

**Opening Speech delivered by David Nussbaum,  
Chief Executive, Transparency International  
Kuwait Transparency Conference, 15 January**

Your Excellencies,

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to speak in front of this audience today. The fact you are all present, including the representative of His Highness, underlines the importance of this conference and the centrality of our cause. I thank you for sharing your views with us, and for entering into this dialogue with all partners involved, from civil society, private sector and state institutions.

For Transparency International, this conference is an opportunity to meet various players from Kuwait and other Gulf countries and address the issue of how most efficiently we can all join together to fight corruption. Let me thank Mr Al-Ghazali and our colleagues from Kuwait Transparency Society for having taken the initiative a couple of months ago, and for making this conference a reality.

The main aim of the conference is to discuss strategies how best to fight corruption in a country like Kuwait. If such strategies are implemented, it is possible for the rating of Kuwait in TI's Corruption Perception Index to improve, given that reform should lead to lower levels of corruption, and so to better perceptions. Many of you have participated in the seminar by Johann Graf Lambsdorff yesterday, so I will not go into the methodology.

TI's approach underlines the need for comprehensive strategies: We call this the National Integrity System (NIS), which outlines a framework of various "pillars" of society which need to function in themselves, and in relation to each other, to create a building bloc against corruption. These pillars include the legislative, the judiciary, the executive, media, and civil society, among other institutions. This emphasises that all actors of society need to be involved. Against this background, this conference is exemplary in bringing together players and activities from all these areas, as well as

international and regional experts, and our TI colleagues from Algeria, Bahrain, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine.

So, I am delighted to have TI partners from the MENA region, and particularly pleased to have representatives from TI Chapters in Nigeria and South Africa here. The sharing of experience of how other civil society groups, parliamentarians, youths and others can promote transparency efforts is key.

This Conference comes at a moment where there is great momentum in the fight against corruption, both nationally, but also internationally: Kuwait ratified the UN Convention against Corruption recently, as the seventh country in the Arab region, and I congratulate you on this act of political will to fight corruption. I would be pleased if you conveyed my congratulations to High Highness. Internationally, Members States to the UNCAC gathered for the first time at the Conference of States Parties to the UNCAC last December at the Dead Sea in Jordan to design the way forward in the international fight against corruption. I will talk more about this in the next session.

I was at that UN conference just a few weeks ago. I was struck by the views of almost all participants there that civil society is crucial in the fight against corruption. Several dozen civil society organisations from all over the world, including Kuwait Transparency Society, were at the Dead Sea as “observers” – but actually mainly as *partners* in discussing solutions. Their experience of the anti-corruption struggle in their country, and their passion for the cause, inspired the governments and led to better results! Future progress will rely on further *joint* work.

I underline “joint” as a key message for every country and, particularly, Kuwait. Of course, governments implement reforms, they draft laws, and it is not the place of civil society to do this. However, effective anti-corruption work involves raising of awareness of the problem, providing expertise and input on reform process, playing the “watchdog” so that these reforms are put into place. Civil society is basically a partner in reform, amongst others. Cooperation is needed to counter uncertainty about the reform agenda and cynicism about whether one can truly fight corruption.

We are glad to know that CSOs in Kuwait are playing this role, in particular the Kuwait Transparency Society. We hope and encourage that the dialogue between high-level government representatives and civil society will continue after this conference.

Thank you!