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EDITORIAL

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Dear Readers,

Corruption is extremely flexible and easily adaptable to new scenarios, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. It is generally a major impediment to prosperity and security because it hinders sustainable economic growth, distorts market competition, undermines the rule of law, and erodes trust between citizens and governments. In times of emergency and crisis, however, the risk increases that corruption can exacerbate these negative effects, thwarting efforts geared towards a sustainable and resilient recovery. Corruption therefore has an even more debilitating effect during a *global* pandemic, which enormously challenges societies and economies – it becomes a “thief of the future.”

The G20 has played a significant role in global anticorruption efforts. Its Anti-Corruption Working Group (ACWG), established at the Toronto Summit in 2010, was especially designed to prepare “comprehensive recommendations for the consideration of Leaders on how the G20 can continue to make a valuable contribution to international efforts in the fight against corruption.” This mandate was intended to ensure that its member countries lead by example and make a qualified contribution to international anti-corruption objectives and instruments. In its ten years of activity, the G20 ACWG has adopted seven Action Plans, ten Accountability Reports, fifteen sets of High-Level Principles, and six Compendia of Good Practices; they contribute to develop the global agenda toward a new era of enforcement (<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/corruption/g20-anti-corruption-resources/by-thematic-area.html>).

The work of the ACWG, which includes a multi-stakeholder approach, has been guided by a multiannual Action Plan that systematically takes up commitments by G20 countries to, *inter alia*, (1) support, and implement the UN Convention against Corruption; (2) criminalise and prosecute foreign bribery; (3) cooperate with other countries to trace, prosecute, and repatriate the proceeds of corruption; (4) combat money laundering; and (5) promote integrity in public and private sectors.

G20 countries have been proactive in their response to the COVID-19 pandemic, both at the national level and within the ACWG. These efforts resulted, *inter alia*, in a *Compendium of good practices on anti-corruption in response to COVID-19*. With this compendium, the ACWG seeks to leverage the experience of all G20 countries to create a first vision of best practices against corruption taken during the pandemic. The compendium draws on best practices already developed to combat corruption in procurement fraud and other areas. It aims to provide guidance on national anti-corruption responses and procedures implemented in the G20 states and to provide useful information on countries’ responses to the current pandemic in order to prepare for similar future events.

The priorities of the Italian Presidency of the ACWG for 2021 are ambitious and innovative in terms of content. They focus particularly on modern forms of corruption that are increasingly linked to economic and organised crime. Moreover, they address the development of reliable indicators to measure corruption and to enhance prevention in exposed sectors and new risk areas, e.g., sports. Emphasis has been put on the role of reliable indicators, since measurement indices based on the perceived level of corruption have gradually shown inherent limitations since analyses of the phenomenon have turned out to be too subjective.

The Italian Presidency is highly aware of the new challenges of corruption and the ensuing need for an effective global fight against corruption, stressing the importance of taking into account the challenges posed by COVID-19. On one hand, the response has been to tackle more than just the negative impact of corruption on economic growth, once highlighted by G20 leaders in the High-Level Principles on corruption and growth adopted in Brisbane in 2014. On the other, consensus must be reached on a new set of High-Level Principles on integrity and transparency in case of future emergencies. Countries should be prepared and more resilient against any form of corruption beyond the medical crisis.

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