform efforts remains in the gap between de jure commitments, and de facto implementation. While legislation, national strategies and various transparency frameworks often exist on paper, enforcement remains weak due to limited capacity and lack of political will. The level of enforcement, therefore, needs to be monitored through data and relevant indicators which enables policy makers to understand gaps and address them accordingly.

Data limitations remain substantial, even though the past decade has seen a rise in the availability of transparent administrative data. Still, many countries lack the technical and institutional capacity to collect high-quality and comparable data, while others restrict access to administrative information by invoking privacy, national regulation or security concerns. Independence and trust are also critical challenges, as corruption measurement is politically sensitive and vulnerable to bias when conducted by actors with vested interests. Surveys were highlighted challenging as they are often costly, context-dependent, and sensitive to design and interpretation choices.

Increasing specialization also risks fragmentation, with a proliferation of indicators that are insufficiently coordinated and difficult to translate into concrete reform. Another risk discussed by participants is the tendency to ignore areas of corruption that are deemed too difficult to measure. Even where precise measurement is not (yet) feasible, these areas should remain a part of public and scholarly conversation.

What's Next?

Looking ahead, corruption measurement should further strengthen the recognition of the complementarity of approaches and the integration of multiple perspectives adapted to specific policy objectives and contexts, rather than relying on single, definitive measures. Participants emphasized the importance of fully embracing the principles of triangulation and complementarity across instruments, approaches, and data sources, including mixed-methods. They also highlighted the need to acknowledge the plurality of objectives that different countries, organizations, and stakeholders may have in their measurement efforts, ensuring that strategies remain context-sensitive and actionable.

 [6] For instance, Pakistan's National Accountability Bureau (NAB) uses its website to publicly document its actions, and to publish regular updates on asset recovery, alongside annual reports.

Panelists also encouraged critical reflections of the role of judgment in assessing and generating evidence. Alongside a clear desire for developing actionable, quanitifiable indicators, participants also discussed the extent to which objectivity is possible, and how can the validity of indicators be meaningfully assessed.

Participants echoed calls throughout the conference about the importance of strengthening collaboration. Broader engagement across relevant institutions, international actors, academia, and civil society is essential in the promotion of methodological rigor and credibility.

Finally, participants emphasized the importance of raising awareness, promoting and using corruption measurement as a practical tool for improving governance. When measurement is embedded in national systems and developed in an open and inclusive manner, it is better able to strengthen accountability, guide reform, and contribute to stronger public institutions and robust governance.

Closing remarks and the New York Recommendations on the Future of Corruption Measurement

While recognizing the limitations of different types of corruption measurement, the conference reaffirmed that many forms of corruption can and should be measured objectively, reliably, and credibly, and that robust data, verified by Member States, are essential for preventing and combating corruption, ensuring accountability, and fostering trust in institutions. The conference highlighted progress in developing methodologies and indicators, and in using diverse data sources, including global, regional, and national population and business surveys; criminal justice, procurement, and financial administrative records; and innovative approaches that leverage artificial intelligence and machine learning, in accordance with domestic laws. The role of interagency coordination, and the leading role of anti-corruption authorities and national statistical offices in generating data that are relevant to understand corruption was also highlighted.

Participants emphasized the need to go beyond the measurement of perception of corruption towards more experience-based data, while recognizing that perception remains important for understanding social behaviours in relation to corruption. Participants also highlighted challenges in measuring corruption and the need for capacity building and technical cooperation, considering also that corruption continues to evolve. Areas requiring further methodological development include data collection, analysis, and dissemination, to strengthen the evidence base to better identify corruption risks and trends, assess institutional effectiveness, and support more effective anti-corruption policies.

To ensure measurement tools are accessible, supporting Member States in building sustainable national capacity for corruption measurement is imperative. By assisting Member States in strengthening national data systems, leveraging innovative tools, and fostering inclusive participation, the Vienna Principles can be transformed into practice, enabling countries to generate reliable evidence, strengthen accountability, enhance prevention, and make anti-corruption strategies more effective. This is also relevant to ensure fair competition for private sector entities to thrive, and to create a level playing field within business environments.

The need for domestic resources, complemented by international support where requested, was highlighted to support countries in overcoming resource constraints and challenges in measuring corruption. The focus should be on targeted technical cooperation and capacity building in methodological development and its implementation to ensure the sustainability of data collection, analysis, and the dissemination of high-quality data.

Building on the outcomes of the three-day discussion at the Second Global Conference on Harnessing Data to Improve Corruption Measurement, participating delegates and experts underscored the following key recommendations, which can be explored in more detail in the Annex.

Annex 1:
The New York Recommendations

Introduction

As emphasized by the UN General Assembly at its special session against corruption in 2021, corruption endangers the stability and security of societies, undermines the institutions and values of democracy, ethical values, and justice, and jeopardizes sustainable development and the rule of law. It is imperative to have a comprehensive, accurate picture of corruption and its impact across all levels of society to prevent and combat it effectively.

Yet, the international community continues to face significant challenges in capturing an accurate picture of the ex tent, incidence, and prevalence of corruption within countries, owing, inter alia, to the complexities of measurement, the different manifestations and hidden nature of corruption, limited resources or capacity, and a disconnect bet ween national efforts in preventing and combating corruption and scores obtained in international indices.

Nonetheless, Member States, international organizations, and other relevant stakeholders have made significant strides toward closing these gaps and strengthening the evidence base for action. Some international statistical frameworks for assisting countries to measure corruption have already been developed and welcomed by the UN Statistical Commission, including the UNODC Statistical Framework to Measure Corruption . These frameworks could ser ve as starting points for guiding national statistical efforts to measure corruption and for informing the public on States's efforts against corruption.

To reflect on achievements and challenges in measuring corruption, the Second Global Conference on Harnessing Data to Improve Corruption Measurement was held at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 2 to 4 December 2025, bringing together over 500 participants from around the world.

The conference was convened by the United Nations Development Programme, the International Anti-Corruption Academy, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the World Bank, and with the participation of the African Integrity Indicator, Basel Institute on Governance, the Government Transparency Institute, IMD World Competitiveness Center, the Internationl Consortium of Investigative Journalists, International Monetary Fund, INTOSAI Development Initiative, Transparency International, the U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre, the Open Contracting Partnership, the Open Ownwership, the World Justice Project and the UN Global Compact, and brought together participants from academic institutions and civil society organizations, representatives of the private sector, and delegates from more than 100 Member States.

The participants and organizers expressed appreciation and gratitude to all those who contributed to the success of the Conference and shared their experiences and insights, to assist countries in developing more effective strategies to prevent and counter corruption, particularly the Oversight and Anti-Corruption Authority (NAZAHA) of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for their financial contribution to organizing this Conference.

Building on the Vienna Principles Towards a Global Framework for the Measurement of Corruption, the outcome of the First Global Conference on Measuring Corruption held in 2023 , and resolutions 8/10 and 10/4 of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, this global conference took stock of progress and challenges in corruption measurement and further consolidated a shared commitment to developing actionable, methodologically robust approaches to corruption measurement to strengthen the foundations for evidence-based anti-corruption policy reforms.

While recognizing the limitations of different types of corruption measurement, the conference reaffirmed that many forms of corruption can and should be measured objectively, reliably, and credibly, and that robust data, verified by Member States, are essential for preventing and combating corruption, ensuring accountability, and fostering trust in institutions. The conference highlighted progress in developing methodologies and indicators, and in using diverse data sources, including global, regional, and national population and business sur veys; criminal justice, procurement, and financial administrative records; and innovative data sources, that leverage artificial intelligence and machine learning, in accordance with domestic laws. The role of national statistical offices in generating data that are relevant to understand corruption was also highlighted.

Participants emphasized the need to go beyond the measurement of perception of corruption towards more experience-based data, while recognizing that perception remains important for understanding social behaviours in relation to corruption. Participants also highlighted challenges in measuring corruption and the need for capacity building and technical cooperation, considering also that corruption continues to evolve. Areas requiring further methodological development include data collection, analysis, and dissemination, to strengthen the evidence base to better identify corruption risks and trends, assess institutional effectiveness, and support more effective anti-corruption policies.

To ensure measurement tools are accessible, supporting States in building sustainable national capacity for corruption measurement is imperative. By assisting States in strengthening national data systems, leveraging innovative tools, and fostering inclusive participation, the Vienna Principles can be transformed into practice, enabling countries to generate reliable evidence, strengthen accountability, enhance prevention, and make anti-corruption strategies more effective. This is also relevant to ensure fair competition for private-sector entities to thrive, and to create a level playing field within business environments.

The need for domestic resources, complemented by international support where requested, was highlighted to support countries in overcoming resource constraints and challenges in measuring corruption. The focus should be on targeted technical cooperation and capacity building in methodological development and its implementation to ensure the sustainability of data collection, analysis, and the dissemination of high-quality data.

Way forward: New York Recommendations on the Future of Corruption Measurement

Building on the outcomes of the three-day discussion at the Second Global Conference, participating delegates and experts underscored the following key recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Strengthening National Data Systems to Produce Quality Data

National statistical offices and anti-corruption agencies need to collaborate closely to strengthen national data systems. This partnership can ensure the use of comparable national methodologies, integrating both traditional and innovative data sources. Additionally, adequate human, technical, technological, and financial resources should be allocated to strengthening national capacity to sustainably collect, compile, analyze, and disseminate quality data on corruption trends, as well as the effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of anti-corruption and integrity measures and reforms, and to consider mobilizing support for such purposes.

Data from diverse national sources should be employed and interlinked using mixed-method approaches to measure various aspects of corruption and assess the effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of anti-corruption and integrity measures and reforms. They should also integrate direct corruption measures, risk indicators, and data on policy implementation to inform evidence-based decision-making on policy reform, drive advocacy, and assist scientific research. Voluntary sharing of statistical data bet ween countries, in accordance with domestic legal frameworks, should also be considered to measure transnational aspects of corruption.

To ensure that data is handled adequately and responsibly among all relevant institutions, steps should be taken to facilitate the prompt exchange of data between national institutions, removing possible obstacles, and ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place to govern the collection, sharing, processing, and publication of data in a manner that is efficient, ethical, and in accordance with domestic laws.

National coordination mechanisms should be established to improve data availability and interoperability, and facilitate the collection, exchange, analysis, and dissemination of quality data within and bet ween institutions, including through leveraging technology. Inclusion of all relevant government entities should be encouraged with a view to ensuring data availability and increasing ownership. This may include law enforcement authorities, criminal justice institutions, supreme audit and oversight institutions, tax authorities, and financial intelligence units. Furthermore, to expand the range of data sources and to further enhance the legitimacy and credibility of data and increase ownership, measurement efforts should consider involving academic institutions, civil society organizations, or the private sector, as appropriate.

Targeted training, financial support, and methodological guidance should be provided to countries developing or strengthening corruption measurement systems, including support for survey design, use of administrative data, data integration, use of digital sources, and robust data analytics methods and user-friendly dissemination. To foster mutual learning, it is also encouraged to share good practices and challenges through relevant international and regional fora, including through the Global Conference on Harnessing Data to Improve Corruption Measurement.

Recommendation 2: Enhance Coordination Among Corruption Measurement Efforts

Measurement tools can be a valuable means of helping countries focus their efforts and inform domestic policy-making. Efforts should prioritize institutions, sectors, and regions where evidence indicates the most significant risks of corruption, including through multi-dimensional impact analyses. Efforts to enhance corruption measurement by relevant stakeholders should be coorindated, as appropriate, to avoid redundancy, increase cost-efficiency, and maximize reach and impact.

States should be supported in their efforts to develop, improve, pilot, and use statistical tools to measure corruption and assess the effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of anti-corruption and integrity measures and reforms, taking into account the Vienna Principles.

Tools intended for voluntary use across multiple countries must remain flexible to account for differing political, legal, and institutional frameworks and different capacities to collect, produce, analyse, exchange, and disseminate data. Tool development should be nationally anchored, reflect national and sub-national needs, and be integrated into existing national frameworks to ensure alignment with national and/or local contexts.

Corruption measurement can adopt a phased approach, starting with a minimum set of indicators, which could be drawn from the UNODC Statistical Framework to Measure Corruption, and expanding gradually as national priorities and capacity permit.

Recommendation 3: Leveraging Technology

To strengthen the measurement of corruption and/or assessment of the effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of anti-corruption and integrity measures and reforms, technology should be leveraged within available resources and in accordance with domestic law. This application can expand coverage, improve timeliness, enhance diagnostic value, and provide early warning signs of corruption risks. These tools should be deployed ethically and transparently, with safeguards to protect privacy, ensure accountability, and reinforce the quality and credibility of results. To fully optimize the use of these resources, all relevant institutions should conduct knowledge-building activities to make use of these tools.

If measurement and/or assessment results are voluntarily published or permission to publish them is granted, technology could be used to present the information in a user-friendly, interactive, and visualized manner, while also presenting the methodology used and any of its limitations.

Recommendation 4: Fostering International Cooperation

To advance global efforts in corruption measurement, experts and institutions engaged in anti-corruption activities and statistics are encouraged to collaborate with countries to reconvene and institutionalize the Global Conference on Harnessing Data to Improve Corruption Measurement. The conference should be established as a recurring forum held every two years for coordination and monitoring, ser ving as a global peer-learning platform for sharing good practices and challenges from all regions. Global experts are also encouraged to share good practices and lessons learned through relevant fora such as the UNCAC Conference of States Parties and its subsidiary bodies, and the Global Operational Net work of Anti-Corruption Law Enforcement Authorities (GlobE Net work).

Annex 2:
Links to initiatives to facilitate continued knowledge transfer

African Peer Review Mechanism	https://au.int/en/aprm
CoST – Infrastructure Transparency Initiative	https://www.cost-transparency.org
Corruption risk forecast trends	https://corruptionrisk.org/forecast-trends/
Corruption data	www.corruptiondata.eu
DANE – Political culture survey	https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/gobierno/cultura-politica
Foreign corruption at Swiss companies – TI bribery payers index case study	https://www.fhgr.ch/en/uas-grisons/unternehmerisches-handeln/swiss-institute-for-entrepreneurship-sife/foreign-corruption-at-swiss-companies/
Government Transparency Initiative databases	https://www.govtransparency.eu/category/databases/
IACA Anti-Corruption Agency Effectiveness Dashboard	https://www.iaca.int/resources/aca-effectiveness-dashboard.html
IACA Publications	https://www.iaca.int/measuring-corruption/
IDI Global SAI stocktaking Report	https://idi.no/about/strategies-impact/global-stocktaking-reports/

IMD business integrity survey	https://macn.dk/macn-incident-data-and-global-port-integrity-platform-gpip/
MACN – Maritime Anti-Corruption Network port integrity platform	https://macn.dk/macn-incident-data-and-global-port-integrity-platform-gpip/
Public integrity index	www.corruptionrisk.org
Resource Governance Index	https://resourcegovernanceindex.org/
UNDP global data dashboard	https://anti-corruption.org/global-initiative/
UNODC statistical framework to measure corruption	https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/corruption/UNODC_Statistical_Framework_to_measure_corruption.pdf
World Bank Enterprise Surveys	https://www.enterprisesurveys.org/en/enterprisesurveys
World Justice Project Rule of Law Index	https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/global/2024