

Statement by Mr. Atle Leikvoll,
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Mr. Secretary General, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin by congratulating the member countries on the tenth anniversary of the OECD convention against bribery. Furthermore, I would like to thank the Government of Italy for hosting this event, and for its efforts, in cooperation with the OECD Secretariat, to make this a memorable occasion.

Ten years ago, there was a wide-spread scepticism about introducing binding anti-corruption instruments, and bribes were in many cases even tax-deductible. At the same time, we were jointly beginning to recognise the destructive nature of corruption – a recognition that paved the way for the Convention.

Today, the picture has changed. In just 10 years, this rather short but highly focused convention and its rigorous review mechanism have had an enormous influence on the fight against corruption.

As parties to the convention, we have all had to amend our legislation. In Norway's case, this has involved introducing comprehensive penal provisions against bribery and corruption.

Appropriate legislation is but a starting point. Implementing the legislation is the key challenge. This is where the convention really makes a difference. Its extensive and effective self assessment and peer review mechanism – often referred to as the gold standard for review mechanisms – is unique. It provides a solid unique framework for countries in their efforts to comply with its aims and principles.

One of the aims of the convention is to ensure a level playing field for businesses engaged in international activities. There is little doubt that it has helped to create a common standard for businesses to follow.

Another important aim of the convention is to promote sustainable development. Corruption exists in all countries, but is most damaging to poor countries and impoverished populations. The convention plays a particularly important role in this respect, by targeting the often neglected supply side of bribery and corruption.

A lot has been achieved over the last 10 years. Still there is no time for complacency as the Secretary General said. Many tasks remain. One is the development of the review mechanism through the new phase 3. Another is coverage. I hope that we will be able to welcome new parties to the convention in the near future.

It is very encouraging to see that additional instruments are being developed. The UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) has already been ratified by more than 100 States, and adds a new, global dimension to the fight against corruption. Moreover, it enhances the need for close cooperation between the OECD and UN in this field.

The long list of corruption investigations that are currently being carried out all over the world indicates that the convention is being taken seriously by the member countries. However, investigating and prosecuting corruption is complicated and difficult. And, in many countries, the investigators, prosecutors and judges risk their lives in taking up the fight. I would like to take this opportunity to commend them on their tremendous courage and dedication.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the Working Group on Bribery for their efforts to ensure that evaluations take place.

I would like to express particular thanks to the chairman of the Group, Professor Mark Pieth. Your great experience and knowledge, along with that of the delegates of the Group and the Secretariat, have helped to make the OECD's anti-bribery efforts so successful.

Indirect response to the Secretary General's challenge, I can assure you of Norway's full and unqualified commitment to the implementation of our Convention.

Thank you.