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ANTI-CORRUPTION AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN ASEAN:

**Areas of Overlap based on
the UNCAC Implementation
Review Mechanism and UN
Human Rights Mechanisms
Recommendations**



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AS OF AUGUST 2025

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I. Introduction

A. Intersection between corruption and human rights

This report examines the intersection of human rights and corruption through the respective monitoring mechanisms of the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and the core UN human rights treaties. It analyzes overlapping recommendations issued to ASEAN Member States (“focus States”) by UNCAC’s Implementation Review Mechanism and UN human rights bodies.

Corruption and human rights violations are deeply interconnected, each reinforcing and perpetuating the other. Corruption undermines the enjoyment of human rights, both directly and indirectly, impacting a wide range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. In turn, anti-corruption efforts can strengthen the rule of law, build trust in governments and enhance the effectiveness of the State in delivering essential services. Countering corruption fosters an environment of respect, protection and advancement of human rights. Upholding human rights supports anti-corruption efforts by ensuring adherence to legal principles, due process and the rule of law.

This connection is reflected in the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 16, which calls for peaceful, inclusive societies and effective, accountable institutions. It urges action to reduce corruption, curb illicit financial flows, and recover stolen assets.

The report identifies six key thematic areas¹ where recommendations from both frameworks converge, offering opportunities to strengthen anti-corruption and human rights efforts in a mutually reinforcing way:

- Protection of whistle-blowers, witnesses, and human rights defenders
- Freedom of expression and the right to information
- Judicial integrity
- Business and human rights
- Institutional frameworks
- Corruption and the death penalty

B. UN Mechanisms issuing recommendations on corruption and human rights

Recognizing the global nature of corruption, the UN General Assembly adopted the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) in 2003. As of May 2025, 191 States are parties to UNCAC—including all ASEAN Member States. UNCAC is the only legally binding global anti-corruption instrument, offering a comprehensive framework of preventive and enforcement measures, mandatory criminalization of corrupt practices, and mechanisms for international cooperation and asset recovery. It also emphasizes the roles of government, civil society, and the private sector.

UNCAC implementation is monitored through peer reviews in the framework of the Implementation Review Mechanism (IRM). Each State is reviewed by two other States, and the full implementation is reviewed in two cycles: the first on criminalization and international cooperation (Chapters III and IV), and the second on prevention and asset recovery (Chapters II and V). All ASEAN Member States have completed their first cycle reviews; most have finished or are finalizing their second cycle reviews.²

¹ This categorization, made for analytical purposes, reflects the content of the recommendations and may not always match the exact wording of the recommendations or related Conventions.

² As of June 2025, nine ASEAN States (Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam) have finalized recommendations from the second review cycle.

The international human rights mechanisms include the Special Procedures and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR),³ both established by the Human Rights Council, and the human rights treaty bodies, established by each of the core UN Human Rights Treaties. Through their analysis, they assess best practices in implementing human rights, identify gaps and make recommendations to support states in enhancing their implementation of the instruments.

The UPR is a peer-review process in which all 193 UN Member States are reviewed every 4.5 years by fellow States. Reviews are conducted by the UPR Working Group and the final report is adopted during a formal session of the Human Rights Council. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), National Human Rights Institutions, academic institutions, and other stakeholders, including persons in their individual capacity, are able to submit information in writing, which is made available to all Member States to be considered during the review. Recommendations are based on all human rights obligations of the State under review, including the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration, relevant treaties, national commitments, and international humanitarian law. After receiving the recommendations from the UPR, the State under review may decide to either support or note them, and this report references both. All ASEAN Member States have completed three UPR cycles and are at various stages of their fourth.

Human rights treaty bodies are committees of independent experts that monitor the implementation of the core international human rights treaties. When ratifying a Convention, each State Party is obligated to take steps to ensure that everyone in their State can enjoy the rights set out in the treaty. There are 10 human rights treaty bodies, as described in the table, and 9 of them periodically conduct reviews of the implementation of the respective Convention by the States having ratified it⁴. Not all countries included in this analysis have ratified all core human rights Conventions and there is therefore no comparable number of recommendations for all States included in this analysis. When ratifying a Convention, State Parties are obliged to periodically submit reports on the steps taken to implement the provisions of the relevant treaty and any difficulties encountered in that regard. The Treaty Bodies review these reports, identify issues of concern and make recommendations in what are known as “concluding observations”.

The third key human rights mechanism is the Human Rights Council’s Special Procedures. These are independent experts—including Special Rapporteurs, independent experts, and working groups—appointed to address specific thematics worldwide or all human rights in specific countries (thematic and country mandates). Unlike treaty bodies or the UPR, they do not conduct regular reviews. However, upon invitation, they can conduct visits to provide findings and recommendations to address the specific issues within the scope of their mandate. They can also receive information on specific allegations of human rights violations and send a communication to States to request information.

Core Human Rights Treaties Ratification		
Treaty	Human rights treaty bodies	Ratification ⁵
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)	Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.	Cambodia; Indonesia; Lao PDR; the Philippines; Singapore; Thailand; Viet Nam; Timor-Leste
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)	Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.	Cambodia; Indonesia; Lao PDR; Myanmar; the Philippines; Thailand; Viet Nam; Timor-Leste
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its optional protocols (CCPR)	Human Rights Committee.	Cambodia; Indonesia; Lao PDR; the Philippines; Thailand; Viet Nam; Timor-Leste

³ This report includes all UPR recommendations, both noted and supported.

⁴ Treaty Bodies may also have other “tools” available, see OHCHR, “What are the treaty bodies?” accessed on 7 August 2024. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies>.

⁵ As of May 2025

Core Human Rights Treaties Ratification		
Treaty	Human rights treaty bodies	Ratification ⁵
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its optional protocol (CEDAW)	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.	Brunei Darussalam; Cambodia; Indonesia; Lao PDR; Malaysia; Myanmar; the Philippines; Singapore; Thailand; Viet Nam; Timor-Leste
Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)	Committee against Torture.	Cambodia; Indonesia; Lao PDR; the Philippines; Thailand; Viet Nam; Timor-Leste
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	Committee on the Rights of the Child.	Brunei Darussalam; Cambodia; Indonesia; Lao PDR; Malaysia; Myanmar; the Philippines; Singapore; Thailand; Viet Nam; Timor-Leste
Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (CMW)	Committee on Migrant Workers.	Indonesia; the Philippines; Timor-Leste
International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CED)	Committee on Enforced Disappearances.	Cambodia; Thailand
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)	Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.	Brunei Darussalam; Cambodia; Indonesia; Lao PDR; Malaysia; Myanmar; the Philippines; Singapore; Thailand; Viet Nam; Timor-Leste

C. Recognizing the intersection of corruption and human rights

UN Member States have increasingly recognized the interconnected nature of corruption and human rights violations through various UN resolutions.⁶ Notably, the Political Declaration adopted at the 2021 UN General Assembly Special Session Against Corruption underscores concern about the negative impact of all forms of corruption—including the solicitation of undue advantages—on access to basic services and the enjoyment of human rights. The Declaration acknowledges that corruption can exacerbate poverty and inequality, disproportionately affecting the most disadvantaged, and reaffirms the commitment to combating corruption in line with obligations to uphold human rights, justice, democracy, and the rule of law.⁷

Additional recommendations have also been issued by specialized UN bodies, including the Human Rights Council and the Conference of States Parties to UNCAC.⁸ For example:

- Resolution A/HRC/RES/59/6, entitled ‘The negative impact of corruption on human rights’, adopted at the 59th session of the Human Rights Council on 16 July 2025, recognizes that the promotion and protection of human rights and the prevention of and fight against corruption are mutually reinforcing. Key elements include the role of good governance, democracy, and the rule of law, as well as the protection of fundamental freedoms—such as the right to receive and impart information and participate

⁶ Examples of resolutions include A/HRC/RES/52/21 (2023), A/HRC/RES/46/11 (2021), A/HRC/RES/47/7 (2021), A/RES//S-32/1 (2021), A/HRC/RES/41/9 (2019), A/HRC/RES/29/11 (2015), and A/HRC/RES/23/9 (2013).

⁷ UN General Assembly, “Our common commitment to effectively addressing challenges and implementing measures to prevent and combat corruption and strengthen international cooperation,” A/RES/S-32/1, 7 June 2021.

⁸ UN General Assembly, “Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 11 July 2019,” A/HRC/RES/41/9, 2019 – see also UN General Assembly, “Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 3 April 2023,” A/HRC/RES/52/21, 2023.

in public affairs. It also stresses the importance of creating a safe and enabling environment for civil society, academia, whistle-blowers, witnesses, anti-corruption activists, journalists, prosecutors, lawyers and judges, and of protecting these individuals from any threats arising from their activities in preventing and fighting corruption. It also stresses the fundamental importance of an independent, free, diverse and pluralistic media landscape as well as of an independent and impartial judiciary.

- The Doha Declaration, adopted in April 2015 at the 13th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, highlights four interrelated priorities: strengthening judicial integrity and preventing corruption; promoting prisoner rehabilitation and social reintegration; preventing youth crime through sports; and fostering a culture of the rule of law through the Education for Justice initiative in schools and universities. The Declaration reaffirms the shared commitment to uphold the rule of law, prevent and combat crime in all its forms, ensure fair, effective, humane, and accountable criminal justice systems, provide access to justice for all, and promote inclusive institutions grounded in human dignity and respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/58/7, adopted on 2 April 2025, entitled '*The negative impact of the non-repatriation of funds of illicit origin to the countries of origin on the enjoyment of human rights, and the importance of improving international cooperation*' affirms the central role of good governance and anti-corruption in the promotion and protection of human rights, and invites the UNCAC Conference of States Parties to consider ways of implementing UNCAC that take human rights into full consideration, including when dealing with the return of proceeds of crime.

The South-East Asian region has recognized that corruption and human rights are interconnected, as reflected in the Regional Roadmap underlying South-East Asia's Regional Platform (2024 – 2027), a UNODC led process that included the participation of OHCHR.⁹ This includes action points such as:

- Develop policies on right to information in the public and private sectors based on UNCAC and UN Human Rights Instruments.
- Build awareness and common understanding on the importance of whistle-blower protection in line with UNCAC article 33 and relevant UN Human Rights instruments.
- Strengthen the capacity of officials to implement whistle-blower protection.
- Legislative review based on UNCAC reviews and UN Human Rights Instruments.
- Consider establishing specialized funds for confiscated assets to be used for identified priority areas, such as, inter alia, the promotion of human rights.

The UNODC Regional Office for South-East Asia and the Pacific and the OHCHR Regional Office for South-East Asia have been collaborating to strengthen linkages between UN human rights mechanisms and the UNCAC Implementation Review Group (IRG). As part of this effort, they co-organized a regional dialogue titled "Corruption and Human Rights: Mutually Reinforcing Drivers to Advance Regional Efforts" on 1–2 October 2024 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The event built on ongoing analysis of recommendations and the Regional Roadmap, which identifies human rights as a cross-cutting component of anti-corruption strategies.

The dialogue brought together government officials, anti-corruption practitioners, national human rights institutions, experts, and civil society actors from South-East Asia. It focused on the mutually reinforcing nature of anti-corruption and human rights efforts and examined shared recommendations made to States under UNCAC and UN human rights mechanisms, and identified good practices and challenges.

⁹ UNODC, "Regional roadmap to reinvigorate the platform to fast-track the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption in Southeast Asia (2024 – 2027)," 2024. Available at: https://www.unodc.org/roseap/uploads/documents/Publications/2024/2024-2027_UNCAC_Implementation_Roadmap_in_Southeast_Asia.pdf.

II. Overview of thematic synergies between international standards on corruption and human rights

A. Whistleblowers, witnesses and human rights defenders

Nine focus States, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam, received complementary recommendations in relation to whistle-blowers, witnesses and human rights defenders under the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism and UN human rights mechanisms.

Whistle-blowers, witnesses, and human rights defenders play a vital role detecting, reporting, and advocating for actions against corruption and the violation of human rights. Whistle-blowers¹⁰ are defined as persons who report wrongdoing or malpractice in the context of their workplace to a person who can affect action. However, in doing so, they often face retaliation, including threats or physical harm.

UNCAC¹¹ includes provisions to protect reporting persons – including, but not limited to, whistleblowers:

- Article 33 (protection of reporting persons) requires States Parties to consider “appropriate measures to protect reporting persons against unjustified treatment.”
- Article 8(4) (codes of conduct for public officials) requires State Parties to consider establishing measures and systems to facilitate the reporting by public officials of acts of corruption.
- Article 13(2) (participation of society) requires States Parties to ensure public awareness of anti-corruption bodies and provide access to them to enable anonymous reporting.
- Article 37(1) (cooperation with law enforcement authorities) requires States Parties to provide measures to encourage those involved in corruption to provide useful information to authorities.

Witness protection, while related to whistle-blower protection, is distinct. Article 32 of UNCAC addresses the protection of witnesses, experts, and victims involved in legal proceedings. Whistle-blowers may require witness protection if they testify in court, but not all do.¹² Similarly, witnesses may not need whistle-blower protection if they lack an employment link to the accused.

The term “human rights defenders” refers to people who, individually or with others, act to promote or protect human rights peacefully.¹³ The Declaration on Human Rights Defenders reaffirms existing rights in a framework specific to human rights defenders, including the rights to seek, receive, and disseminate information (article 6). Crucially, article 12 requires States to take all necessary measures to protect individuals against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of those rights — imposing clear duties on States to safeguard defenders.

¹⁰ UNODC, “Whistle-blower protection in ASEAN Member States,” accessed on 7 August 2024. Available at: https://www.unodc.org/roseap/uploads/documents/Publications/2023/Whistleblower_Protection_in_ASEAN_-_2023_UNODC_paper.pdf.

¹¹ See Resolution 10/8, “Protection of reporting persons,” CAC/COSP/2023/L.12/Rev.1, 2023.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ OHCHR, “About human rights defenders,” accessed on 7 August 2024. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-human-rights-defenders/about-human-rights-defenders>.

Acknowledging that corruption is a human rights-related issue, the 2021 report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders¹⁴ notes that those who work peacefully against corruption for transparency and the rule of law — such as activists, whistle-blowers, witnesses, journalists, academics, and professionals — can be classified as human rights defenders, so long as their work is peaceful and motivated by human rights concerns. The Special Rapporteur further noted that:

- Strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPP) are used to intimidate whistle-blowers and other human rights defenders working to reveal corrupt practices;
- Uncovering corruption often involves powerful actors, putting human rights defenders — such as environmental human rights defenders exposing corruption in business and development projects, including extractive industries — at serious risk of physical harm, surveillance, arrest, or excessive force;
- Women human rights defenders working against corruption also face distinct threats, including gender-based attacks and smear campaigns, sometimes using tools like deepfakes to damage their reputations.

“Corruption is a human rights issue, which ought to be recognized as such by States, the business community and civil society. Those who peacefully work for the rights of others against corruption should be recognized, celebrated and protected as human rights defenders. States have an obligation to combat corruption in compliance with their human rights obligations, which includes taking appropriate steps to enable and encourage human rights defenders working against corruption.”

“[A]part from intimidation, smear campaigns and attacks, anti-corruption activists and their organizations often face civil and criminal lawsuits for their legitimate efforts exposing corruption. They may be targeted by civil or criminal defamation lawsuits; strategic lawsuits against public participation aimed at intimidating and silencing them; or charged with terrorism and national security related offences. Human rights defenders fighting corruption have also faced charges under cybercrime laws, charged with subversion, public mischief, sedition and mutiny. They are accused of disclosing official secrets, propaganda against the State, inciting ethnic hatred, publishing false news and of public nuisance. Those vulnerable to administrative harassment, including enhanced scrutiny by tax authorities and CSOs, are frequently themselves charged with misuse of funds. Such legal proceedings not only act as a chilling effect but are also a serious drain of the human and financial resources of defenders and NGOs.”

Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Mary Lawlor A/HRC/49/49 of 28 December 2021 on *At the heart of the struggle: human rights defenders working against corruption*.¹⁵

The UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism and UN human rights mechanisms provide complementary recommendations on protecting witnesses and reporting persons, often addressing both groups together. Emphasis is placed on adopting protection laws and implementing protection programmes.

Key outcomes from the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism:

- Witness Protection (article 32): Nine States (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam) received recommendations on protecting witnesses, experts, and victims. These included entering into agreements for witness relocation and extending protection to persons who are close to witnesses, such as their relatives.¹⁶

¹⁴ UN General Assembly, “At the heart of the struggle: human rights defenders working against corruption – Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Mary Lawlor,” A/HRC/49/49, 2021.

¹⁵ UN General Assembly, “At the heart of the struggle: human rights defenders working against corruption – Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Mary Lawlor,” A/HRC/49/49, 2021.

¹⁶ UNODC, “Implementation of UNCAC chapter III: Criminalization and law enforcement in ASEAN States Parties and Timor-Leste,” 2024, pp. 39 – 42. Available at: https://www.unodc.org/roseap/uploads/documents/Publications/2024/Implementation_of_UNCAC_Chapter_III_-_ASEAN_States_parties_and_Timor-Leste_March_2024.pdf.

- Protection of Reporting Persons (article 33): Ten States (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam) received recommendations on the protection of reporting persons, including to implement whistle-blower protection laws and allocate sufficient resources for their enforcement.
- At the time of their first UNCAC review cycle, Malaysia¹⁷ was the only ASEAN Member State with dedicated whistle-blower protection legislation. Viet Nam¹⁸ and Indonesia¹⁹ have since adopted similar laws.²⁰

Additionally, focus States received recommendations under the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism to facilitate the reporting of corruption:

- Six States, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam, received recommendations on enhancing cooperation with law enforcement authorities (article 37).
- Four States, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar,²¹ and the Philippines, received recommendations on facilitating the reporting of corruption by public officials (article 8(4)). Recommended measures included accepting anonymous complaints and implementing integrated system of public complaints.

UN human rights mechanisms echoed these recommendations, particularly regarding whistle-blower and witness protection legislation. For example:

- In 2014, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recommended Viet Nam to uphold laws protecting anti-corruption actors, including whistle-blowers and witnesses.²²
- In 2011, Cambodia received recommendations by various UN human rights mechanisms²³ to adopt laws protecting reporting persons, witnesses, experts, and victims, and to establish protection programmes.
- In 2022 and 2023, the Philippines received recommendations from UN human rights mechanisms²⁴ to expedite the enactment of a law protecting human rights defenders.
- In 2024, Indonesia²⁵ received a recommendation to adopt adequate measures to protect victims of corruption, their lawyers, activists who campaign against corruption, whistle-blowers and witnesses.

In nine of the States having received recommendations on articles 32 and 33 of UNCAC, UN human rights mechanisms issued complementary recommendations addressing issues such as freedom of expression, protection from unlawful prosecution, SLAPP suits, and support for women human rights defenders.²⁶

In this regard, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women raised concerns about the protection of women human rights defenders in six States.²⁷

¹⁷ Section 10 of Malaysia's Whistleblower Protection Act 2010 identifies that no person shall take detrimental action against a whistle-blower, or any person associated with the whistleblower, in reprisal for a disclosure of improper conduct.

¹⁸ Article 8 of Viet Nam's Law on Denunciation 2018 identifies a number of prohibited acts, for example "obstructing or harassing the denouncer", "threatening, bribing, taking revenge on, victimizing or insulting the denouncer," and "disclosing the denouncer's name, address and signature or other information which may reveal his/her identity."

¹⁹ Indonesia's Law No. 31 of 2014 "Protection of Witnesses and Victims Law" provides protection to whistle-blowers against prosecution or civil lawsuits. Regulation No. 43 of 2018, Article 12 details the right to legal protection. This includes (but is not limited to) protection for confidentiality of identity, confidentiality of the report materials and/or suggestions and opinions submitted, and/or physical protection.

²⁰ For more information on whistle-blower protection in Southeast Asia, see UNODC, "Whistle-blower protection in ASEAN Member States," 2024, p. 4. Available at: https://www.unodc.org/roseap/uploads/documents/Publications/2023/Whistleblower_Protection_in_ASEAN_-_2023_UNODC_paper.pdf.

²¹ Recommendations to Myanmar under the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism and certain UN human rights mechanisms were published prior to 2021 (see S/RES/2669 (2022)).

²² E/C.12/VNM/CO/2-4, 2014, p. 3.

²³ CAT/C/KHM/CO/2, 2011, p. 3; CCPR/C/KHM/CO/3, 2022, pp. 2, 7 - 9; E/C.12/KHM/CO/2, 2023, p. 5; A/HRC/57/17, 2024, pp. 13 - 14.

²⁴ A/HRC/52/13, 2022, p. 22; CERD/C/PHL/CO/21-25, 2023, p. 7.

²⁵ E/C.12/IDN/CO/2 (CESCR 2024).

²⁶ Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam; see for example CCPR/C/VNM/CO/4; CCPR/C/IDN/CO/2; CCPR/C/PHL/CO/5; CCPR/C/KHM/CO/3; CEDAW/C/THA/CO/8; A/HRC/44/6; A/HRC/48/16; A/HRC/34/11; A/HRC/31/13.

²⁷ Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand.

For example, in 2021 and 2022, UN human rights mechanisms²⁸ recommended that Singapore protect human rights defenders by, inter alia, ensuring their rights to freedom of expression and preventing reprisals. Similarly, under the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism, Singapore was advised to strengthen protections against retaliation or intimidation of witnesses, experts, and their relatives and other persons close to them.

In Thailand, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in 2022 recommended effective, prompt, thorough and impartial investigations into judicial harassment of human rights defenders.²⁹ Cambodia³⁰ and Indonesia³¹ also received both Treaty Bodies and UPR recommendations to uphold the rule of law, protecting human rights defenders from unlawful prosecution, and release imprisoned human rights defenders. Viet Nam noted similar recommendations made by the UPR³². For instance, Cambodia was urged in 2022³³ and 2024³⁴ to end mass trials against human rights defenders and unconditionally release all detained human rights defenders. Indonesia, during its 2022 Universal Periodic Review,³⁵ was recommended to strengthen protections against unlawful prosecution of human rights defenders.

Specific measures to protect women human rights defenders were recommended in Thailand and Singapore. In 2017, Thailand³⁶ was recommended to adopt effective protection mechanisms for women human rights defenders and improve the effectiveness of its current witness protection measures. In 2024, CEDAW³⁷ recommended that Singapore establish effective measures, including a dedicated registry, to prevent harassment and intimidation of women human rights defenders.

B. Freedom of expression and right to information

Six States — Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam — received complementary recommendations from the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism and UN human rights mechanisms on freedom of expression and the right to information.

Freedom of opinion and expression

All ASEAN Member States had legal provisions supporting freedom of opinion and expression. However, in some cases, these freedoms were undermined in practice by laws on hate speech, terrorism, public order, or cybersecurity.

Four States — Indonesia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam — received complementary recommendations on the right to freedom of opinion and expression, along with recommendations on article 13 of UNCAC (participation of society). These included calls to amend restrictive laws and to reduce barriers to civil society engagement.

The right to freedom of opinion and expression is protected under article 19 of the ICCPR and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as other instruments like the ICESCR, the Convention on Migrant Workers, and CERD. While limited restrictions are allowed under article 19(3) of the ICCPR,³⁸ States should not restrict discussions on government policies, political debate, human rights reporting, corruption, peaceful protests, or

²⁸ A/HRC/48/16, 2021, p. 17; CPRD/C/SGP/CO/1, 2022, p. 9; CERD/C/SGP/CO/1, 2022, pp. 2 – 3.

²⁹ CERD/C/THA/CO/4-8, 2022, pp. 4 – 5.

³⁰ CCPR/C/KHM/CO/3, 2022, pp. 7 - 9; A/HRC/57/17, 2024, pp. 13 - 14.

³¹ E/C.12/IDN/CO/2, 2024, pp. 2 - 3; A/HRC/52/8, 2022, p. 15.

³² A/HRC/57/7, 2024, p. 13.

³³ CCPR/C/KHM/CO/3, 2022, p. 7.

³⁴ A/HRC/57/17, 2024, pp. 13 – 14.

³⁵ A/HRC/52/8, 2022, p. 15.

³⁶ CEDAW/C/THA/CO/6-7, 2017, pp. 9 - 10.

³⁷ CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/6, 2024, p. 5.

³⁸ Examples of circumstances include where freedom of speech is limited to respect the right or reputations of others; protect national security or public order; or protect public health or morals.

dissent – including by minorities and vulnerable groups.³⁹ Criminal defamation and blasphemy laws are also sometimes misused to unduly limit this right.⁴⁰

The right to freedom of opinion and expression is closely linked to other rights, including to freedom of association and assembly, and the freedom of the press and media independence. It is essential for the protection of human rights defenders, activists, and journalists.

According to General Comment No. 34 of the Human Rights Committee,⁴¹ States must guarantee the right to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds, across all forms and borders. This includes political discourse, public commentary, journalism, human rights advocacy, artistic and cultural expression, teaching, and even commercial advertising. While the right extends to expression that may be offensive, any restrictions must strictly comply with article 19(3) and article 20 of the ICCPR.

The right to freedom of opinion and expression is closely tied to civil society participation. The most comparable UNCAC provision is article 13, which calls on States to promote the active participation of individuals and groups outside the public sector—such as civil society, NGOs, and community-based organizations—in preventing and combating corruption. Article 13 also urges States to raise public awareness about corruption and to enhance transparency, ensure public access to information, and protect the freedom to seek, receive, and share information on corruption.

The table provides examples of complementary recommendations received by focus States under UN human rights mechanisms (on freedom of expression) and UNCAC article 13 (on participation of society).

Freedom of opinion and expression		
State	Recommendations under the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism	Recommendations under UN human rights review mechanisms
Indonesia	In 2018, Indonesia was recommended ⁴² to continue fully implementing its law on public information, including ensuring that all public agencies were endowed with public information officers.	In 2022, Indonesia was recommended under the Universal Periodic Review ⁴³ to ensure a safe and enabling environment for civil society and align its laws on freedom of expression, association, and media with international standards. In 2024, the Human Rights Committee ⁴⁴ recommended that Indonesia take necessary measures to fully uphold the right to freedom of opinion and expression.
Lao PDR	Lao PDR received a recommendation ⁴⁵ in 2020 to continue strengthening the participation of society in efforts to prevent corruption.	In 2019 and 2020, Lao PDR was recommended ⁴⁶ to avoid restricting civil society activities, end government surveillance of civil society, and remove travel restrictions imposed on non-profit associations.
Thailand	Thailand received a recommendation ⁴⁷ in 2020 to continue strengthening the participation of society in efforts to prevent corruption.	In 2017 and 2019, ⁴⁸ Thailand was recommended to amend laws that unduly restricted freedom of expression online and offline, consider decriminalizing defamation, and review defamation cases to prevent strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs).

³⁹ UN General Assembly, “Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development,” A/HRC/RES/12/16, 2009, p. 4.

⁴⁰ OHCHR, “Freedom of opinion and expression,” accessed on 26 September 2024. Available at: [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Expression/Factsheet_1.pdf#:~:text=in%20article%2019\(3\)%20of%20the%20ICCPR.%20Criminal%20defamation%20and](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Expression/Factsheet_1.pdf#:~:text=in%20article%2019(3)%20of%20the%20ICCPR.%20Criminal%20defamation%20and).

⁴¹ Human Rights Committee, “General comment No. 34,” 2011, CCPR/C/GC/34.

⁴² Second review cycle, 2018, article 13.

⁴³ A/HRC/52/8, 2022, pp. 15 – 16.

⁴⁴ CCPR/C/IDN/CO/2.

⁴⁵ Second review cycle, 2020, article 13.

⁴⁶ A/HRC/41/39/Add.2, 2019, pp.17, 21; A/HRC/44/6, 2020, pp. 15 – 16.

⁴⁷ Second review cycle, 2020, article 13.

⁴⁸ CCPR/C/THA/CO/2, 2017, pp. 6 – 7; A/HRC/41/43/Add. 1, 2019, p. 19.

Right to information

Four focus States — Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Viet Nam — received complementary recommendations under UNCAC article 10 (public reporting) and from UN human rights mechanisms on the right to information.

Recommendations emphasized the need to guarantee access to information by adopting legal frameworks, addressing technical gaps, establishing public databases, and ensuring the collection of accurate and up-to-date data.

The right to information is a core element of freedom of expression, as recognized in article 19 of the ICCPR and UDHR. It empowers individuals to seek, receive and impart information and obliges public bodies to proactively publish it in accessible formats. Similarly, the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (2012) affirms the right to “receive and impart information” in Principle 23.⁴⁹

General Comment No. 34⁵⁰ affirms that Article 19(2) includes access to information held by all branches of the State, regardless of format, source, or date. This extends to the executive, legislative, and judiciary at all levels. Combined with article 25 of the ICCPR, it also guarantees media access to public information and the public’s right to receive it.

General Comment No. 34 notes that States Parties should:

- Proactively put Government information of public interest in the public domain;
- Make every effort to ensure easy, prompt, effective and practical access to such information;
- Establish clear procedures—such as freedom of information laws—for accessing information, with timely processing, reasonable fees, and justified refusals that include appeal options.

The right to information is a key tool in combatting corruption, as reflected in UNCAC article 13(1). Article 10 (public reporting) complements this by requiring States to enhance transparency in public administration, including its structure, operations, and decision-making. Measures may include:

- Adopting procedures or regulations for the general public to request information;
- Simplifying administrative procedures to facilitate public access to decision-making authorities; and
- Publishing information, such as regular reports on corruption risks.

A recent UNODC publication⁵¹ notes that eight ASEAN Member States — including Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam — have constitutional provisions on the right to information. Seven of these also have some form of legislative framework on the right to information.

Despite this, gaps in legislation or implementation have been identified by both the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism and UN human rights mechanisms. Examples are provided in the table.

⁴⁹ ASEAN, “ASEAN Human Rights Declaration,” 2012. Available at: <https://asean.org/asean-human-rights-declaration/>.

⁵⁰ Human Rights Committee, “General comment No. 34,” 2011, CCPR/C/GC/34.

⁵¹ UNODC, “Right to information in ASEAN Member States, Mongolia and Timor-Leste,” 2024. Available at: https://www.unodc.org/roseap/uploads/documents/Publications/2024/Right_to_Information_in_ASEAN_Member_States_Mongolia_and_Timor-Leste_Sep_2024.pdf.

Right to information		
State	Recommendations under the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism	Recommendations under UN human rights review mechanisms
Malaysia	Malaysia was recommended ⁵² in 2017 to adopt legislation on access to information at a federal level, given that it only had such legislation in two out of over 10 states.	During the 2019 UPR, ⁵³ Malaysia was recommended to ensure full implementation of the right to access information while safeguarding privacy, personal data, and national secrecy laws. In 2007, the Committee on the Rights of the Child ⁵⁴ also emphasized children’s right to freedom of expression, including the ability to voice complaints publicly and receive information.
Viet Nam	In 2021, Viet Nam was recommended ⁵⁵ to implement a framework for access to information, and enhance the transparency of decisions and procedures on access to information.	UN human rights mechanisms ⁵⁶ in 2012 and 2024 recommended that Viet Nam strengthen its mechanisms for the public oversight of its finances via access to information, and bridge any existing technical gaps required to facilitate the right to information.

C. Judicial integrity and corruption

Four States — Indonesia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam — received recommendations on judicial integrity under both UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism and UN human rights mechanisms. Indonesia, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam were received specific recommendations to strengthen judicial independence and integrity. Other recommendations emphasized the need to strengthen judicial capacity and ensure access to justice.

Judicial integrity, independence, and impartiality are vital to protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms. Anti-corruption measures—such as codes of conduct and strong conflict-of-interest rules—are essential to ensure trust in the judiciary and protect the right to a fair trial.⁵⁷ When anti-corruption efforts disregard human rights and the rule of law, they risk undermining their effectiveness, the infringement of the right to a fair trial and due process including through dismissed cases or denied mutual legal assistance due to due process violations.

Article 11 of UNCAC highlights the critical role of the judiciary in combating corruption and stresses the importance of judicial independence. It requires States to strengthen judicial integrity and prevent corruption within the judiciary. This is directly linked to the right to a fair trial under article 14 of the ICCPR⁵⁸ and article 10 of the UDHR.⁵⁹

⁵² Second review cycle, 2017, article 10.

⁵³ A/HRC/40/11, 2019, p. 18.

⁵⁴ CRC/C/MYS/CO/1.

⁵⁵ Second review cycle, 2021, article 10.

⁵⁶ A/HRC/20/23/Add.1, 2012, p. 22; A/HRC/57/7, 2024, p. 15.

⁵⁷ UNODC, “Judicial integrity,” accessed on 27 September 2024. Available at: <https://www.unodc.org/corruption/en/learn/thematic-areas/judicial-integrity.html>.

⁵⁸ Article 14(1) of the ICCPR notes: “All persons shall be equal before the courts and tribunals. In the determination of any criminal charge against him, or of his rights and obligations in a suit at law, everyone shall be entitled to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law.”

⁵⁹ Article 10 of the UDHR notes: “Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.”

Judicial integrity also underpins due process protections, as reflected in UNCAC articles 25 (obstruction of justice) and 30 (prosecution, adjudication and sanctions), and is essential in asset recovery to safeguard third-party rights.

The table outlines complementary recommendations from the UNCAC Review Mechanism and UN human rights mechanisms, emphasizing the need to strengthen judicial independence, integrity, capacity, and access to justice.

Judicial integrity recommendations		
State	Recommendations under the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism	Recommendations under UN human rights review mechanisms
Lao PDR	In 2013, Lao PDR was recommended ⁶⁰ to ensure that any discretionary prosecutorial powers were exercised to deter the commissioning of such offences.	Lao PDR was recommended in 2015 to ensure prompt, thorough, and independent investigations into judicial corruption, including cases involving high-level officials. ⁶¹
		In 2019, Lao PDR was advised to reform village mediation committees and review out-of-court settlements to ensure gender equality, procedural fairness, and access to appeals. ⁶²
		In 2019, ⁶³ human rights mechanisms noted a shortage of lawyers in Lao PDR. In 2020, ⁶⁴ the UPR recommended strengthening the capacity of law students and legal professionals.
Indonesia	In 2018, Indonesia received a recommendation ⁶⁵ to continue strengthening the application of integrity in the judiciary.	Indonesia was recommended to prevent corruption in the judicial system, and to strengthen judicial independence, investigate judicial corruption, combat corruption and nepotism in justice administration, and regulate the legal profession. ⁶⁶ The Human Rights Committee also noted the limited number of investigations of cases concerning extractive industries and business entities. ⁶⁷
Viet Nam	In 2021, Viet Nam was recommended ⁶⁸ to enhance the objectivity of the selection and reappointment of judges.	In 2024, Viet Nam was recommended ⁶⁹ by the UPR to ensure the judiciary's independence from political influence.

The negative impact of judicial corruption on certain groups, such as women and girls, were highlighted by UN human rights mechanisms in the context of Myanmar⁷⁰ and Thailand.⁷¹ Judicial corruption was highlighted as a barrier for these groups to access justice.

⁶⁰ First review cycle, 2013, article 30.

⁶¹ CRC/C/OPSC/LAO/CO/1, 2015, p. 5.

⁶² A/HRC/41/39/Add.2, 2019, pp. 16, 20.

⁶³ A/HRC/41/39/Add.2, 2019, p. 20.

⁶⁴ A/HRC/44/6, 2020, p. 15.

⁶⁵ Second review cycle, 2018, article 11.

⁶⁶ CAT/C/IDN/CO/2, 2008, p. 5; CCPR/C/IDN/CO/1, 2013, p. 7; E/C.12/IDN/CO/2 (CESCR 2024).

⁶⁷ CCPR/C/IDN/CO/2 (CCPR 2024).

⁶⁸ Second review cycle, 2021, article 11.

⁶⁹ A/HRC/57/7, 2024, p. 13.

⁷⁰ CEDAW/C/MMR/CO/4-5, 2016, pp. 5 – 6.

⁷¹ CEDAW/C/THA/CO/6-7, 2017, p. 3.

D. Business integrity and human rights

All focus States—Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam—received recommendations on business and human rights under both the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism and UN human rights mechanisms.

While UNCAC does not address issues like labour exploitation or land governance, its recommendations on preventing and criminalizing private sector corruption complement human rights recommendations. Recommendations on criminalizing and preventing corrupt acts in the private sector are of particular relevance given prevailing commercial interests, as well as recommendations from other UNCAC provisions involving the public sector, including the bribery of national public officials, bribery of foreign public officials and officials of public international organizations, and public procurement.

An analysis of recommendations from UN human rights mechanisms and the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism reveals overlaps in key areas:

- Labour exploitation and trafficking in nine States: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam;
- Land acquisition and indigenous rights in six States: Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam;
- Other context-specific issues, such as corruption in investments, human rights violations in Special Economic Zones, the extractives sector, and beneficial ownership transparency.

The Working Group on Business and Human Rights, in its 2020 report to the Human Rights Council,⁷² highlighted how corruption contributes to systemic human rights abuses in business, including in public procurement, land acquisition, health supply chains, and the extractive sector. It also emphasized the gendered impacts of such abuses.

The report proposed reforms to address these challenges and promote both human rights and anti-corruption goals, such as beneficial ownership reforms to promote transparency; procurement reform, including risk assessments at all stages; expanding procurement mechanisms to prevent abuses; and mandatory human rights due diligence regulations.

The link between business and human rights is evident in cases of forced labour and trafficking.⁷³ A UNODC issue paper⁷⁴ outlines how this can occur, including bribes to private firms or staff to bypass immigration controls or facilitate smuggling (e.g., air carrier and common carrier staff, travel agencies, private security personnel); transport company employees enabling undocumented migrants to hide on ships or planes; travel agencies issuing tickets without proper ID checks or record-keeping; and corrupt banking officials helping launder profits or produce false documents or to facilitate the laundering of proceeds of migrant smuggling operations.

While the private sector plays a key role, the issue paper⁷⁵ also highlights how public officials can enable abuse. For example, bribes may be offered to visa officers and immigration directors to provide services or falsify documents; immigration, security, and airline staff may be paid to overlook irregularities, unlock a door or grant access; officials who are bribed may ignore illegal activities, leak information, or warn traffickers of enforcement actions.

⁷² A/HRC/44/43, 2020.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ UNODC, "Corruption and the smuggling of migrants," 2013. Available at: https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/2013/The_Role_Of_Corruption_in_the_Smuggling_of_Migrants_Issue_Paper_UNODC_2013.pdf.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

The intersection of corruption and human rights in Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in South-East Asia—particularly the Mekong Region⁷⁶—has drawn growing attention. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has expressed concerns regarding the “negative impacts that business activities and large development projects, including in the Special Economic Zones, have on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, in particular on access to land, the right to an adequate standard of living, labour rights and the right to health”.⁷⁷

UNODC has documented cases in SEZs where victims, lured by false job advertisements, were rescued from kidnapping, extortion, trafficking, and forced labour.⁷⁸

Article 12 of UNCAC highlights the importance of preventing private sector corruption⁷⁹ as part of a comprehensive anti-corruption strategy. It calls on States Parties to adopt measures such as stronger accounting and auditing standards, assorted with proportionate civil, administrative, or criminal penalties; and tools like codes of conduct, conflict-of-interest rules, and promotion of transparency among private entities,⁸⁰ including on beneficial ownership. These safeguards are especially relevant in land governance, where misuse of subsidies or licensing procedures can lead to rights violations, particularly against indigenous communities.

Public procurement⁸¹ is especially vulnerable to corruption due to the high financial stakes and incentives for misconduct. UNCAC article 9 emphasizes the need for transparent, competitive, and objective procurement systems as a key safeguard against corruption.

To combat private sector corruption, UNCAC calls on States to criminalize certain intentional acts in economic or commercial activities. Article 21 addresses both active and passive bribery in the private sector, while articles 22 and 26 cover embezzlement of property in the private sector and the liability of legal persons. Article 26 is especially important, ensuring that companies and other legal entities—not just individuals—can be held accountable and face effective, proportionate, and dissuasive sanctions for corrupt acts.

Other UNCAC provisions may also apply, including those on bribery of national public officials, foreign bribery, and public–private sector cooperation. For instance, public officials may enable private sector corruption by holding roles in state-owned enterprises or receiving illicit proceeds from foreign investments.

To address governance gaps that allow business-related human rights harms, the UN Human Rights Council unanimously endorsed the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.⁸² The Principles are the first UN-backed framework clarifying the duties and responsibilities of States and businesses in preventing and addressing human rights impacts arising from business activities.⁸³ The Principles remain vital to the 2030 Agenda, which relies on private sector engagement grounded in respect for human rights.

⁷⁶ SEZs can be understood as specific areas of industrial development designated by the State that benefit from fiscal, tax and regulatory regimes and infrastructure support to encourage investment. SEZs operate under specific legal regimes that are designed to attract foreign investment. Three quarters of the world’s SEZs are in Asia, with 737 SEZs located in Southeast Asia, of which 167 were under development with a further 235 planned. The countries of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) account for 84 of these with many in border areas.

⁷⁷ E/C.12/KHM/CO/2, 2023, p. 2.

⁷⁸ UNODC, “Casinos, cyber fraud, and trafficking in persons for forced criminality in Southeast Asia,” 2023, p. 74. Available at: https://www.unodc.org/roseap/uploads/documents/Publications/2023/TiP_for_FC_Policy_Report.pdf.

⁷⁹ See resolution 10/12, “Providing incentives for the private sector to adopt integrity measures to prevent and combat corruption,” CAC/COSP/2023/L.17/Rev.1, 2023.

⁸⁰ See resolution 10/6, “Enhancing the use of beneficial ownership information to strengthen asset recovery,” CAC/COSP/2023/L.10/Rev.1, 2023.

⁸¹ See resolution 10/9, “Promoting transparency and integrity in public procurement in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” CAC/COSP/2023/L.13/Rev.1, 2023.

⁸² A/HRC/17/31.

⁸³ OHCHR, “Connecting business and human rights with anti-corruption: preliminary concept note by the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights,” *op cit.*, p. 1.

Most focus States received recommendations under the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism on criminalizing and preventing private sector corruption—recommendations that complement those from UN human rights mechanisms across various areas, as discussed later in this paper.

Key findings from UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism include:⁸⁴

- Bribery in the private sector (article 21): Seven States—Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar,⁸⁵ the Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam—had not adequately criminalized private sector bribery. Challenges cited included inadequate normative frameworks and, for some States, a remaining perception that bribery occurs only in the public sector.
- Liability of legal persons (article 26): Eight States—Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, the Philippines, and Viet Nam—received recommendations to strengthen the legal accountability of legal persons, including companies. This included clarifying when and how legal persons can be liable for corrupt acts, ensuring both companies and individuals can be prosecuted, and imposing effective, proportionate, and dissuasive sanctions.
- Prevention of private sector corruption (article 12): Nine States—Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, and Viet Nam—were recommended to develop corporate governance codes, regulate post-employment transitions for public officials transferring to the private sector, adopt measures to prevent conflicts of interest, and enhance internal auditing. Additional recommendations focused on increasing beneficial ownership transparency and preventing the misuse of procedures regulating private entities.
- Public procurement (article 9): Eight States—Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, the Philippines, and Viet Nam—received recommendations to strengthen procurement systems, adopt conflict-of-interest rules for procurement officials, increase the transparency of public procurement, establish independent procurement appeals mechanisms, enhance integrity measures for procurement personnel, and implement regular external audits.
- Trading in influence (article 18): Four States—Lao PDR, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Viet Nam—were advised to criminalize and strengthen legislation on trading in influence.
- Cooperation between public authorities and the private sector (article 39, as well as where such cooperation was provided in recommendations under other UNCAC provisions): Five States—Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Viet Nam—received recommendations in this regard.

The UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism recommendations complement those from UN human rights mechanisms in key areas,⁸⁶ including:

- Labour exploitation and trafficking – addressed in nine States: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam.
- Land acquisition and indigenous rights – raised in six States: Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

UN human rights mechanisms issued recommendations on labour exploitation - stressing the need to regulate, monitor, and prosecute entities like recruitment and employment agencies that may facilitate abuse. Examples of complementary UNCAC and UN human rights recommendations are shown in the table.

⁸⁴ UNODC, "Implementation of UNCAC chapter III: Criminalization and law enforcement in ASEAN States Parties and Timor-Leste," 2024. Available at: https://www.unodc.org/roseap/uploads/documents/Publications/2024/Implementation_of_UNCAC_Chapter_III_-_ASEAN_States_parties_and_Timor-Leste_March_2024.pdf.

⁸⁵ Recommendations to Myanmar under the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism and certain UN human rights mechanisms were published prior to the military takeover on 1 February 2021 (see S/RES/2669 (2022), which refers to "the ongoing state of emergency imposed by the military in Myanmar on 1 February 2021"). This report therefore includes an analysis of some information provided prior to the military takeover, which may not reflect the current context.

⁸⁶ This categorization, made for analytical purposes, reflects the content of the recommendations and may not always match the exact wording of the recommendations or related Conventions.

Labour Exploitation		
State	Recommendations under the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism	Recommendations under UN human rights review mechanisms
Indonesia	Indonesia received recommendations ⁸⁷ in 2012 on criminalizing foreign bribery, trading in influence, illicit enrichment, and bribery in the private sector.	In 2017, the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers recommended that Indonesia: ⁸⁸ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate and prosecute officials involved in trafficking-related corruption; • Enforce and strengthen human rights standards in Indonesian companies at home and abroad; • Establish complaint mechanisms for migrant domestic workers; • Strengthen labour inspections; • Establish a recruitment system subject to public administration in order to reduce the irregularities caused by private employment agencies.
Philippines	The Philippines received recommendations ⁸⁹ in 2013 on criminalizing bribery in the private sector and reviewing legislative gaps in relation to trading in influence, the bribery of national public officials, foreign bribery, and reviewing sanctions in relation to the liability of legal persons.	In 2014 and 2023, the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers recommended that the Philippines ⁹⁰ strengthen oversight of recruitment agencies. The Committee was informed that some agencies acted as intermediaries for abusive foreign recruiters, falsified birth certificates to bypass age limits (especially in domestic and construction work), charged excessive fees, and withheld key employment information—leading to underpaid and exploited workers. The Committee recommended the Philippines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen monitoring and inspections of recruitment agencies and ensure agencies provide full information to job seekers; • Establish complaint mechanisms for migrant workers and ensure that these mechanisms have the mandate and resources to investigate all cases of corruption; • Equip oversight bodies to investigate corruption, both domestically and in foreign posts.

UN human rights mechanisms issued recommendations on land governance - concerns were raised about weak governance and lack of consultation in large-scale development projects, especially affecting local communities and Indigenous Peoples. Examples of complementary UNCAC and UN human rights recommendations are shown in the table.

Land Governance		
State	Recommendations under the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism	Recommendations under UN human rights review mechanisms
Indonesia	In 2018, Indonesia was recommended ⁹¹ to strengthen public procurement integrity and prevent private sector corruption, including by improving transparency in line with international standards.	In 2024, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ⁹² recommended that Indonesia review its National Strategy on Business and Human Rights in consultation with Indigenous Peoples, affected communities, and stakeholders. It noted that State-owned enterprises often held shares in industries harming local communities, without clear requirements for human rights due diligence.

⁸⁷ First review cycle, 2012, articles 16, 18, 20, 21.

⁸⁸ CMW/C/IDN/CO/1, 2017, pp. 9 – 11.

⁸⁹ First review cycle, 2013, articles 15, 16, 18, 21, 26.

⁹⁰ CMW/C/PHL/CO/2, 2014, pp. 4 – 5, 7; CMW/C/PHL/CO/3, 2023, pp. 5, 10 – 11.

⁹¹ Second review cycle, 2018, articles 9, 12.

⁹² E/C.12/IDN/CO/2, 2024, pp. 2 – 4.

Viet Nam	Viet Nam received recommendations ⁹³ relating to criminalizing bribery in the private sector, liability of legal persons, public procurement, and preventing corruption in the private sector.	In 2015 and 2023, UN human rights mechanisms ⁹⁴ raised concerns about corruption in land acquisition by local officials. They recommended ensuring proper procedures were followed and noted that land seizure and consequent relocations of Indigenous Peoples and farming communities violated the principle of free, prior, and informed consent.
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The criminalization of corrupt acts is crucial to ensuring investor accountability. In the extractives sector, beneficial ownership transparency is equally important to prevent the misuse of legal entities, enhance oversight, and strengthen accountability.

The table below highlights complementary recommendations from the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism and UN human rights mechanisms, focusing on issues such as corruption in investments, abuses in SEZs, and transparency in the extractives industry.

Corruption and human rights violations in relation to investments		
State	Recommendations under the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism	Recommendations under UN human rights review mechanisms
Lao PDR	In 2013, Lao PDR received recommendations ⁹⁵ on criminalizing bribery and the embezzlement of property in the private sector. Additionally, while not receiving a direct recommendation on this point, reviewing experts observed that Lao PDR did not have measures which established the liability of legal persons for their participation in UNCAC-related offences.	In 2019, UN human rights mechanisms ⁹⁶ observed that “companies chose to invest or operate in Lao PDR, knowing full well the human rights concerns, the high levels of corruption, and the lack of resources for regulatory monitoring and enforcement,” and that “[c]ompanies, including foreign companies investing in Lao PDR’s special economic zones or the hydropower and mining sectors, should have an ongoing human rights due diligence process to identify, prevent and mitigate their impact on human rights, as well as a process for providing remedies where appropriate.”
Corruption and human rights violations in Special Economic Zones		
State	Recommendations under the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism	Recommendations under UN human rights review mechanisms
Cambodia	In 2016, Cambodia was recommended ⁹⁷ to amend its legislation to fully align with UNCAC provisions on private sector bribery. Experts noted gaps, such as the lack of reference to direct or indirect bribery, third-party beneficiaries, and the limitation that bribery of employees was only criminalized when done without the employer’s knowledge.	Cambodia received recommendations from UN human rights mechanisms ⁹⁸ in 2023 and 2024 to investigate and prosecute traffickers and officials complicit in forced labour and online scam operations in SEZs. Recommendations also noted the need for Cambodia to provide more information in relation to its SEZs, including assessments of SEZs’ impacts on land, local communities, workers’ rights and the environment, and tax and investment benefits received by SEZs.

⁹³ First review cycle, 2012, articles 21, 26; second review cycle, 2021, articles 9, 12.

⁹⁴ A/HRC/28/57/Add.1, 2015, pp. 9 – 10; CERD/C/VNM/CO/15-17, 2023, p. 8.

⁹⁵ Articles 21, 22, UNCAC.

⁹⁶ A/HRC/41/39/Add.2, 2019, pp. 18 – 20.

⁹⁷ Article 21, UNCAC.

⁹⁸ A/HRC/57/17, 2024, pp. 13, 16 – 17; E/C.12/KHM/CO/2, 2023, pp. 2 – 4.

Beneficial ownership transparency: corruption and human rights violations in relation to the extractives industry		
State	Recommendations under the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism	Recommendations under UN human rights review mechanisms
Myanmar	In 2020, Myanmar was recommended ⁹⁹ to enhance transparency by requiring private entities to disclose beneficial ownership information and identify those involved in establishing and managing corporate entities.	In 2019 and 2020, UN human rights mechanisms ¹⁰⁰ recommended Myanmar to continue participating in the Extractives Industries Transparency Initiatives and develop robust frameworks in relation to beneficial ownership transparency.

The gendered impacts of corruption are well recognized, with women both targeted by and affected differently by corrupt practices.¹⁰¹ For example:

- In 2023,¹⁰² UN human rights mechanisms noted that large-scale projects by foreign investors on Indigenous lands in the Philippines led to the forced eviction and displacement of Indigenous and rural women;
- In 2017,¹⁰³ UN human rights mechanisms urged Singapore to strengthen protections for women migrant workers, who faced exploitation, including included non-payment of salary, food and rest deprivation, restricted movement, confiscation of personal items (such as mobile phones and passports), and various forms of abuse;
- 2017,¹⁰⁴ UN human rights mechanisms reported official complicity in the exploitation of women in prostitution in Thailand, including large-scale extortion by corrupt police officers.

E. Institutional frameworks

Nine States—Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam—received complementary UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism and UN human rights recommendations on institutional frameworks, including strengthening anti-corruption bodies, improving implementation, and enhancing national and international cooperation.

Accountable public institutions are essential for effective governance, enabling the fair management of resources and protection of human rights free from abuse and corruption.¹⁰⁵ Strong institutional frameworks ensure that all actors—public and private—are held to laws that are transparent, fairly enforced, and aligned with international standards.

Complementary recommendations were made by the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism and UN human rights mechanisms:

- Two States - Indonesia and Malaysia - were recommended to enhance the independence of their anti-corruption bodies;

⁹⁹ Second review cycle, 2020, article 12.

¹⁰⁰ A/HRC/40/68, 2019, pp. 15 – 16; A/HRC/43/59, 2020, pp. 7 – 8.

¹⁰¹ UNODC, "Gender and corruption," accessed on 28 January 2025. Available at: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/gender/gender-and-thematic-areas/gender-and-corruption.html>.

¹⁰² CEDAW/C/PHL/CO/9, 2023, pp. 15 – 16.

¹⁰³ CEDAW/C/SGP/CO/5, 2017, pp. 9 – 10.

¹⁰⁴ CEDAW/C/THA/CO/6-7, 2017, pp. 8 – 9.

¹⁰⁵ UNDP, "Responsible and accountable institutions," accessed on 25 January 2025. Available at: <https://www.undp.org/eurasia/our-focus/governance-and-peacebuilding/responsible-and-accountable-institutions>.

- Five States - Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, the Philippines, and Timor-Leste - received recommendations to strengthen institutional capacity, increase anti-corruption efforts, and improve training and prevention;
- Three States - Lao PDR, the Philippines, and Viet Nam - received recommendations on managing public resources and implementing anti-corruption measures, with additional recommendations on evaluating efforts and boosting national and international cooperation.

These complementary recommendations on anti-corruption body independence and strengthening institutional capacity and measures are detailed in the table.

Independence of anti-corruption bodies		
State	Recommendations under the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism	Recommendations under UN human rights review mechanisms
Indonesia	In 2018, Indonesia was recommended ¹⁰⁶ to ensure the independence of its anti-corruption bodies.	Treaty Bodies ¹⁰⁷ recommended in 2024 that Indonesia review its legislation to strengthen the independence and effectiveness of its anti-corruption body.
Malaysia	In 2013 and 2017, Malaysia was recommended ¹⁰⁸ to address the replacement of the head of its Anti-Corruption Unit.	The Universal Periodic Review ¹⁰⁹ in 2024 recommended that Malaysia establish independent bodies to oversee appointments to its anti-corruption and oversight functions.
Strengthening institutional capacity and anti-corruption measures		
State	Recommendations under the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism	Recommendations under UN human rights review mechanisms
Cambodia	In 2016, Cambodia indicated that strengthening its Anti-Corruption Unit required skill training for staff and to ensure that the required equipment is secured. ¹¹⁰	Since 2011, UN human rights mechanisms ¹¹¹ have urged Cambodia to eradicate corruption nationwide by strengthening education, prevention, enforcement, transparency, accountability, independent investigations, and sanctions.
Indonesia	Indonesia received recommendations ¹¹² in 2018 to ensure that its anti-corruption agencies received full support in relation to resources and specialized staff, as well as to strengthen their capacity to prevent and eradicate corruption.	Since 2008, UN human rights mechanisms ¹¹³ have recommended Indonesia strengthen corruption prevention and prosecution across all government levels. In 2022, the UPR urged reforms in the criminal justice system and better supervision of law enforcement. In 2024, the Committee on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights ¹¹⁴ recommended raising awareness among parliamentarians and officials about corruption's social and economic costs.

¹⁰⁶ Second review cycle, 2018, article 6.

¹⁰⁷ E/C.12/IDN/CO/2, 2024, p. 5; Indonesia CCPR/C/IDN/CO/2 (CCPR 2024).

¹⁰⁸ First review cycle, 2013, article 36; second review cycle, 2017, article 6.

¹⁰⁹ A/HRC/56/11, 2024, p. 12.

¹¹⁰ First review cycle, 2016, articles 36.

¹¹¹ CAT/C/KHM/CO/2, 2011, pp. 2 – 3; CCPR/C/KHM/CO/3, 2022, p. 2; CED/C/KHM/CO/1, 2024, pp. 5 – 6; A/HRC/57/17, 2024, pp. 12 – 13.

¹¹² Second review cycle, 2018, articles 5, 6.

¹¹³ A/HRC/7/3/Add.7, 2008, pp. 13, 15, 24, 26 – 27; A/HRC/52/8, 2022, p. 14.

¹¹⁴ E/C.12/IDN/CO/2, 2024, p. 5.

Lao PDR	In 2013, Lao PDR was recommended ¹¹⁵ to reform its prosecution of corruption, including promptly lifting officials' immunity and ensuring corruption is not treated as a minor offence in law.	From 2015, UN human rights mechanisms ¹¹⁶ have recommended that Lao PDR tackle corruption systematically, and ensure that senior officials, including ministers and governors, were also prosecuted for corruption offences.
Philippines	In 2022, the Philippines was recommended ¹¹⁷ to strengthen public sector integrity through mandatory anti-corruption training, clear policies on high-risk positions, and rotation of staff in those roles.	Treaty Bodies ¹¹⁸ recommended the Philippines to step up corruption prosecutions and train law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and judges on strict application of anti-corruption laws, and to allocate sufficient financial and technical resources to effectively investigate all allegations of corruption.
Timor-Leste	In 2012, Timor-Leste was recommended ¹¹⁹ to strengthen law enforcement capacity through improved training, including on corruption offences, and to develop specialized investigators to expedite cases.	In 2015 and 2023, Timor-Leste was recommended ¹²⁰ to strengthen training on bribery linked to trafficking for personnel, including law enforcement, judges, prosecutors, labour inspectors, teachers, embassy staff, border and social guards.

Management of public resources and implementation of anti-corruption efforts

State	Recommendations under the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism	Recommendations under UN human rights review mechanisms
Lao PDR	In 2020, Lao PDR was recommended ¹²¹ to implement effective risk management and internal controls in public finance, with clear corrective measures for non-compliance.	In 2018, the Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended ¹²² Lao PDR to prevent and eliminate corruption and mismanagement of public resources impacting children's rights.
Philippines	In 2013, the Philippines was recommended ¹²³ to broaden anti-corruption provisions and expand the mandate of bodies like the Ombudsman to strengthen investigation and prosecution of corruption.	In 2016, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recommended ¹²⁴ the Philippines to investigate and prosecute corruption and cases of mismanaged, diverted, or unaccounted public funds.
Viet Nam	In 2012, resource constraints were highlighted ¹²⁵ as a factor which impacted the implementation of a variety of UNCAC provisions, including on the cooperation between national authorities to combat corruption.	In 2012, the Committee on the Rights of the Child ¹²⁶ noted that corruption in Viet Nam reduced funds for children's rights. The Independent Expert on foreign debt ¹²⁷ also recommended Viet Nam to strengthen anti-corruption measures to lessen the impact of foreign debt on its people.

¹¹⁵ First review cycle, 2013, article 30.

¹¹⁶ A/HRC/41/39/Add.2, 2019, p. 20.

¹¹⁷ Second review cycle, 2022, article 7.

¹¹⁸ E/C.12/PHL/CO/4, 2008, pp. 2 – 3; /C.12/PHL/CO/7 (CESCR 2025).

¹¹⁹ First review cycle, 2012, article 36.

¹²⁰ CMW/C/TLS/CO/1, 2015, p. 10; CEDAW/C/TLS/CO/4, 2023, p. 8.

¹²¹ Second review cycle, 2020, article 9.

¹²² CRC/C/LAO/CO/3-6, 2018, p. 3.

¹²³ First review cycle, 2013, articles 15, 36.

¹²⁴ E/C.12/PHL/CO/5-6, 2016, p. 3.

¹²⁵ First review cycle, 2012, article 38.

¹²⁶ CRC/C/VNM/CO/3-4, 2012, p. 4.

¹²⁷ A/HRC/20/23/Add.1, pp. 9, 22.

Evaluation of measures taken against corruption		
State	Recommendations under the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism	Recommendations under UN human rights review mechanisms
Thailand	In 2020, Thailand was recommended ¹²⁸ to monitor the effectiveness and impact of the implementation of its National Anti-Corruption Strategy.	In 2015, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ¹²⁹ emphasized that Thailand must evaluate the impact of its anti-corruption measures to effectively combat corruption across all sectors.
Strengthening national cooperation to combat corruption		
State	Recommendations under the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism	Recommendations under UN human rights review mechanisms
Thailand	Thailand was recommended ¹³⁰ in 2016 to strengthen cooperation between its public authorities and authorities responsible for investigating and prosecuting criminal offences.	The Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons ¹³¹ in 2012 recommended that Thailand eradicate deep-rooted trafficking-related corruption at the provincial and local levels, which would necessitate cooperation between different bodies and mandates.
Strengthening international cooperation to combat corruption		
State	Recommendations under the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism	Recommendations under UN human rights review mechanisms
Singapore	Singapore received recommendations on international cooperation including to use UNCAC as the legal basis for extradition in corruption cases. ¹³²	In 2021, the UPR recommended ¹³³ Singapore strengthen international cooperation to tackle corruption and transnational organized crime affecting human rights.

F. Corruption and the death penalty

The Philippines and Thailand received overlapping recommendations by UNCAC Implementation review Mechanism and UN human rights mechanisms on assessing sanction severity.

The UN opposes the death penalty in all cases, regardless of legal frameworks.¹³⁴ The Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR prohibits executions for States Parties. The Human Rights Committee's General Comment No. 36¹³⁵ provides additional analysis, clarifying that the term "the most serious crimes" must be read restrictively and pertain only to crimes of extreme gravity involving intentional killing. Crimes not resulting directly and intentionally in death, such as attempted murder, corruption and other economic and political crimes, armed robbery, piracy, abduction, drug and sexual offences, although serious in nature, can never serve as the basis, within the framework of article 6, for the imposition of the death penalty. Various States from the region received recommendations by human right bodies either to abolish or maintain a moratorium on the death penalty.¹³⁶

¹²⁸ Second review cycle, 2020, article 5.

¹²⁹ E/C.12/THA/CO/1-2, 2015, p. 2.

¹³⁰ First review cycle, 2016, article 38.

¹³¹ A/HRC/20/18/Add. 2, 2012, pp. 9, 12, 17.

¹³² First review cycle, 2015, articles 44, 46.

¹³³ A/HRC/48/16, 2021, p. 11.

¹³⁴ UNODC, "The death penalty and organized crime," accessed on 7 August 2024. Available at: <https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/organized-crime/module-10/key-issues/death-penalty-and-organized-crime.html>.

¹³⁵ Human Rights Committee, "General comment No. 36 (2018) on article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, on the right to life", CCPR/C/GC/36, 2018.

¹³⁶ These recommendations are not specific to corruption - see CCPR/C/LAO/CO/1, p.3; CCPR/C/THA/CO/2, p.3; CCPR/C/VNM/CO/3, p.4; CCPR/C/IDN/CO/2, p. 7.

Article 65(2) of UNCAC allows States to set harsher penalties, but these must respect the right to life and human dignity (UDHR, article 2) and consider the offence's gravity (UNCAC article 30(1)).¹³⁷ In their first UNCAC Implementation Review, Thailand and the Philippines noted that although some corruption acts could theoretically warrant the death penalty, their courts have never applied it. Thailand was advised to review its laws to ensure sanctions are proportionate.¹³⁸ Thailand¹³⁹ has been recommended to limit the death penalty to the most serious crimes, consider a moratorium, and run public awareness campaigns on alternatives.

The Philippines was the first Asian country to abolish the death penalty under the 1987 Constitution.¹⁴⁰ After its reinstatement in 1993 and abolition again in 2006, strong political interest in reinstating it in 2016¹⁴¹ prompted UN human rights mechanisms to urge the Philippines to reaffirm its commitment to abolition and reject reintroduction efforts.¹⁴² At the time of the writing of this report, capital punishment remains abolished.

On 25 June 2025, the National Assembly of Viet Nam adopted a law removing the death penalty for eight offenses including embezzlement and accepting bribes.¹⁴³ Various human rights mechanisms have repeatedly recommended the abolition or moratorium on the death penalty.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁷ UNODC, "Challenges faced and best practices applied by States in integrating human rights into their national strategies and policies to fight against corruption, including those addressing non-State actors, such as the private sector," accessed on 7 August 2024, p. 4. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Corruption/Challenges/UNODC.pdf>.

¹³⁸ First review cycle, 2016, article 30.

¹³⁹ CCPR/C/THA/CO/2, 2017, pp. 3 – 4; A/HRC/49/17, 2021, p. 19.

¹⁴⁰ Parliamentarians for Global Action, "Philippines and the death penalty," accessed on: 8 July 2024. Available at: <https://www.pgaction.org/ilhr/adp/phl.html>.

¹⁴¹ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/12/03/philippines-dont-reinstate-death-penalty>.

¹⁴² A/HRC/52/13, 2022, pp. 11 – 12.

¹⁴³ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/06/viet-nam-parliament-votes-abolish-death-penalty-some-offences>.

¹⁴⁴ See for example CRPD/C/VNM/CO/1 (CRPD 2025), A/HRC/57/7 (UPR 2024), CERD/C/VNM/CO/15-17 (CERD 2023), CRC/C/VNM/CO/5-6 (CRC 2022), CCPR/C/VNM/CO/3 (CCPR 2019) or CAT/C/VNM/CO/1 (CAT 2018).

III. Conclusion

This report highlights the complementary nature of human rights and anti-corruption efforts, underscoring how both aim to strengthen the rule of law, promote transparency, and ensure accountability. Corruption undermines human rights, particularly for those already in a situation of vulnerability and marginalization, while upholding human rights reinforces anti-corruption by promoting participation, access to justice, and non-discrimination. Human rights-based approaches add value to anti-corruption efforts by bringing a focus on individuals and communities affected by corruption, and by ensuring that responses are grounded in legal safeguards and dignity.

The analysis of overlapping recommendations from the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism and UN human rights bodies reveals that both sets of mechanisms approach similar corruption related challenges from different yet complementary angles. While UNCAC focuses on the technical implementation of specific obligations, UN human rights mechanisms address broader structural and societal impacts. Together, they offer a more comprehensive understanding of the harm caused by corruption and the multi-faceted responses needed to address it.

The convergence of recommendations in the six key thematic areas — see tables— demonstrates the need for greater integration of the work done to promote, implement and monitor these two frameworks. These overlapping recommendations are not duplicative but mutually reinforcing, providing States with coherent and actionable guidance that balances legal compliance with their international obligations in terms of criminal justice and human rights.

Closer cooperation between the UNCAC Review Mechanism and UN human rights mechanisms is therefore essential. Strengthened collaboration between their respective secretariats, including through information exchange, and coordinated follow-up – including through interagency cooperation at regional level-, can support more coherent and efficient implementation. For national practitioners, greater alignment is also key. Those responsible for implementing human rights and anti-corruption obligations should work together to identify synergies, align priorities, and coordinate reporting, follow-up, and review processes. This can be done, for example, through joint planning and cooperation in relation to existing recommendations on anti-corruption and human rights, allocation of resources, establish processes allowing for inputs by both human rights and anti-corruption representatives.

Finally, the effective monitoring and implementation of these recommendations depends on the meaningful participation of civil society, human rights defenders, and whistle-blowers. These actors play a vital role in exposing corruption, advocating for reform, and protecting the rights of those affected. Their protection must be ensured, and their contributions recognized across both human rights and anti-corruption spaces. Greater integration of civil society voices into both sets of mechanisms, and enhanced coordination among stakeholders, are crucial to ensuring that anti-corruption and human rights efforts are not pursued in isolation, but in support of a shared vision of just, accountable, and rights-respecting societies.

Convergence of recommendations		
Key themes	States that received recommendations under both UNCAC IRM and UN human rights mechanisms ¹⁴⁵	Key findings
Whistle-blowers, witnesses and human rights defenders	Nine States: Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, ¹⁴⁶ Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Viet Nam. ¹⁴⁷	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both mechanisms recommended adopting or strengthening laws to protect whistle-blowers, witnesses, and related groups. • UN human rights mechanisms emphasized protection from retaliation, intimidation, and enforced disappearances. • While the UNCAC IRM does not directly address human rights defenders, UN human rights bodies issued complementary recommendations, particularly on freedom of expression, judicial harassment, and the protection of women defenders, which complement UNCAC IRM recommendations on protecting persons who report on corruption.
Freedom of opinion and expression and right to information	Six States: Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, Viet Nam.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four States (Indonesia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Viet Nam) received overlapping recommendations on freedom of opinion and expression from UN human rights mechanisms, aligning with recommendations provided under UNCAC article 13 (participation of society). • UN human rights mechanisms urged amending restrictive laws and enabling civil society activity. • Four States (Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Viet Nam) received recommendations under both frameworks to strengthen the right to information (UNCAC article 10), including by amending legislation, establishing public databases, and ensuring the collection of reliable data.
Judicial integrity	Four States: Indonesia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Viet Nam.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three States (Indonesia, Lao PDR, Viet Nam) received complementary recommendations on strengthening judicial independence and integrity, including access to justice. • Other recommendations also noted the importance of strengthening judicial capacity and ensuring that judicial processes were implemented in a manner that supported access to justice.

¹⁴⁵ Please note that of the UPR recommendations included, some were noted.

¹⁴⁶ Recommendations to Myanmar under the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism and certain UN human rights mechanisms were published prior to the military takeover on 1 February 2021 (see S/RES/2669 (2022), which refers to “the ongoing state of emergency imposed by the military in Myanmar on 1 February 2021”). This report therefore includes an analysis of some information provided prior to the military takeover, which may not reflect the current context.

¹⁴⁷ Viet Nam received UPR recommendations, which were noted.

Convergence of recommendations		
Key themes	States that received recommendations under both UNCAC IRM and UN human rights mechanisms ¹⁴⁵	Key findings
Business and human rights	All States: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Viet Nam.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the UNCAC IRM does not cover labour exploitation or land governance, its private sector-related recommendations (e.g., on corruption, public procurement, and cooperation between the public and private sectors) align with human rights findings. • Complementary recommendations were related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Labour exploitation and trafficking (nine States). - Land acquisition and Indigenous rights (six States). - Corruption in investments, SEZs, extractives, and beneficial ownership (context-specific).
Institutional frameworks	Nine States: Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Viet Nam.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two States (Indonesia, Malaysia) were advised to reinforce the independence of anti-corruption bodies under both mechanisms. • Five States were urged to enhance anti-corruption capacity and training (e.g., Cambodia, Philippines) under both mechanisms. • Three States (Lao PDR, Philippines, Viet Nam) received guidance from both mechanisms on managing public resources and evaluating anti-corruption efforts. • Other recommendations related to evaluating the measures taken on corruption and strengthening national and international cooperation.
Corruption and the death penalty	Two States: the Philippines and Thailand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two States (Philippines, Thailand) received overlapping recommendations on the proportionality of sanctions under UNCAC and all States received recommendations from UN human rights mechanisms on abolishing the death penalty.

