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**Statement submitted by Transparency International, a  
non-governmental organization in consultative status with  
the Economic and Social Council\***

The following document is being circulated in accordance with paragraph 1 (i) of resolution 4/6 of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption and rule 17, paragraph 3 (b), of the rules of procedure for the Conference.

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# Countering corruption impacts on women and on other groups at risk of discrimination

Transparency International submission to the first resumed 15th session of the UNCAC Implementation Review Group and to the 15<sup>th</sup> Session of the UNCAC Working Group on the Prevention of Corruption

**UNCAC Resolution 10/10 on Addressing the Societal Impacts of Corruption is a major milestone addressing the gender dimensions of corruption, its disproportionate impacts and the need for higher participation in anticorruption efforts. We also welcome the Conference of States Parties' (CoSP) request to the UNCAC Working Group on Prevention in Resolution 10/3 para. 15 to discuss "the negative effects of corruption on women and youth and the role played by women and youth in preventing and combating corruption". We further welcome the mandate given to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to provide technical assistance to States Parties for the implementation of Resolution 10/10, particularly mainstreaming gender and social inclusion into anticorruption efforts. We call for ensuring that women and other at-risk groups are meaningfully included in the discussions about the impacts of corruption and in decisions on how technical assistance is provided.**

This submission reflects Transparency International's findings that show the perverse effect of corruption on women, and other groups.<sup>1</sup> Corruption drives discrimination and disproportionately affects the most marginalised. It exacerbates inequalities and undermines access to services, land, and political representation, among other social and economic opportunities, for women and other at-risk groups, including young people, LGBTQ, ethnic, racial, and religious minorities, persons with disabilities, and refugees. Discriminatory corruption results in a particularistic allocation of resources or the refusal to provide goods or services based on discrimination.<sup>2</sup>

Women experience corruption in different ways than men due to power imbalances and unequal participation in public versus domestic life.<sup>3</sup> Corruption hinders women's access to politics, employment, and business. Women face different and greater pressure to pay bribes, and engage in sexual corruption (sextortion), while also encountering higher obstacles when seeking redress and justice.<sup>4</sup>

Several approaches are required to address these challenges. These include the recognition of the impact of discriminatory corruption on women, and other groups at risk, mainstreaming gender

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<sup>1</sup> The projects Transparency International's findings are based on include [All 4 Inclusive Service Delivery in Africa](#), [Clean Money in Elections](#) and [Land and Corruption in Africa](#).

<sup>2</sup> McDonald, E., Jenkins, M., & Fitzgerald, J. (2021). *Defying Exclusion*. Equal Rights Trust, Transparency International. <https://www.transparency.org/en/publications/defying-exclusion-corruption-discrimination>

<sup>3</sup> Duri, J. (2020). *Overview of corruption and anti-corruption in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Transparency International. Available: <https://knowledgehub.transparency.org/helpdesk/overview-of-corruption-and-anti-corruption-in-sub-saharan-africa>

<sup>4</sup> McDonald, E., Jenkins, M., & Fitzgerald, J. (2021). *Defying Exclusion*. Equal Rights Trust, Transparency International. Retrieved from <https://www.transparency.org/en/publications/defying-exclusion-corruption-discrimination>

and social inclusion in anti-corruption efforts and the access to redress through gender-sensitive reporting mechanisms.

## **Impacts of corruption on women and other groups at risk of discrimination**

Corruption especially affects women in political representation, access to public services, and land rights.

Transparency International's recent findings on political integrity demonstrate that corruption exacerbates the existing barriers women face as political candidates.<sup>5</sup> These barriers include gender stereotypes, systematic discrimination, financial and time burdens on primary caregivers, insufficient support from political parties, and higher campaign costs. On average, women earn less than men, dominate low-wage occupations, are underrepresented in leadership, possess fewer assets, and have less control over their income.<sup>6</sup> Most countries do not provide gender-specific funding; while 70 percent provide direct public funding to political parties, only 17 percent offer gender-targeted funding.<sup>7</sup> In countries where public financing earmarks resources for women, these funds are often misappropriated.<sup>8</sup> Despite constitutional quotas mandating a percentage of female representation in political parties, enforcement is undermined by political patronage and corruption.

Corruption in service delivery is the form of corruption most frequently encountered by citizens.<sup>9</sup> Given their greater dependency on public services, it affects disproportionately women and other marginalized groups.<sup>10</sup> According to Transparency International's recent evidence, when accessing healthcare services, corruption means that people living in poverty cannot access medicines or even the emergency treatment they need.<sup>11</sup> Marginalised groups are often more impacted by the denial of services due to the lack of financial means to turn to alternative (private) services.

Corruption also deprives access to land and resources. Recent studies by Transparency International and Equals Right Trust, report how women are disproportionately affected by corruption in land services, through patronage and fraud in valuation and compensation processes.<sup>12</sup> Youth face the potential loss of their generational right to land, as politically connected individuals are prioritised in land reallocations and government resettlements. Limited

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<sup>5</sup> See Transparency International's Project on [Clean Money in Elections](#).

<sup>6</sup> Ortiz-Ospina, E., Hasell, J., & Roser, M. (2018, March). Economic inequality by gender. Our World in Data. <https://ourworldindata.org/economic-inequality-by-gender> (last revised March 2024)

<sup>7</sup> International IDEA. (n.d.). Political Finance Database. Available at: <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/political-finance-database>

<sup>8</sup> See Transparency International's Project on [Clean Money in Elections](#).

<sup>9</sup> Ardigó, I. A., & Chêne, M. (2017). Corruption in Service Delivery Topic Guide. Transparency International. <https://knowledgehub.transparency.org/guide/topic-guide-on-corruption-in-service-delivery/4471>

<sup>10</sup> McDonald, E., Jenkins, M., & Fitzgerald, J. (2021). *Defying Exclusion*. Equal Rights Trust, Transparency International. Retrieved from <https://www.transparency.org/en/publications/defying-exclusion-corruption-discrimination>

<sup>11</sup> Bergin, J. (2024). Left Behind: Corruption in Education and Health Services in Africa. Berlin: Transparency International. <https://www.transparency.org/en/publications/left-behind-corruption-in-education-health-services-africa>

<sup>12</sup> Barnes, S. (2024). *This Beautiful Land: Corruption, Discrimination and Land Rights in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Transparency International. [https://images.transparencycdn.org/images/24.04.09\\_LO-RES-REV-THIS-BEAUTIFUL-LAND-LCD-REPORT.pdf](https://images.transparencycdn.org/images/24.04.09_LO-RES-REV-THIS-BEAUTIFUL-LAND-LCD-REPORT.pdf)

opportunities to report and challenge these practices further affects women and youth rights, entrenches inequality and creates incentives for conflict.<sup>13</sup>

## Specific manifestations of corruption

Sexual corruption (sextortion) is defined as the abuse of entrusted power to obtain a sexual benefit. It primarily, but not exclusively, affects women and girls, subgroups such as [migrants](#) and [LGBTQ](#) may also be targeted. It occurs when accessing services like education and health, but also in recruitment processes for public positions.<sup>14</sup> Perpetrators generally enjoy widespread impunity, due to “*legislative gaps*”, as recognized in Resolution 10/10, para. 6.

UNCAC Resolution 10/10, para.12 recognises that other forms of corruption disproportionately affect women. For example, mothers receive demands from public sector health providers to make informal payments while accessing [maternal and perinatal](#) care, exposing them to critical health risks, when unable or unwilling to pay. While not recognised in Resolution 10/10, dire impacts also exist in the education sector, where corruption-led constraints result in the premature withdrawal of children from school.

However, despite the notable progress made by Resolution 10/10, it fails to account for intersectional inequalities that make some groups more vulnerable to corruption and exploitation. It also fails to account for other groups at risk of discrimination; these include but are not limited to persons with disabilities, [LGBTQI+](#), [religious minorities](#) and [indigenous communities](#) whose unique exposure to corruption should also be recognised by State Parties.

## How can the UNCAC respond?

We commend the commitments outlined in UNCAC Resolution 10/10 as well as in other UN resolutions<sup>15</sup> to promote gender equality and to acknowledge the specific impacts of corruption on women and other groups, including sexual corruption. However, corruption remains pervasive, driving discrimination that denies women, and other groups access to economic and political opportunities. States Parties to the UNCAC, along with UN implementing agencies, have a crucial role to play.

We urge UNCAC State Parties to go beyond the measures outlined in CoSP resolutions in their national implementation and encourage the CoSP to build on the existing mandates regarding groups at risk of discrimination. We recommend to:

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<sup>13</sup> Oxfam International, [Uneven Ground](#), 2020.

<sup>14</sup> Bergin, J. (2024). *Left Behind: Corruption in Education and Health Services in Africa*. Transparency International. <https://www.transparency.org/en/publications/left-behind-corruption-in-education-health-services-africa>

<sup>15</sup> The 2021 United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on Corruption (A/RES/S-32/1 (2021)) urged Member States to advance gender equality and women's empowerment by incorporating these principles into their legislation, policies, research, and programs. Similarly, the ninth Conference of the States Parties (CoSP) to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) reaffirmed the commitment of States Parties to exploring the links between gender and corruption and encouraged the integration of gender considerations in line with domestic law (CoSP Resolution 9/2).

1. Take concrete and timely actions to implement the provisions of Resolution 10/10 *"Addressing the Societal Impacts of Corruption"*.
2. Mainstream gender and social inclusion in anti-corruption frameworks, using inclusive language, addressing the unique needs of women, children, persons with disabilities, minorities, refugees, and people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.
3. Enable the meaningful and equal participation of women and other groups at risk through affirmative-action measures in priority-setting and ensuring the involvement of equality partners in the design and implementation of anti-corruption interventions.
4. Ensure the inclusion of citizens, particularly indigenous peoples, women, and any other vulnerable groups, in decision-making processes concerning their land.
5. Promote transparent targeted financial measures to enhance women's representation. Legal frameworks should condition direct and indirect public funding on political parties' adherence to gender equality standards. Additionally, political parties, candidates and third parties must report income and expenditure with gender disaggregated information, published by a relevant oversight agency.
6. Promote access to redress through gender-sensitive, locally accessible and inclusive reporting mechanisms that consider barriers women and other vulnerable groups face. These should enable citizens to safely report different forms of corruption, including sexual corruption, and ensure meaningful follow-up.
7. Operationalise Resolution 10/10, preambular para.13 and operational para.6 by urgently adopting targeted measures to combat sexual corruption. States should expedite the enactment of legislation criminalising the abuse of authority to obtain sexual favours.

#### **Recognizing sexual corruption in regulation**

While sexual corruption may be interpreted as a prosecutable offence, some countries such as Nigeria and Tanzania have adopted bespoke laws to address sexual corruption to avoid legal ambiguity.

#### **Gender-sensitive corruption reporting**

[Gender-sensitive corruption reporting and whistleblowing mechanisms](#) provide women with the necessary conditions to safely report corruption. [Transparency International Madagascar](#) has worked for sexual corruption to be recognised, giving victims an avenue to report and hold perpetrators accountable.

We also recommend that the Intergovernmental Working Group on Prevention:

1. Urge the UNODC to continue integrating a gender perspective into its activities and programmes, and to embed a social inclusion approach that mitigates the impacts of corruption on other vulnerable groups.

2. We urge that the technical assistance provided by UNODC to States Parties is guided by policy recommendations included in this written submission, Article 6 of the Convention, and previous Resolutions.<sup>16</sup>
3. Assist the next Conference of States Parties in exploring the linkages between gender, corruption, and discrimination. This includes tasking the Intergovernmental Working Group with preparing a background paper on how corruption relates to discrimination based on gender, race, language, religion, political opinion, national or social origin, or other status.
4. Encourage States Parties to collect disaggregated data on corruption to understand its impact on women, girls, and other groups at risk. This data should inform effective anti-corruption policies consistent with the Convention and be shared with States Parties. Data collection can be facilitated through surveys, as per operational para.10 of Resolution 10/10, in cooperation with civil society organisations.

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<sup>16</sup> Including, but not limited to the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on Corruption A/RES/S-32/1 (2021) and CoSP Resolution 9/2 (2021).