**Goodwill Message by HE Edward Kallon, UN Resident Coordinator in Nigeria at the 2nd National Summit on Diminishing Corruption in the Public Sector, Monday,**

**28 September 2020**

**Protocols:**

Your Excellency, President Muhammadu Buhari, GCON, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria;

Honourable Ministers & Attorney-General of the Federation;

Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Mr. Boss Mustapha;

Director-General, ICPC;

Your Excellencies & Members of the Diplomatic Community

Ladies, and Gentlemen:

I am delighted to be part of this epoch-making event; the second in a series of events organized in collaboration with the Office of the Secretary to Government of the Federation to review the fight against Corruption in Nigeria and to mark the 20th Anniversary of the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC). This Summit signifies another step-in demonstrating Nigeria’s commitment to the global fight against corruption.

Excellencies,

The United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) provides tools for countries to prevent, control and combat corruption, including the recovery of proceeds of crime. Diminishing corruption in the public sector is one of the main thrusts of the Convention. Comprehensive provisions, which should be domesticated and implemented in accordance with the fundamental principles of law of each country include:

* The recruitment, hiring, retention, promotion and retirement of civil servants based on principles of efficiency, transparency, merit and equity, as well as adequate remuneration;
* Transparency in the funding of candidatures for elected public office, and where applicable, the funding of political parties; and prevention of conflict of interest are provided in article 7 of the Convention.
* In addition, article 8 of the Convention provides for codes of conduct for public officials while article 9 deals with measures to enhance transparency in public procurement and management of public finances, all with a view to preventing corruption in the public service.

If countries take advantage of this global legal framework, they can contribute in building a robust structure for efficient and effective anti-corruption policies and enforcement.

From the elaboration to practical efforts in implementing the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), Nigeria has relentlessly advocated for the recovery and return of proceeds of corruption to countries of origin. Together with other concerned parties, Nigeria has sponsored resolutions, including resolution 8/8 on strengthening international cooperation in asset recovery with a view in support of the 2030 goals on Sustainable Development.

Significant progress has been made in law enforcement against corruption in Nigeria. But there is still room for improvement. In my remarks at one of the events organized in July this year to mark the 20th Anniversary of the ICPC, I did observe that “in Nigeria for example, 2019 marked the year with the largest number of corruption related convictions. At the same time, the Nigerian Government in cooperation with its partners was able to recover and return to Nigeria hundreds of millions of US dollars from a few jurisdictions”.

I also observed that, despite these efforts and successes, citizens’ appreciation of the fight against corruption remains low in many countries. While negative perceptions may not be a fair reflection of the progress being made, we need to acknowledge them’.

It is against this background that I would like to reiterate that while a citizen-centered approach should be an integral part of anti-corruption efforts, my suggestions for further discussion on four specific actions drawing from our experience in Nigeria remains relevant. These are:

1. **Ending wide-spread small-scale bribery:** While large scale corruption scandals may capture the attention of the public, our experience suggests that actual experience with bribe-seeking behavior by public officials also influences citizens’ perception of the effectiveness and seriousness of Governments’ anti-corruption agendas. Unless there is a tangible reduction in such conduct, citizens will continue to have legitimate doubts concerning the actual commitment and reported successes to eradicate corruption.

1. **Enhancing the development impact of asset recovery:** The recovery of large sums of proceeds of corruption from a citizens’ perspective is only relevant if these proceeds translate visibly into improvements in their lives. It is thus crucial that countries find practical ways to ensure that both domestically and internationally recovered assets are managed in a transparent and accountable fashion, and reliably reinvested into the achievement of the SDGs.

This is in line with the respective Resolution on *Strengthening Asset Recovery to Support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, which was sponsored by Kenya, Nigeria and the State of Palestine and adopted by the Conference of States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption at its 8th Session, held in December 2019 in Abu Dhabi, UAE.

1. **Creating effective and responsive public complaints systems:** The request for citizens to own the fight against corruption is not new. Yet, as long as the State and its institutions are failing in the eyes of the public to demonstrate their determination in the fight against corruption, it is unlikely that we will convince citizens to embrace the fight against corruption wholeheartedly.
2. **Improving transparency and communications in the fight against corruption:** I believe we can and must do much better in communicating about the fight against corruption, bearing in mind that most citizens in Africa are below the age of 25.

In this context, it is my great pleasure to refer you to a short animated film which has been produced by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) summarizing the key findings of the *2nd Corruption in Nigeria Survey* with a view to reaching a much broader public audience, in particular the youth. UNODC with funding from DFID (now FCOD) and EU supported the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) to conduct two (2) corruption surveys in 2016 and 2019 respectively. Each survey provides key findings and recommendations that can help government in its different initiatives aimed at diminishing corruption in Nigeria.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the ICPC marks its 20th Anniversary, I would like to join you all in congratulating the leadership of the Commission for sustaining the momentum of the fight against corruption in Nigeria. The United Nations will remain an important partner in Nigeria’s commitment to fight corruption and achieve sustainable development goals. I wish you fruitful deliberations at this Summit.

Thank you for your kind attention