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COMBATING CORRUPTION: USA EXPERIENCE

Around the world, corruption saps economic growth hinders development, destabilizes governments, undermines democracy, and provides openings for dangerous groups such as criminals, traffickers, and terrorists. The State has made anti-corruption a national security priority and works across the globe to prevent graft, strengthen investigation and prosecution of corruption, promote accountability and transparency, and empower reformers.

By prioritizing anti-corruption, the state seeks to make it even harder for criminality to take root and spread, to promote governments that are more stable and accountable.

The United States believes addressing corruption begins with countries around the world sharing a common vision and a strong commitment to taking effective, practical steps to prevent and prosecute corruption. To turn talk into action, the United States directly engages other countries, promotes internationally recognized standards, sponsors reform programming, and contributes to building the architecture for cross-border cooperation. To sustain this effort, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) engages in high-level diplomacy and reinforces the important role played by civil society, the media, and the business community.

Corruption and other forms of crime are interconnected: addressing both is core to INL's mission.

Keeping corruption in check:

- Boosts stability, the rule of law, human rights, and democracy.
- Promotes economic growth in foreign markets, and levels the playing field for American businesses.
- Strengthens our law enforcement partners.
- Makes it harder for those engaging in transnational crime, terror, and illegal trade to operate.

The passage of the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) in 1977 and the Dodd-Frank Act in 2010 inspired similar legislation in other countries. The United States boldly promoted strong international norms, including via the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Anti-Bribery Convention in 1999, the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) in 2005, and the OGP, a government–civil society partnership that the United States cofounded in 2011. Since 2010, the U.S. Kleptocracy Asset Recovery Initiative has frozen more than \$3.2 billion in stolen funds. Through it all, bilateral diplomacy and foreign assistance to countries around the world have tilted governance equilibria in favor of reform. The Obama administration has made anti-corruption a key element of its democracy agenda, and has strengthened governmentwide efforts to prevent and combat graft, both domestically and internationally. Toward that end, it has been amassed an array of tools and international relationships which are effective in advancing accountability and the rule of law. INL, alongside other State bureaus, has established strong working relationships with the departments of Treasury and Justice, the U.S. Agency for International Development, various United Nations bodies and numerous nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) all over the world to attempt to conduct this effort in a coordinated and comprehensive manner. In addition, DOJ has successfully returned some \$143 million in assets since 2004, and is currently litigating stolen asset cases involving more than a billion dollars. State’s denial of visas to current and former foreign government officials and private citizens who have bribed government officials strongly complements such efforts.

During Fiscal Year 2015, the State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development dedicated more than \$120 million to a wide range of programs to fight corruption globally. This assistance helps governments develop electronic systems—typically less prone to corruption—to carry out government services like the provision of identification documents; supports training to build the capacity of law enforcement officials, prosecutors and members of the judiciary; and bolsters our efforts to mentor parliamentarians to implement key legislation, among many other effective programs. For example, the USA in Ukraine supported the Interior Ministry’s efforts to recruit, vet and train 7,000 new patrol officers; as a result, the police now enjoy an 85-percent approval rating among Ukrainian citizens. To reinforce that progress, Vice President Biden visited Kyiv to announce an aid package totaling more than \$190 million in assistance to help Ukraine prevent and fight corruption, implement reforms and bolster civil society.

Fighting and preventing corruption is not only a government’s responsibility. It requires a bottom-up approach to building citizens’ demand for justice and accountability. With that in mind, the USA is prioritizing efforts to expand civil society’s role and empower citizens to hold their governments accountable. In Mexico, for example, INL has

worked with a local NGO to establish citizens' watch booths in district attorneys' offices located in the Federal District and the states of Mexico and Puebla. The booths are run by volunteers who advise citizens of their rights in reporting crimes, monitor local authorities to ensure that they follow correct procedures, collect data on the quality of services provided and report irregularities. They also support training investigative journalists to uncover corruption at a local level. Local citizens, journalists and organized civil society must all be empowered to expose corrupt practices and feel safe enough to press for the prosecution of perpetrators.

Corruption is a pressing problem in a pandemic. The coronavirus and its associated disease, COVID-19, have only heightened the centrality of anticorruption. In countries where graft is rampant, citizens who cannot pay bribes likely will be locked out of treatment—accelerating the virus's spread and duration. In addition, public anger at government malfeasance in the face of COVID-19 could topple regimes, weaken multilateral alliances, and embolden authoritarian populists. The extent to which democracies will be able to fend off the rise of authoritarianism depends in part on their ability to deliver the services and safety that their citizens seek. Rampant corruption impedes that ability to deliver and undermines government credibility, as seen in the early days of the Ebola epidemic in West Africa. Bolstering democracy globally requires fighting corruption.

So this is not just a moral fight for more ethical, just societies. It is an economic fight for fair, accountable, transparent systems that allow for growth. And it is a fight we must wage both within our borders and alongside our international partners to protect our economic growth and stability, our security and our future. Good governance is a goal we cannot afford to ignore. That is why experience and cooperation with the United States are so important.

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