

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**THE HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL CONFERENCE FOR THE PURPOSE OF
SIGNING THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION AGAINST CORRUPTION**

Merida, Mexico, 9 December 2003

Appeal to Judges Worldwide

by

*Mr. Hans Corell
Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs
The Legal Counsel*

Since my professional experience is deeply rooted in the judiciary of my own country – I had the privilege of serving in several judicial functions in the past – I would like to use the opportunity of this Conference to make the following personal appeal to judges worldwide.

The adoption of the United Nations Convention against Corruption is a major step forward in the fight against a phenomenon that has devastating effects on our efforts to create societies under the rule of law. But the Convention and the consequent national legislation must be faithfully implemented.

It is a sad fact that not all national justice systems are free from corruption. To eradicate corruption from these systems is a task in which many are involved – within the legal profession and elsewhere. It goes without saying that the way in which the legal profession, in particular the judiciary, deals with corruption is one of the most important factors for the prospects of success. A corrupt judiciary means that the very mechanism designed to eradicate corruption has itself been infected with the disease. This is a devastating blow to the courageous efforts of others who are engaged in the fight against this scourge.

Corruption is a crime. But, basically, it is a question of morality and ethics. Those of us who are engaged in the administration and dispensation of justice know that there are many different issues that have to be addressed in this context; in particular the status and remuneration accorded to judges at the national level. But the fact that these issues may not have been solved in a fully satisfactory manner in all instances can never be an excuse. A judge must have integrity and self-respect, and someone with even a minimum of self-respect would shun corruption.

On this solemn occasion, I appeal to judges worldwide to engage effectively in the fight against corruption by individually setting the example. In particular, I turn to senior members of the profession. Your example will be of decisive importance for new generations of judges.

Judges all over the world: let today's event be a signal to us to join hands, at the national level and across borders, in a common effort to eradicate corruption within our own profession. This is the most important contribution we can make to the common effort, in which so many people are engaged, to create societies where we all can live in dignity.