



Corruption major impediment to advancing development, warn UN officials



9 December 2009 – Corruption kills development and is one of the biggest obstacles to achieving the globally agreed targets to reduce poverty, hunger and other social ills by 2015, also known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), United Nations officials warned today.

“When public money is stolen for private gain, it means fewer resources to build schools, hospitals, roads and water treatment facilities. When foreign aid is diverted into private bank accounts, major infrastructure projects come to a halt,” Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in his **message** on International Anti-Corruption Day, observed on 9 December.

The theme of this year’s observance is “don’t let corruption kill development,” and highlights one of the biggest impediments countries face in their efforts to reach the MDGs.

“Corruption undermines governments’ ability to act and serve their people. It siphons off the finance intended to reduce poverty and discourages investment in economies,” said Helen Clark, the Administrator of the UN Development Programme (**UNDP**).

The Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (**UNODC**), Antonio Maria Costa, paid tribute to “heroes with integrity: anti-corruption officials who are not afraid to go after the big fish; whistleblowers who risk their jobs to expose cheating; journalists who risk their lives to investigate fraud and report the truth; prosecutors who defend justice, even when under attack from powerful forces.”

Through its Global Programme against Corruption, the Vienna-based UNODC assists States with vulnerable developing or transitional economies by promoting anti-corruption measures in the public and private sector, including in high-level financial and political circles.

Mr. Ban urged everyone to join the “Your NO Counts” campaign – spearheaded by UNODC and UNDP – at www.yournocounts.org, and to make a pledge: never to offer or accept a bribe.

“Live by that motto, and the world will be a more honest place – and we will increase the chances of reaching the Millennium Development Goals,” he stated.

He also urged both the private and public sectors to make more effective use of the UN Convention against Corruption, which he described as “the world’s strongest legal instrument to build integrity and fight corruption.”

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