



THE VICE PRESIDENT
WASHINGTON

February 24, 1999

The security and prosperity of the United States – and the entire world – depend on the success of the world's nations in building strong economies based on the rule of law. Nations with prosperous, market-based democracies governed by rule of law do not pose security threats to their neighbors. They create economic opportunities instead. And yet, nothing can undercut economic opportunity more than corruption, and no form of corruption is more destructive than corruption among government officials.

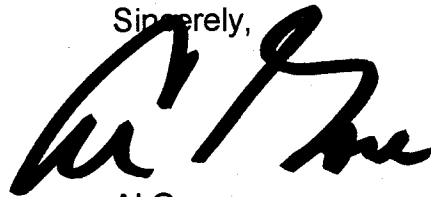
Fortunately, the world's tolerance for corruption is fading fast. Gone are the days when corruption was written off as a cost of doing business. Today, in more and more parts of the world, corruption is seen as serious crime with devastating consequences. Corruption can speed environmental destruction; accelerate the drug trade; and even encourage the smuggling of biological, chemical or nuclear weapons materials. Economically, corruption represents an arbitrary tax – a second payment – on government services already bought. It leads to wasteful government spending; bigger deficits; greater income inequality; and potentially a crisis of confidence that can spark capital flight, disrupt markets, destabilize governments, and send economic shock waves around the world.

The United States Government takes corruption very seriously, and is acting to combat it. Last year, President Clinton called on the Departments of Justice, State, and Treasury to develop and implement a comprehensive national strategy to fight international crime. Working closely with numerous federal agencies, these departments developed the International Crime Control Strategy, released in May of last year, which offers a roadmap for a coordinated, effective, long-term attack on international crime.

The President's International Crime Control Strategy included a call for an international conference to develop model approaches for upholding integrity among key justice and security officials – a conference to assess what causes corruption; review standards of ethical conduct; and take stock of ongoing national, regional, and global initiatives to fight corruption.

I was proud to chair this conference, and I am honored to introduce this first publication of our International Strategy Against Corruption. This document offers a complete account of U.S. Government efforts to join with other nations in mounting an effective attack against corruption. With our first-ever conference on fighting corruption among justice and security officials, and this first-ever account of our actions against corruption, we hope to open a new era of international cooperation in fighting official corruption – where each nation works with its neighbors to embrace anti-corruption principles, promote effective practices, and safeguard for its citizens the full fruits of their labors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Al Gore', written in a cursive style.

Al Gore