United Nations Institute for Training and Research

NS/aj/2021/1684

Geneva, 31 May 2021

The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) presents its compliments to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and has the pleasure to refer to the call for contributions addressed to organs, entities, and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, among other stakeholders, from Resolution 74/276 -entitled "Special Session of the General Assembly against corruption" and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on 1 June 2020.

UNITAR has the pleasure to submit the enclosed summary as a United Nations autonomous body with the mission of developing the individual, institutional and organizational capacities of countries and other UN stakeholders through high quality learning solutions and related knowledge products and services to enhance decision-making and to support country-level action for overcoming global challenges.

In this regard, the Institute, in partnership with different actors, has developed tools to combatting corruption from the capacity building perspective, bearing in mind the impact of mainstreaming knowledge as a powerful approach to raise awareness, empower people, as well as fostering positive mindsets for transforming lives and moving forward from theory to practice. These initiatives have been envisioned to tackle the root causes and consequences of corruption, while analysing its linkages with different topics and finding solutions for strengthening prevention, accountability, and redress.

The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) avails itself of this opportunity to renew to compliments to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) the assurances of its highest consideration.

United Nations Institute for Training and Research

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
New York Office, United States

Introduction

UNITAR welcomes the opportunity to submit the following summary in the framework of Resolution 74/276 -entitled "Special Session of the General Assembly against corruption" and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on 1 June 2020.

As corruption hampers development, the rule of law, and Human Rights, among other effects; raising awareness on efforts taken to combat corruption through capacity building represents an opportunity to enhance capabilities and share good practices towards a more participatory and open societies for all.

Knowledge serves as a transformative opportunity to identify discriminatory social institutions, laws, cultural norms, and community practices that facilitate corruption. In this regard, UNITAR has being working on different initiatives by using adult learning pedagogical principles. So far, more than 1500 participants from States and other relevant stakeholders working on anticorruption and other issues from developed and developing countries have acceded to these learning initiatives.

These tools aim at strengthening the capabilities to design and deliver effective training to properly transmit expertise and create a strong foundation for dealing with different challenges and identifying opportunities in people's daily life and professional environments.

1.- Anticorruption and Sustainable Development: Building Inclusive and Transparent Societies for All

There is a common agreement on the need of suppressing and preventing corruption because of its negative impacts and its ripple effects for employment, leadership, and decision-making at all levels. As corruption hampers economic growth and increases poverty, corruption actively sabotages any progress to achieve all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially given the limited ability of governments when dealing with the challenges imposed by widespread corruption.

While the United Nations does substantial work to strengthen anti-corruption efforts, these labours remain insufficient, without a central platform that facilitate access to knowledge and exchange of best practices to increase the knowledge of experts on the problematic of corruption and its link with sustainable development.

In this context, the adoption of the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations represents an opportunity for change. This commitment assumed by States, through Resolution A/RES/70/1 of the General Assembly in 2015, demands joint efforts to enhance capabilities in the design and implementation of public policies and partnership towards building more open, inclusive, and transparent societies for all.

To support this join endeavor, UNITAR together with the Rule of Law and Anticorruption

Center (ROLACC) developed the e-learning course on "Anticorruption and Sustainable Development: *Building inclusive and transparent societies for all.*" This free MOOC aims at strengthening the competences required for overcoming some of the challenges to combat corruption. In addition to learning its causes and consequences for sustainable development, participants will also understand the benefits of its prevention for the enhancement of the rule of law and the enjoyment of Human Rights.

The content of the course was developed from scratch by the UNITAR SDP team through desk research, with the objective of identifying the most current and updated information and building linkages between the effects of corruption and the SDGs. It follows the UN Disability-Inclusive approach, by recognizes that combating corruption requires improving accessibility services, information, and participation of persons with disabilities; therefore, this tool includes sign language video and narrative audio.

As part of its content, the course has readings, curious facts, notes, graphics, more than 100 references with a wide variety of relevant sources, besides of additional documents to read, self-assessment activities and quizzes that are distributed in such a way to ensure the achievement of the learning objectives in a flexible manner. Certificates of completion are issued to those participants who fulfil the respective requirements. (See Annex. I)

2.- Mainstreaming Anticorruption for the effective promotion and protection of Human Rights

Corruption directly or indirectly affects all individuals and societies and take different shapes and nuances by intensifying disparities in the most vulnerable people. It can cause detrimental effects on the enjoyment of Human Rights and set hurdles for their promotion and protection.

Because of the universal, indivisible, interrelated, interdependent, and mutually reinforcing nature of Human Rights, corruption can trigger a domino effect on civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights by weakening the rule of law, good governance at all levels, and hampering transparent, effective, and accountable institutions, among other consequences. Likewise, they can reduce resources available to cover needs and root vicious cycles towards immoral and unlawful practices.

The efforts of States towards strengthening the competencies required at the individual and collective level to overcome some of the impacts caused by corruption to the full enjoyment of Human Rights will require a better understanding of the benefits of mainstreaming anticorruption for their effective promotion and protection.

Although this problematic is often considered a crime without victims, its effects can hamper the full enjoyment of human rights, in particular for the most vulnerable and marginalized sectors of society who have limited possibilities to defend themselves.

On this thematic, UNITAR and ROLACC prepared the e-learning course on "Anticorruption and Human Rights: *Mainstreaming Anticorruption for the effective promotion and protection of Human Rights.*" This free MOOC will be launched in June-July 2021. It aims to strengthen the competencies required at the individual and collective level to overcome some of the impacts caused by corruption to the full enjoyment of Human Rights while better understanding the benefits of promoting its prevention to this end. This tool has similar

features to the previous course, with welcome video messages per module as "food for thought" from different profiles, including from the President of the UN Human Rights Council, H.E. Ambassador Nazhat Shameem Khan. (See Annex II)

3.- The COVID-19 pandemic and anti-corruption efforts in public procurement

The United Nations has estimated that a staggering 20 to 25 percent of all public contract funds are lost due to corruption. The sudden rise of the COVID-19 virus exacerbates this already dire situation. Massive public procurement projects for necessary medical and protective equipment are threatened by a serious risk of collusion and embezzlement.

Accordingly, previous health crises, such as the Ebola outbreak, have shown that corruption can act as a "silent killer". There is a common agreement on the need of suppressing and preventing corruption, particularly during times of extreme urgency.

Sharing insights on how countries are fighting corruption in public procurement during the current pandemic, and for future crises, are important for building resilient public procurement processes looking ahead. The United Nations System has an essential role in the promotion of spaces and tools for achieving such objectives.

In this regard, UNITAR has hold several online virtual roundtables and other meetings on a wide variety of topics linked to the COVID19, including on its linkages to Anticorruption.

[(3) The Coronavirus pandemic and Anti-Corruption Efforts in Public Procurement - YouTube](#)

[(3) Launch of the e-learning course on Anticorruption and Sustainable Development - YouTube](#)

[(3) Digital tools for combating corruption - YouTube](#)

4.- The potential of e-learning and other digital tools in the fight against corruption

The creation of digital spaces represents an opportunity for awareness raising not only about the detrimental effects of corruption, but also to eenhance capabilities, and share good practices towards mainstreaming anticorruption practices in public policy making.

Digital tools play an instrumental role in combating corruption due to a wide range of benefits, challenges, and needs caused by development dynamics. Its use from different actors demands responsible knowledge for improving quality of life rather than dimmish it. Although the digital gap is present in and between all regions, there is a common understanding of its imperative use as part of globalization for socio-economic inclusion.

Therefore, as a contribution for achieving this objective, UNITAR with its partners have brought together their expertise and practical knowledge to collaboratively developed a several courses and trainings on anticorruption based on its sound adult learning pedagogical principles.

In this framework, UNITAR and ROLACC prepared the online Global Training Platform on Anticorruption - [Global Anti-Corruption Training Platform (un-anticorruption-learn.org)](#) - as a contribution to better understand corruption and its links with different topics, as well as its causes, effects, and ways to combat it. By mainstreaming knowledge about this worldwide challenge, it is possible to raising awareness, empowering people, and fostering positive mindsets for transforming lives.

It gathers and makes visible existing material on corruption issues, which is publicly available on different webpages. It gathers publications, information on courses, and videos, relevant quotes, curious facts, related events, news, and other websites of interest. (See Annex III)

Finally, UNITAR is currently developing a new e-learning course on "The use of technologies for combating corruption."

Recommendations to the Special Session of the General Assembly against corruption

1. Taking into account the relevance of strengthening knowledge as a powerful approach to raise awareness, empower people, as well as fostering positive mindsets for transforming lives and moving forward from theory to practice.

2. Bearing in mind the frequent staff turnover, it is important to hold parallel or informal meetings on anticorruption issues addressed to delegates from States, in particular to those who are new, dealing with anticorruption issues in the framework of the General Assembly. This will allow them to easily adapt, participate and been included as well as to smoothly progress in the discussions and actions on the topic.

If you want any additional information, please contact Ms. Analucía Jácome, Senior Project leader, Sustainable Development Program, Division for People and Social Inclusion, at analucia.jacome@unitar.org.