

The Egyptian Experience as a Model Dual Sustainable Development and Anti-Corruption!



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In 2015, the United Nations announced the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which called for a shift towards modern development patterns. The old patterns involved excessive exploitation of resources to achieve economic growth and technological progress individually, without considering the need to protect the environment. The desired new patterns aim to achieve balanced environmental, social, and economic development for all people on the planet, ensuring the fulfillment of the current generation's needs while preserving the rights of future generations. The launch of the agenda called on member states to formulate strategies that contribute to achieving global sustainable development goals based on national priorities. Consequently, the term began to emerge and circulate among decision-makers, policymakers, strategists, and implementers in many countries.

In light of the release of the UNCTAD World Investment Report, which stated that approximately \$4.5 trillion annually should be mobilized to achieve the global 2030 Agenda, in addition to estimating a financing gap ranging from \$2.5 trillion to \$3 trillion annually for achieving sustainable development goals in developing countries, the United Nations has stated that in the absence of the necessary means for investing in sustainable development, developing countries will fall further behind and there is an urgent need to rebuild international cooperation and find solutions through multi-stakeholder action. Countries that have launched their national strategies for sustainable development have realized that achieving the 2030 Agenda requires not only policy and strategy adjustments but also the development of financial, monetary, trade, and tax systems, making significant investment decisions, and mobilizing the necessary resources to finance this transformation.

In the same vein, sustainable growth and comprehensive development cannot be achieved without combating corruption, as emphasized by Australian economist Wolfgang Kasper, the developmental experience over the past half-century has proven that the inability of some countries to achieve economic growth was not due to a lack of natural resources or capital, but rather their failure to combat corruption, lack of empowerment of oversight bodies, and the inability to implement rules and principles of good governance, which hindered local and foreign investments and banned the maximum utilization of available resources, which in turn led to the waste of efforts to activate productive forces. The International Monetary Fund's report titled "Corruption: Its Costs and Strategies for Mitigation" in 2016 also stated that corruption hinders public budget management, the implementation of sound monetary policies, and weakens financial supervision, thus impeding inclusive growth. At that time, Christine Lagarde, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, stated that combating corruption is a fundamental requirement for achieving overall economic stability because the direct economic costs of corruption are known, but the indirect costs are greater and more burdensome. Furthermore, the World Bank has reported that corruption causes enormous financial and economic losses, with nearly \$1 trillion in bribes being paid annually worldwide. According to estimates from the Global Integrity Index, Africa witnessed illicit financial flows amounting to \$1.8 trillion between 1970 and 2008. Therefore, the 2030 Agenda has placed great emphasis on combating corruption and emphasized the close link between fighting corruption and peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. Goal 16, titled "Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions," includes targets related to reducing bribery, strengthening institutions, and accessing information, not only as aspirations but also as conditions for achieving the remaining sixteen sustainable development goals. The United Nations has called for making the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), which has been signed by nearly 189 countries, a legally binding instrument. This Convention provides a comprehensive framework and mechanisms to prevent, detect, and prosecute corrupt practices in all sectors and across all segments of society. Its fifth article emphasizes the need to formulate strategies to combat corruption, along with effective implementation mechanisms that promote participation and reflect the principles of the rule of law, sound public affairs management, and public property, alongside integrity and transparency."

"In light of the unprecedented crises and shocks facing the world, which not only hinder progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals but also lead to regression and setbacks, combating corruption remains a priority and a crucial step towards achieving comprehensive and sustainable development, as described by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, in his speech at the opening of the Ninth Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, in December 2021. The world still urgently needs to apply the principles of transparency and integrity, as emphasized by Ms. Ghada Waly, the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, during the same conference. She pointed out that this session holds exceptional importance, especially after the first-ever special session on combating corruption was held in the General Assembly, describing it as a "historic session." During this special session, Mr. Volkan Bozkir, the President of the United Nations General Assembly, stated that corruption remains one of the most significant challenges for countries, institutions, and societies. He emphasized that we cannot pretend



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that there were no problems before the COVID-19 pandemic and concluded that the world will not recover from the current economic contraction without concerted efforts to end corruption and that "we cannot allow corruption to continue, and we will not do so."

Finally, on Tuesday, May 2, 2023, Her Excellency Ms. Laetitia Stouva, the seventy-eighth President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), stated that corruption leads to wasting approximately 5% of the world's gross domestic product and 25% (equivalent to 13 trillion dollars) of global public expenditure. She added that eliminating corruption can fund the Sustainable Development Goals with at least 3 trillion dollars. This statement came during a special meeting aimed at proposing feasible solutions that achieve tangible results in combating corruption at all levels and enhancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Ms. Stouva further emphasized that the world is in the second half of the implementation phase of the 2030 Agenda, and there is an urgent need to accelerate the implementation of all Sustainable Development Goals. According to the United Nations' interim monitoring report for 2023, only 12% of the Sustainable Development Goals are on track, 50% have made significant progress, and 30% have witnessed a decline in achievements. She added that corruption represents the biggest and most formidable obstacle to progress towards desired development. She concluded that the cost of corruption goes beyond financial losses and includes the loss of natural resources, exacerbation of poverty and inequality, undermining trust and social cohesion, and threatening economic and political stability."

Despite Egypt's long-standing commitment to combating corruption, as one of the first countries to ratify the United Nations Convention against Corruption, the anti-corruption system in Egypt has witnessed significant development since 2014. Article 218 of the amended 2014 Egyptian Constitution states, "The state is committed to combating corruption, and relevant oversight bodies and authorities are committed to coordinating among themselves in the fight against corruption, promoting integrity and transparency, ensuring the proper performance of public functions, and developing and monitoring the implementation of the national anti-corruption strategy in collaboration with other relevant bodies and entities." Following this, President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi called for the adoption of a national strategy to combat corruption on the occasion of the International Anti-Corruption Day, which falls on December 9, 2014, from the headquarters of the Administrative Control Authority. Subsequently, an anti-corruption strategy was launched for the period from 2014 to 2018 as a first phase.

Efforts were combined from all state institutions to activate the executive measures of that strategy. The Sub-Coordinating National Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Corruption was entrusted with the task of monitoring the implementation of the strategy, and it also assumed the technical responsibility of monitoring and tracking best practices as well as identifying challenges. The anti-corruption strategy comprised three key pillars. The first pillar focused on relevant laws and regulations, the second on empowering oversight and judicial bodies responsible for implementing and monitoring the strategy, and the third pillar on supporting political leadership in combating corruption without any favoritism or discrimination. The United Nations has praised the Egyptian efforts in this regard and recognized the national strategy as one of the most successful practices in the field of corruption prevention and combating.

Egypt believes that eradicating corruption is the only guarantee for achieving its ambitious development program and fulfilling its international obligations; therefore, the economic dimension was included in its national strategy for sustainable development: Egypt Vision 2030, launched by President Sisi in 2016. This dimension focuses on transparency and the efficiency of government institutions. The goal is for Egypt to have an efficient and effective administrative apparatus by 2030, improving the management of state resources, characterized by transparency, integrity, flexibility, accountability, citizen satisfaction, interaction, and responsiveness.

In line with Egypt's commitment to continue its efforts to achieve higher levels of corruption prevention, integrity, and transparency, the second phase of the anti-corruption strategy was developed for the period from 2019 to 2022. This phase aimed to address the challenges identified in the first phase and draw on international experiences in combating corruption to identify the most suitable approaches for the Egyptian context. President El-Sisi launched this phase at the conclusion of the 2018 Africa Forum in Sharm El-Sheikh.

The second phase of the strategy included several pillars related to the state's administrative apparatus. These pillars focused on its development and support to become efficient and effective, simplifying administrative procedures, automating public services to facilitate auditing and internal control processes, completing databases, and making them available to activate mechanisms of transparency

Egypt's efforts to combat corruption have contributed to its successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda. According to the United Nations 2023 report monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, Egypt has advanced six positions among 166 countries in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. It has also made a 1.1 percentage point increase towards achieving the goals and has increased its global influence

The Egyptian strategy to combat corruption is based on several principles, including prioritizing the public interest, prevention being better than cure, equal access to justice for all, and the integration of roles among the three branches of government. It also involves adhering to governance principles of transparency, integrity, efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, and responsibility

and integrity. It also involved updating the legislative framework supporting anti-corruption measures, including laws governing the work of anti-corruption bodies to ensure independence and transparency in this field. Additionally, it aimed to support law enforcement agencies, develop national indicators related to corruption perceptions, enhance the feedback loop for corruption prevention and combat priorities, conduct research and studies in governance and anti-corruption, activate international and regional cooperation to benefit from the expertise of those working in the field of anti-corruption, ensuring they fulfill their national duties to the fullest.

Egypt believes that the will of the people alone guarantees the achievement and acceleration of the country's development plans. Therefore, the national anti-corruption strategy in its second phase includes programs to raise awareness among individuals, civil society, the private sector, media professionals, students, and academics to activate their pivotal roles. The strategy is based on several principles, including prioritizing the public interest, prevention being better than cure, equality before the law, the integration of the roles of the three authorities in the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, and the adherence to principles of governance such as transparency, integrity, efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, and the establishment of flexible procedures capable of responding to changing and increasing needs.

According to the results of the "General Index of Administrative Corruption Perception," Egypt has witnessed a continuous decrease in administrative corruption by 17.8% between the years 2016 and 2019. The local corruption perception index report for 2021 has not been issued due to the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. Egypt also advanced two positions in the annual report issued by Transparency International on the Global Corruption Perception Index for 2020. Furthermore, Egypt progressed by 55 ranks in the "Anti-Corruption Index" in 2020 compared to 2019. Additionally, Egypt has been consistently announcing corruption cases and holding those responsible accountable.

To emphasize Egypt's seriousness in combating corruption and the importance given by the political will to this issue, the third phase of its national anti-corruption strategy was launched, covering the period from 2023 to 2030. Due to the interconnected nature of corruption-related issues, the five objectives of the strategy in its third phase intersect and influence each other, being implemented in parallel. The state's administrative apparatus is considered the cornerstone within the framework of anti-corruption efforts as it is responsible for the executive process and has direct daily interaction with citizens. Legislation is also considered one of the most important supportive tools, and therefore, a legislative framework compatible with the national context and in line with relevant international and regional frameworks and agreements must be developed.

The third phase has outlined a roadmap to ensure accurate implementation and timely achievement of results. It has set quantitative targets, identified relevant implementing entities, and provided mechanisms for monitoring and reporting.

In conclusion, Egypt's efforts to combat corruption have contributed to its successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda, enabling it to progress by six positions out of 166 countries in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, according to the United Nations' 2023 report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Egyptian state has achieved a 1.1% increase towards goal achievement and increased its global influence to reach 98.8. Despite the progress and notable achievements, Egypt remains committed and determined in its journey to combat corruption, aiming to eliminate it entirely through collective action and a unified vision under the umbrella of an aware political leadership that adopts a culture of priorities.