

PARTNERSHIP FOR ANTICORRUPTION GLOBAL FORUM 2025:

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS LUNCHEON

April 8, 2025

Dean's introductory remarks

Good afternoon, everyone. I am Matteo Bugamelli, Dean of the Board of the World Bank Group and the Executive Director representing Italy, my own country, Albania, Greece, Malta, Portugal, San Marino and Timor Leste.

It is a true honor to join you today at this Anticorruption Global Forum hosted by the Integrity and Prosperity Vice Presidencies of the WBG. I would like to begin by expressing my sincere words of gratitude and support for the work led by Pablo Saveedra and by Mouhamadou Diagne and their teams. Special thanks to Mouhamadou for INT's investigations and knowledge initiatives – like this conference – that ensure that integrity is maintained in the implementation of the Bank's projects.

I understand that this Forum has gathered over 300 partners from a broad spectrum of stakeholders – including public sector institutions, private sector, academia, civil society, foundations, other MDBs. I could not be prouder to address such a distinguished audience and to share with you a few reflections on the efforts of our institution and its Board in advancing the global anticorruption agenda.

WBG Evolution

Let me begin with a brief update on what we call the *WBG Evolution* process. I believe that for today discussion this is essential context for understanding what the World Bank Group is striving to become—through a joint effort of the President, management and staff, and our Board.

At the 2023 Annual Meetings in Marrakesh, our Board of Governors endorsed a renewed vision: to end extreme poverty and boost shared prosperity on a livable planet. This vision was encapsulated in the Evolution Roadmap, which has guided us in taking concrete steps toward better project design and implementation.

Key pillars of this Evolution include:

- **Scaling up resources** through a combination of donor support, balance sheet optimization, and financial innovations;
- **Enhancing operational efficiency** to deliver stronger impact with greater agility and better leverage of our unique knowledge base;
- Introducing a new **WBG Scorecard** to increase the focus on outcomes, while strengthening transparency and accountability;
- Defining 8 **global challenges as strategic priorities**: energy access, food and nutrition security, water security and access, fragility and conflict, pandemic preparedness, digitalization, climate change, and biodiversity.

At the upcoming Spring Meetings, we will add a crucial cross-cutting theme: job creation which is not only a driver of prosperity, but also essential for sustainable and inclusive development.

And this is precisely where the issue of **anticorruption** becomes central.

Corruption and development

Corruption—which is the misuse of public office for private gain—is notoriously hard to identify and to measure. Yet today, with a combination of objective and perception-based metrics, including those developed by the World Bank, we are better equipped to monitor, understand, and address corruption.

The link between corruption and development is clear. And it is even clearer to me that this audience does not need to be addressed on this.

But let me just quickly remind how wide-ranging its consequences can be:

- It undermines the efficiency and effectiveness of public spending and policy
- It distorts the recruitment and functioning of public institutions
- It acts as a regressive tax for citizens and businesses
- It hampers fair competition, misallocates resources, and stifles innovation and productivity. This may happen both directly through the allocation of public funds to private firms and indirectly through distortive regulations (firm entry, firm exit, labor market regulation and the like)
- It erodes public trust in institutions, fueling social unrest and, in fragile contexts, increasing the risk of conflict. Indeed, 90% of the bottom 30 countries in the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index are classified as fragile states.

At the macroeconomic level, corruption deters investment—including foreign direct investment—, lowers growth and exacerbates poverty and inequality.

The WBG's role

The World Bank Group has long recognized corruption as a barrier to inclusive and sustainable growth. Over the years, we have adopted a two-pronged approach:

1. **Ensuring that WB funds are used effectively** and reach their intended beneficiaries.
2. **Supporting country systems and institutions** to prevent, detect, and respond to corruption.

Three decades of experience have taught us that:

- Corruption takes many forms—across procurement, budgeting, personnel management, and legal and regulatory systems
- It involves multiple actors and stakeholders
- Its manifestations differ across and within countries, shaped by political, institutional, and cultural contexts.

Thus, successful interventions must:

- Be **context-specific and adaptive**
- Include **mechanisms for monitoring and adjustment**
- Balance **short- and medium-term actions**
- Focus on **local capacity-building**.

Most importantly, we must recognize corruption as a **symptom of weak governance**. Addressing it requires deep governance reform and institutional strengthening.

This is where our Governance experts step in—working on legal frameworks, transparency, civil service reform, public accountability, citizen engagement, and diagnostic tools.

In the past 5 years the WB has committed \$23.4 billion through IBRD and IDA to 119 projects to support “Transparency, Accountability, and Good Governance”. From policy reforms to counter illicit financial flows, from AML/CFT enforcement to trade-based money laundering mitigation—the breadth of our engagement is significant and is based on a One WBG approach, with IFC and MIGA also contributing to it.

A few examples:

- In **Ghana, Congo, and Morocco**, through governance reforms to strengthen transparency in public services;
- In **Kenya**, strengthening fiscal transparency and procurement systems.

- In **Burkina Faso**, creating a digital platform for citizens to monitor municipal services.
- In **Paraguay**, providing technical assistance to strengthen local institutions.

A Shared Responsibility

Yet, we must do more. And we cannot do it alone. Combating corruption requires broad-based partnerships involving:

- Multilateral institutions like the WBG and IMF
- National governments and public institutions
- Local communities and beneficiaries
- Oversight bodies
- Civil society and watchdog organizations
- And the private sector, which is essential in project execution.

Conclusion

I am heartened to see all these stakeholders come together at this Forum, forming a broad coalition for integrity and development.

I can assure you that the Board of the World Bank Group is fully committed to this agenda. We stand behind our clients with strong financing and world-class knowledge, while also upholding the highest standards of integrity. When we require additional mitigation measures, it is precisely because we are committed to preventing negative impacts before they happen.

So let me stop here and thank you all again for being here and for inviting the Board.

I look forward to fruitful discussions over lunch, around the tables. Thank you.