

Proposed Speech: "Empowering Youth: Catalysts for a Global Culture of Integrity"

Esteemed representatives, and distinguished guests,

It is with great honor that I stand before you today as a representative of UNODC's YouthLED Integrity Advisory Board to their Global Resource for Anti-Corruption Education and Youth Empowerment Initiative. Before I start, I would like to take a moment to express my sincere gratitude to the organizers for inviting me to join this esteemed panel.

Corruption continues to erode many aspects of our societies, impacting the lives of countless individuals, particularly the youth. While we could spend days discussing the consequences of corruption, today I am tasked with the important responsibility of shedding light on the transformative power of youth in our collective mission to combat corruption.

There is not a single effective strategy in our pursuit of a corruption-free society; however, one thing is clear: the future belongs to us, the youth. We are the leaders of tomorrow, and today, we represent an indispensable force for positive change. We are active agents of change with the passion, creativity, and determination to drive meaningful progress.

But we cannot achieve this on our own. Promoting and enabling meaningful youth engagement is essential for the effectiveness and sustainability of anti-corruption measures. As representatives of governments and international organizations you are in a unique position to empower us to take a seat at the table and allow us to participate as equal partners in the decision-making process. From the drafting of policies to their implementation and evaluation, the voices of young people must be heard and valued every step of the way. Our experiences, perspectives, and innovative ideas have the power to revolutionize our approach to combating corruption and to promoting a culture of integrity and ethics.

In this respect, I want to recognize the Policy Guide on Meaningful Youth Engagement for Anti-Corruption Authorities launched in December 2023 in the margins of the 10th Conference of States Parties to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption. As I said in Atlanta a few months ago in an event co-organized by the Independent Commission Against Corruption of Hong Kong, the International Association of Anticorruption Authorities, and the United Nations

Office on Drugs and Crime, this innovative Policy Guide is a true example of a commitment to inclusivity and a recognition of the transformative power of meaningful youth engagement.

The Policy Guide clearly highlights the beneficial effects of meaningful youth engagement. For instance, by including us in decision making processes, together we can propose innovative solutions to current and emerging challenges in the prevention and fight against corruption.

On behalf of the Youth Advisory Board involved in the elaboration of the Policy Guide, I encourage all of you present here today to consultate the document. I urge you to listen to the collective voice of the youth mobilizing in favor a better world for present and future generations. And I invite you to implement the recommendations outlined in the Policy Guide in the work of your National Anti-Corruption Authority.

Our call to action is for you, as government, to:

1. Fund and develop communication campaign, workshops, and capacity-building programs to support meaningful youth engagement through the implementation of the Policy Guide;
2. Establish local and national youth networks;
3. Recognize young people as champions for sustainable progress;
4. Organize roundtables, and other activities/events, where the experiences and perspectives of both young people and Anti-Corruption Authorities representative can be shared; and
5. Enhance active monitoring and oversight mechanism with youth representation, among other measures.

Another important aspect to highlight is the role of anti-corruption education in enhancing a culture of integrity from a young age. We must equip our youth with the knowledge and skills necessary for becoming active members of society. This begins with teaching ethical values, and the importance of honesty and fairness from a young age, whether through formal or informal education, including extracurricular activities, or community-based initiatives. By promoting awareness of corrupt acts and their consequences, and fostering a culture of ethics and integrity, we can empower youth to become proactive guardians of integrity in our societies.

As you also know, the prevention and fight against corruption is a collective responsibility. Collective actions across different regions of the world have successfully contributed to anti-

corruption efforts, showcasing the positive results of different sectors coming together and working towards a common goal. Collaboration between generations and disciplines is also crucial for tackling corruption effectively. By strengthening synergies between different age groups and areas of expertise, we can develop more robust and sustainable anti-corruption strategies leveraging from the knowledge of everyone to achieve a greater and more sustainable impact. In this regard, technology and innovation play a crucial role in empowering youth to combat corruption. Digital tools, social media, and online platforms amplify youth voices, facilitate information sharing, and mobilize collective action against corrupt practices, even if it through non-organize, or semi-organized coalitions.

Leadership development, mentorship opportunities, and peer-to-peer learning initiatives are also crucial investments in empowering youth. As government representatives, celebrating youth success stories can inspire others to contribute to promoting integrity and accountability in their communities. Recognizing achievements and fostering further further engagement can also promote youth participation.

Our passion and energy can be a catalyst for the promotion of a global culture of integrity. But for ensuring the long-term sustainability of youth engagement we need to institutionalize youth participation mechanisms, securing funding for youth-led initiatives, and foster a supportive environment.

As the conclusion of the Symposium approaches, I stress that we, the youth, are ready to foster a culture of integrity and anti-corruption. Empower us, invest in our potential and create paths for meaningful youth engagement and participation. Because by joining forces, we can live in a world in which corruption is not tolerated, and integrity and ethics are the norm. A world in which integrity and ethics are the norm.

With this, let me conclude by thanking once more the organizers for their invitation, and thanking you for your attention.

Thank you.