

# TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL CALLS FOR STRONGER ANTI-CORRUPTION LEADERSHIP

## *International Anti-Corruption Day Challenges Inevitability of Corruption*

“Stronger leadership is essential if corruption is to be defeated”, says Huguette Labelle, the new Chair of Transparency International, as the world recognises International Anti-Corruption Day on 9 December, two years after the historic signing of the United Nations Convention against Corruption in Merida, Mexico.

“The signing of the United Nations Convention against Corruption was a forceful demonstration of the power of visionary leadership to bring about an historic change for the good,” said Labelle. “Leaders must now carry that spirit through by ensuring ratification by all the nations that signed the Convention and adopting the strong monitoring mechanisms needed to give teeth to the Convention.”

Designated in 2004 by United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, International Anti-Corruption Day recognises the essential global leadership provided at Merida, where 95 countries took the anti-corruption pledge by signing the Convention. They have since been joined by 39 more signatories, bringing the total signatories to 134 nations.

The Convention enters into force on 14 December 2005, 90 days after the required 30<sup>th</sup> ratification documentation was received. Those nations that have ratified will benefit from the Convention’s provisions to help retrieve assets stolen by dictators and other public officials, prevent money laundering, pursue corrupt foreign companies and individuals, prohibit bribery of foreign public officials, and enhance accounting and auditing standards in the private sector. The provisions of the Convention must also, of course, be made to apply to the work of officials of all international bodies.

“Complacency is corruption’s best friend,” said David Nussbaum, Chief Executive of Transparency International. “Signing the document and taking part in the photo opportunity is not enough. Leaders must now complete the ratification process and focus on implementation.” Although being among the first to sign on to the need for an international anti-corruption Convention, Canada has not yet ratified the United Nations Convention against Corruption. TI-Canada, therefore strongly urges the government of Canada to complete this necessary last step in the process and to then publicise the ethical principles and measures set out in the Convention.

Countries must translate the Convention’s provisions into action. The follow-up conference in late 2006 for signatory states must generate an explicit and effective system for reviewing each country’s implementation of the convention and agree on adequate levels of resources and technical assistance to enable developing countries to implement effectively. Experience of other anti-corruption Conventions shows that without a rigorous monitoring mechanism the UNCAC will fail to make a dent on corruption levels.

### **Anti-Corruption Day**

Around the world on 9 December, people will stand up and say no to corrupt politicians, crooked companies and cold-hearted cronyism. International Anti-Corruption Day recognises the devastating impact of corruption on the lives of millions of people around the world and honours the quiet acts of courage of individuals who are building the foundation of change. In countries

rich and poor, in all regions and walks of life, diverse organisations and individuals are united in a common cause: forcing the world to action against the scourge of corruption.

International Anti-Corruption Day is also the day when leaders of the Group of Eight (G-8) should report publicly on their progress in fulfilling the anti-corruption goals set at the Summit at Gleneagles, Scotland six months ago. The G-8 committed to promptly ratify the UNCAC, yet only France has completed this process.

###

*Transparency International is the global civil society organisation leading the fight against corruption. Contact Dr. Wesley Cragg President, Transparency International Canada, Telephone: 416-736-5809*