



The world losing nearly three trillion dollars annually

## International Cooperation: The Path to Combating Transnational Corruption Beyond National Borders



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**Corruption has been known on Earth since ancient times, with deep-rooted origins and various forms and methods. It is no longer limited to national societies within the borders of a single state subject to its own penal system. It has become an international phenomenon shared by all countries without discrimination, transcending regional borders and affecting all societies and economies. This has made it more dangerous, more damaging, and difficult to control, to the extent that it sometimes becomes more powerful than the governing systems in some countries.**

Transnational corruption can be defined as one of the forms of corruption that extends spatially beyond the national territory, crossing regional borders. Its parties can be natural or legal persons who have beneficial relationships with foreign entities or criminal organizations engaged in crimes such as foreign currency fraud, human trafficking, smuggling of migrants, drugs, and prostitution, or with networks of electronic and information crimes to carry out corrupt operations, bypassing the regulatory and judicial systems of specific countries, exploiting the lack of cooperation and the differences in systems and laws between countries worldwide.

This type of corruption is characterized by several features, including its complexity and interconnectedness, relying on internationalization of crime, meaning that the crime occurs in multiple countries rather than a single state, making it difficult to detect. It also has the ability to obscure oversight agencies and influence public opinion by changing facts and realities through various methods. Moreover, it requires significant funding and multiple relationships that are only available to the upper classes of society or high-ranking officials in the state, driven by the pursuit of great personal benefit. It heavily relies on modern technology as a means of communication among perpetrators to minimize the chances of tracking and apprehending them.

It is worth noting that the severity of this type of corruption can be understood by examining its effects on society and its rapid and

widespread penetration. In its early stages, it may be fragile and weak, making it easier to control, observe, and prevent. However, over time, the idea of corruption becomes entrenched among those who benefit from it, and people become accustomed to the conditions created by this corruption.

The spread of transnational corruption has significantly increased in recent times due to several factors that intersect to create a conducive environment for it to develop and infiltrate various international practices. There is a lack of regulatory framework surrounding these practices, lacking transparency and integrity. Among the most significant contributing factors are globalization, market economy, the trend of countries towards privatization, the attempt of capital and major businessmen to control and corrupt authorities. Furthermore, some multinational companies in developing countries depend on exploiting loopholes resulting from legislative shortcomings to further their interests. Additionally, the global arena filled with wars and conflicts has also contributed to creating an environment of instability, making societies fragmented and law enforcement difficult. The lack of activation of international agreements aimed at combating corruption, along with the scarcity of functioning oversight agencies outside countries and the lack of cooperation between states in implementing these agreements, exacerbates the situation. All of this is in addition to the inability of developing countries to provide adequate budgets

to establish effective regulatory institutions and train their personnel to effectively confront corruption.

And one of the most significant forms of cross-border corruption crimes is international bribery, which is considered the classic pattern of corruption, whether it is financial or material. Similarly, organized crimes in the fields of human trafficking, organ trafficking, smuggling of immigrants, illegal migration of adults and minors, foreign exchange, and cybercrime are also forms of corruption that rely on technology and cyberspace, such as electronic fraud, illegal online trade, and the exploitation and sexual blackmail of children through the internet.

It is worth noting that cross-border corruption plays a significant role in undermining the dreams of developing countries in development and prosperity, as it affects the performance of economic sectors and creates negative social dimensions that should not be underestimated. Research in this field has shown that it weakens economic growth when it goes beyond borders, affecting investment climate stability and undermining the positive impact of investment incentives. Its effects extend to the extent that it can eliminate any economic development. Studies in this field have indicated that cross-border corruption imposes a huge economic cost, with the world losing nearly three trillion dollars annually. This is a massive amount of money that leaks into the accounts of criminals and corrupt individuals instead of being invested in development projects and public services. Additionally, this type of corruption poses a threat to the stability and security of societies, wastes religious values, restricts economic, social, and political development worldwide, and exposes countries to dangers that are difficult to confront when corruption takes root and exceeds control.

It is worth mentioning that Egypt has been subjected to many of these cross-border crimes and issues, such as money laundering, international bribery, organized crime, organ trafficking, and sexual blackmail, among other important issues, which have serious effects on Egyptian society if not addressed. However, thanks to the efforts of the supervisory institutions in the state, including the Administrative Control Authority, many of these issues have been uncovered. These efforts have been highlighted under the national strategies adopted by the Administrative Control Authority to combat corruption in general and the mechanisms that emerged from these strategies to combat cross-border corruption. These efforts have been reinforced by international agreements and initiatives that Egypt has ratified to combat corruption, including the United Nations Convention against Corruption. Within this framework, the Administrative Control Authority has been able to address these crimes in cooperation with many international, regional, and Arab entities and institutions, including the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the International Security Cooperation Office at the French Embassy in Cairo, the Federal Criminal Police Office at the German Embassy in Cairo, the Police of Brandenburg County in Germany, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Jordanian Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission, and the Saudi Control and Anti-Corruption Authority "Nazaha". Egypt's participation in the GLOBE International Network for Law Enforcement Authorities Involved in the Fight against Corruption, represented by the Administrative Control Authority, has also enhanced these efforts. The network will provide an interactive platform for the immediate exchange of information on corruption cases between national authorities in different countries, complementing and supporting the official procedures for legal cooperation that are difficult to complete quickly enough to keep pace with the speed of corruption networks. However, the success of this network de-

**It is one of the key factors in the spread of globalization and market economies, the trend of countries toward privatization, the attempt by capital and prominent business figures to control governance, and their corruption of those in power. Similarly, multinational corporations' dominance over developing countries has become influential in various fields, often relying on legislative loopholes to advance their interests. Additionally, advanced governments support bribery and corruption in developing countries**

pends on the participation of the largest possible number of anti-corruption and law enforcement institutions around the world, actively engaging and benefiting from it to exchange information and experiences on a wide scale.

As a result of these efforts, Egypt has gained international recognition and wide appreciation for its efforts in combating organized crime, particularly in the field of combating illegal migration. This has been highlighted through accolades received in various international forums and meetings, such as the European Councils, the European Union, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) in Cairo. Egypt has also hosted international conferences and general assemblies, including the hosting of the ninth session of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (COSP-9) in Sharm El-Sheikh in 2021. Additionally, Egypt's Minister/Chairman of the Administrative Control Authority has chaired the working groups of the Convention in Vienna. Egypt has also hosted the fourth annual general assembly of the African Union Anti-Corruption Agencies and the first African Forum for Anti-Corruption Agencies in June 2019 in Sharm El-Sheikh. Egypt won the presidency of the African Union Anti-Corruption Agencies in June 2022. Furthermore, the Minister/Chairman of the Administrative Control Authority presided over the first ministerial meeting of law enforcement and anti-corruption agencies of the member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, which took place in Saudi Arabia in late 2022 and resulted in the adoption of the Mecca Agreement for member states of the organization in the field of law enforcement and anti-corruption.

Despite the notable Egyptian efforts in combating and preventing corruption, which have been praised by international organizations and many countries around the world, they did not have a positive impact on the Global Corruption Perceptions Index for 2022. Instead, there was a decline, raising suspicions about the accuracy and credibility of this index. The index is based on subjective opinions of internal and external stakeholders, including academics, private sector representatives, civil society, media, and others. It should not be used as the basis for evaluating the effectiveness of strategies, policies, and mechanisms aimed at preventing and combating corruption.

It is worth noting that despite the concerted efforts at the national and international levels to combat transnational crimes and the international recognition received, Egypt experienced a decline in the Global Corruption Perceptions Index for 2022, scoring 30 points compared to 33 points in 2021. However, this decline does not imply a failure in oversight efforts. The index is based on expert opinions regarding the perceived level of corruption, relying on their expertise rather than actual statistical data. Therefore, this index should not be used to assess the impact of the national strategy to combat corruption on corruption levels, as it is subject to significant misunderstandings and statistical errors, similar to other corruption indices, and is not suitable for judging the success or failure of the strategy in achieving its objectives in reality.

Furthermore, according to a report by Transparency International issued in January 2023, most countries around the world still fail to effectively combat corruption. 95% of countries have made little progress or no progress at all since 2017. Egypt is not the only country that has not achieved progress in this regard. This indicates that anti-corruption efforts in most countries, including Egypt, have not resulted in improvements in the Corruption Perceptions Index for these countries. This may be attributed to the increasing global polarity and its consequences, such as escalating crises, conflicts, and international violence, which have a significant impact on developing countries.

In light of the increased rate of transnational crimes imposed by international conflicts and local crises, there is an urgent need for further international cooperation to combat this corruption. This cooperation should be manifested in activating unofficial collaboration immediately in the field of exchanging information with counterpart entities in different countries. Additionally, a secure electronic mechanism should be developed for the immediate exchange of information on corruption crimes between Egypt and the countries that have ratified the United Nations Convention, as well as the African and Arab countries with shared interests. It should be taken into consideration that the first line of defense against corruption is the dissemination of integrity and transparency principles within societies and among individuals, with the participation of state institutions, civil society organizations, and the private sector.