

## **CLOSING REMARKS**

### **High Level Closing Ceremony**

*by Ms. Caitlin Wiesen*

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*6 December 2019*

*H.E. Mr. Truong Hoa Binh, Standing Deputy Prime Minister, Viet Nam*

*H.E. Mr. Le Minh Khai, Government Inspector General of Viet Nam*

*Mr. David McNaught, Political & Prosperity Counsellor, British Embassy in Viet Nam*

*Mr. Jeffrey Schlagenhauf, Deputy Secretary-General, OECD*

*Mr. John Versantvoort, Head of the Office of Anticorruption and Integrity, ADB*

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

1. On behalf of UNDP, I would like to thank the Government of Vietnam for their hospitality and for hosting this Regional Conference of the Anti-Corruption Initiative for Asia-Pacific. I would like also to thank ADB and OECD colleagues for their concerted efforts, together with UNDP, to organize this 4-day conference, bringing together about 120 experts and practitioners from over 20 countries from the Asia-Pacific Region, as well as international delegates. I also wish to thank the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry, VCCI, for their collaboration and invaluable contribution as co-chairs for the kick-off day of the conference, the first Business Integrity Meeting organized within the context of the *Anti-Corruption Initiative for Asia-Pacific*.
2. UNDP has been cooperating since 2014 with the *Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative*. Since then, we have successfully managed to engage more and more stakeholders, facilitating connections between anti-corruption agencies, ministries, civil society organizations, international organizations and now also business sector representatives across the Asia-Pacific region.
3. The wealth of knowledge shared this week and the fruitful group discussions show the importance of collective and concerted action against corruption.

4. This year, the conference's thematic focus was on preventing corruption in infrastructure projects. We all know that infrastructure development is a key driver of socio-economic growth, especially in a dynamic region like ASEAN. At the same time, due to the large size of the projects, their complexity and the budget amounts involved, we are fully aware that corruption and mismanagement risks are extremely high. Infrastructure projects undermined by corruption can turn into "white elephant" projects, which constitute a waste of public funds and have a negative impact on the trust of people in the public institutions. In some cases, corruption in infrastructure projects can affect the quality of the end product, leading to people being deprived of essential services (for example when schools and hospitals are never completed). In the worst cases, lives are being put at risk, when, for example, poorly constructed bridges collapse.
5. Recent research from the Global Infrastructure Hub estimates that about \$97.5 trillion investment funds are needed to meet the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, but investments are likely to fall short of this amount by as much as \$18 trillion. In terms of mismanagement and inefficiency experience from the Construction Transparency Initiative shows that a further 10 – 30% could be lost. The International Monetary Fund corroborates this, specifying an efficiency gap of approximately 30% between the money that is spent and the coverage and quality of the resulting infrastructure. This means that by 2030, unless measures are introduced that effectively improve this situation, a staggering US\$6 trillion could be lost annually to corruption, mismanagement and inefficiency.
6. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides us with renewed impetus for collective efforts to address corruption. As you probably know, we have specific anti-corruption targets under SDG16. Goal 16 is not only a valuable and important aspiration in its own right; it is also an important enabling goal for the entire sustainable development agenda.
7. The engagement of a variety of stakeholders in anti-corruption efforts, promoting the inclusion of civil society and community monitors, as well as business representatives, is important. Such engagement ensures that their perspectives

and wealth of knowledge are taken into account when developing solutions to prevent and tackle corruption in infrastructure projects.

8. This is why, for the first time this year, for example, UNDP and OECD organized the Business Integrity Meeting as part of the *Anti-Corruption Initiative Conference*, which attracted over 60 participants. During this meeting, they shared their experiences of corruption challenges in their business operations, and proposed ideas on how to strengthen their business practices and systems to prevent, detect and report corruption. This year, we have given a platform for businesses to voice their concerns and propose solutions in front of government representatives and anti-corruption practitioners. Solutions include also making good use of technologies to share data and information, ensuring freedom of information, promoting knowledge sharing and strengthening regional and national multi-stakeholder dialogues.
9. Promoting a level playing field for business requires an effort not only on the part of government but also on the part of companies to “put their house in order” and participate in collective action initiatives in the region. Companies should play an active role, in both complying with the laws and regulations, and ensuring that their business practices promote the values of fairness, inclusiveness, integrity, transparency, and accountability.
10. The Vietnam Chamber of Commerce has provided a great contribution to this dialogue, and it has already expressed its willingness to bring good governance and business integrity to the upcoming ASEAN Business Fora in 2020, the year of Vietnam’s chair of ASEAN.
11. In conclusion, let me thank once again the Government of Vietnam and the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce, for their hospitality and contributions. I would like also to thank the **Government of the United Kingdom, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and OECD Korea Policy Centre** for their generous support. Finally, I express my appreciation to ADB and OECD colleagues for this fruitful collaboration. UNDP is very fortunate to have a regional project on “Promoting a fair business environment in ASEAN”, supported by the generous funding of the UK Government. We at UNDP, both at the Country Office and at the Bangkok

Regional Hub, therefore stand ready to build on the outcomes of this conference and to continue supporting this multi-stakeholder dialogue, assisting anti-corruption agencies, all government branches, civil society and business sector to join forces against corruption.

Thank you (Xin Cám Ơn)!