

UNITED NATIONS



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**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**MESSAGE ON INTERNATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION DAY**

**9 December 2009**

The theme of this year's observance of the International Anti-Corruption Day -- "don't let corruption kill development" -- highlights one of the biggest impediments to the world's efforts to reach the Millennium Development Goals.

When public money is stolen for private gain, it means fewer resources to build schools, hospitals, roads and water treatment facilities. When foreign aid is diverted into private bank accounts, major infrastructure projects come to a halt. Corruption enables fake or substandard medicines to be dumped on the market, and hazardous waste to be dumped in landfill sites and in oceans. The vulnerable suffer first and worst.

But corruption is not some vast impersonal force. It is the result of personal decisions, most often motivated by greed.

Development is not the only casualty. Corruption steals elections. It undermines the rule of law. And it can jeopardize security. As we have seen over the last year, it can also have a serious impact on the international financial system.

Fortunately, there is a way to fight back. The United Nations Convention against Corruption is the world's strongest legal instrument to build integrity and fight corruption. A new mechanism decided on at the recent Conference of States Parties in Doha means that, from now on, states will be judged by the actions they take to fight corruption, not just the promises they make.

The private sector should not lag behind governments. Businesses must also prevent corruption within their ranks, and keep bribery out of tendering and procurement processes. I urge the private sector to adopt anti-corruption measures in line with the UN Convention. Companies -- particularly those that subscribe to the 10<sup>th</sup> principle of the Global Compact, to work against corruption -- should pledge not to cheat and should open themselves up to peer review to ensure that everyone is playing by the same rules.

We all have a part to play. On International Corruption Day 2009, I urge all people to join the UN anti-corruption campaign at [www.yournocounts.org](http://www.yournocounts.org). And I encourage everyone to make a pledge: never to offer or accept a bribe. Live by that motto, and the world will be a more honest place -- and we will increase the chances of reaching the Millennium Development Goals.