The United Nations Convention against Corruption: A Strategy for Safeguarding against Corruption in Major Public Events

Complex logistical arrangements, tight timeframes and the involvement of substantial public funds feature prominently in the organization of major public events and may enhance the risk of corruption. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), guided by the principles in the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), has developed a handbook outlining a set of practical measures designed to counter this threat.

These start with a recommendation that organizers of major public events undertake a comprehensive, strategic risk assessment when planning the event, using the Corruption Prevention Checklist developed by UNODC as a starting point to develop a comprehensive risk mitigation strategy from the outset. Undertaking a comprehensive risk assessment at the early stage of planning for an event allows organizers to scope vulnerabilities, and to develop and implement an effective plan to address them. The Corruption Prevention Checklist, based on the relevant provisions of UNCAC, is designed to make that assessment more effective, substantially mitigating risks throughout the process.

Using the Corruption Prevention Checklist

The checklist is a self-administered tool. It aims to:

- Help organizers assess their preparedness and capacity to prevent, detect and respond to corruption while ensuring the successful organization of the major event.
- Assist in the development of a comprehensive approach to anti-corruption with respect to the organization and staging of the event.
- Provide a platform for review for any group or organization involved in the organization of a major event or in preparing a bid to host such an event.

The Checklist should be used as early as possible in the preparations for a major event, and ideally, as part of the process of preparing and submitting the original bid to host the event. It can then be used on an ongoing basis as a means of monitoring and verifying controls against corruption risk.

UNCAC's Framework for Mitigating Corruption Risk in Major Public Events

UNCAC has many principles applicable to the organization of major public events, which inspire the following key areas:

Creating Preventative Anti-Corruption Policies and Practices

UNCAC calls for creating policies and practices with built-in safeguards against corruption. Those especially relevant to the organization of major events can include:

- Creating temporary or permanent special legislation or regulations to support the organization of a major event.
- Establishing agency or agencies responsible for anti-corruption oversight.
- Defining the mandate of public authorities or specifying the division of tasks and responsibilities among public and private partners.
- Creating institutional capacity to manage the organization of major events.
- Monitoring the flow of funds and expenditure of public funds, especially in the areas of construction, infrastructure development and event security operations.
- Examining the effectiveness of preparatory work and related decision making processes.
- Specifying a clear, transparent and accountable governance structure for the agency responsible for the organization of the major event.

Establishing Anti-Corruption Bodies

The role and authority of anti-corruption bodies related to the agency responsible for the organization of a major event should be clear and non-contentious, and the statutory authority of these should be well established. The obligation of the agency and

UNODC
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

its leaders to cooperate with the anti-corruption bodies should be stipulated in the agency's own mandate. These bodies can be instrumental in helping to assess the risk of corruption and the development of the anti-corruption strategy for the event.

Applying Objective Criteria to Recruiting, Hiring and Managing Event Personnel

Major public events can be at risk of corruption, nepotism, conflicts of interest and poor staffing as they recruit, hire and manage personnel - unless objective criteria are applied effectively. Objective standards for hiring must apply to personnel recruitment, with merit, equity and aptitude governing all human resources decisions. Any exceptions to the rules should be documented, made public and enforced systematically.

Managing Public Finances

The large sums disbursed as part of the organization of a major event call for robust mechanisms to promote transparency and accountability in the management of these funds. Close attention must be paid to rigorous financial control and oversight mechanisms required for a major event, including accountability, structure and process for budgeting and financial management; integrity of the budgeting and financial planning process; strength of financial control mechanisms; need for frequent and thorough internal and external audits; and importance of accurate, comprehensive and transparent financial reporting. It may be necessary to review and strengthen financial control mechanisms in how they should be applied to those involved in the organization of the event. Changes or exceptions should be adopted in a transparent and accountable manner.

Adopting Public Procurement Systems

UNCAC obliges States to create and adopt procurement systems based on transparency, competition and objective criteria. The organization of a major event provides the opportunity to review and strengthen existing procurement, tendering and contracting rules to prevent corruption. Adopted criteria must be firm, objective, transparent and publicly available. Published procurement and tendering rules must establish the conditions of participation, including selection and award criteria. Time pressures and calls for efficiency and expediency must not weaken procedures requiring proper documentation of procurement decisions. The system should allow for later verification of how procurement rules were applied in practice.

Managing Risk in Construction and Infrastructure Development

Organizing a major event typically involves significant investments in infrastructure and construction. Risk management strategies can mitigate the risks associated with major construction and infrastructure development projects and minimize the opportunities for corrupt practices to further complicate them. Precise policies should also guide the type of concessions that may be granted for different types of infrastructure projects that involve public-private partnerships.

Detection of Corruption and Law Enforcement

UNCAC requires criminalizing, prosecuting and punishing corruption, including corruption in the private sector. While those involved in organizing the event do not have direct responsibility for law enforcement, they have a duty to cooperate with law enforcement agencies in the detection, investigation and prosecution of acts of fraud.

Requiring Public Reporting

The circumstances surrounding the organization of a major event may require additional measures to make public various information about the organization of the agency, the decisions that it takes, the funds that it manages, the contracts, licenses and other advantages that it grants and the progress that it achieves in preparing for or staging the major event.

Developing Private Sector Corruption Controls

UNCAC calls for action to ensure that businesses have sufficient internal auditing controls to assist in preventing and detecting acts of corruption and that their accounts and required financial statements are subject to appropriate auditing and certification procedures. Such controls can include:

- Promoting the use of good commercial and contractual practices among business and in the contractual relations of business with those responsible for the organization of the major event.
- Providing training for business actors involved in the procurement process, in sponsorship arrangements and the business contract with the agency responsible for the organization of the event.
- Preventing conflicts of interest.
- Ensuring transparency within the private entities, including transparency about the identity of the legal or natural persons involved in the establishment or management of commercial identities.
- Preventing the misuse of procedures regulating private entities, including procedures regarding subsidies and licenses granted by public authorities or by those responsible for organizing the major public event.
- Creating internal auditing controls to assist in preventing and detecting acts of corruption.
- Developing and adhering to policies for both the granting and receiving of sponsorships.

The tools are available at: http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/corruption/publications.html.

UNODC
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime