EU Statement at the
13th session of the
Open-ended intergovernmental expert meeting to enhance international cooperation
United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC)

Vienna, 12-14 June 2024

Mr Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its Member States. The following countries align themselves with this statement: North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Iceland and Norway.

Over the last years, the European Union has introduced ground-breaking changes to international cooperation among its Member States. Extradition has largely been replaced by the European Arrest Warrant, which – unlike the Interpol red notices – is a real arrest warrant. This means that a European Arrest Warrant issued by one EU country’s judicial authority is valid in the entire territory of the EU. The mechanism is based on the principle of mutual recognition and therefore operates via direct contacts between judicial authorities. Likewise, Mutual Legal Assistance has been replaced by the European Investigation Order. The recently adopted e-evidence package aims to ensure that judicial and law enforcement authorities can obtain electronic evidence across the EU in a swift and legally sound manner for the purpose of investigations and prosecutions in criminal cases.

Law enforcement cooperation has been elevated to a new level through the creation of the European Public Prosecutor’s Office (EPPO), which is competent to prosecute corruption, among other offences, if they affect the EU budget. For cooperation in criminal matters with judicial authorities from non-EU countries, the EPPO can use the UNCAC as a legal basis.

With regard to networks, an EU Network against corruption was established in September 2023, to support EU-wide corruption risk-mapping, and to inform the future EU anti-corruption strategy.

Beyond its borders, the EU promotes international cooperation in the fight against corruption as a top priority in its enlargement and neighbourhood policies.

Regarding the former, the prevention and repression of corruption remain at the core of our enlargement policy. Clear progress in the fight against corruption is essential for advancing towards EU membership. To that end, the concept of “mainstreaming anticorruption work” throughout the accession negotiations has been introduced in the
revised enlargement methodology approved in 2020. Accordingly, negotiations on a thematic chapter will not be provisionally closed before sufficient anti-corruption policies in that specific chapter are being implemented. Indeed, a number of priorities in the enlargement process of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia pertain to the fight against corruption, including what we call “de-oligarchisation”.

The fight against corruption is also part of comprehensive and wider efforts to strengthen democracy, good governance and the rule of law, and a long-standing priority of the Eastern Neighbourhood. The current policy framework attaches particular importance to strengthening the fight against corruption, notably through verified asset declarations for high-level officials and other legal and institutional frameworks. In the Eastern Neighbourhood region, EU-funded programmes are ongoing in partnership with the Council of Europe, UNICRI, the OECD and civil society.

Likewise, in the Western Balkans, EU-funded programmes are implemented in cooperation with the Council of Europe, the OSCE and civil society. Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia have been invited to participate in the 2024 Rule of Law Report, aiming to put these countries on an equal footing with EU Member States early on and further monitor and support their reform efforts, including on anti-corruption.

The Joint EU Communication on a “Renewed partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood” acknowledges that the threat of corruption continues to feed instability and stifle prosperity. It also stresses the importance for Southern partners to ensure that fraud, corruption, money laundering, and misappropriation are addressed with effective, dissuasive and proportionate criminal sanctions as well as through effective and efficient cooperation with the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). In the MENA region, EU-funded programmes in the fight against corruption are ongoing in partnership with the Council of Europe, UNICRI and civil society.

This month, the Team Europe Initiative (TEI) to fight illicit financial flows (IFFs) and related transnational organised crime in Africa will be launched. The objective is to enhance the effectiveness of countries in preventing and fighting Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism through enhanced law enforcement, supervision, and judicial capabilities. Another key component relates to supporting civil society, whistle-blowers and investigative journalists. They will be supported to leverage their watchdog and advocacy roles. We also strive to increase civil society’s role to promote greater transparency and to hold institutions accountable to take action against IFFs and organised crime. This initiative alone will comprise 200 MEUR.

Finally, an anti-corruption Helpdesk initiative will support the work of EU Delegations worldwide on anti-corruption in EU programming and decision-making. It will highlight the importance of incorporating a strong anti-corruption perspective in all development efforts to make sure that funding is used effectively and that it targets the right beneficiaries.

Thank you, Mr Chair.