

Statement by Huguette Labelle

on Entry into Force of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption

Berlin, 15 December 2005 --- Today 38 nations are joining together in an historic alliance to conquer corruption.

There is promise on the horizon that through this landmark achievement, all member states of the United Nations will eventually marry their strengths in a common bond against bribery, extortion and malfeasance. Because of its broad reach across continents, the United Nations Convention Against Corruption has the potential to address an important channel of international corruption: bribe payments by crooked companies, and extortion by corrupt officials.

But the Convention's promise is tinged with doubt. Three out of every four countries that have signed the Convention have yet to ratify it. That means that 102 countries clearly recognise the Convention's value, yet will not be bound by its terms as it enters into force. Until they are, the promise of the Millennium Development Goals will remain unfulfilled.

The Group of Eight countries committed at their Summit at Gleneagles in July to promptly ratify the Convention, yet only France has done so. Leaders of Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States should follow France's example and complete the ratification process.

Ratification isn't about getting credit for signing an agreement. It's about making it come alive. Every country in the world should take the pledge: We will not let criminals hide within our borders or pass their stolen money through our banks. We will not let corruption happen here.

This is a matter of urgency. Many countries are in the process of ratifying the Convention. But until all nations are bound by the Convention's terms, like water through the cracks, criminals will find ways to breach the dike.

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