

# Corruption hurts human rights, senior UN official warns

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Corruption kills by siphoning money from humanitarian and development projects, the top United Nations human rights official today said, urging a coordinated human-rights based approach among UN agencies, civil society and inter-governmental groups to fight the scourge.

“Corruption is an enormous obstacle to the realization of all human rights, in practical terms – civil, political, economic, social and cultural, as well as the right to development,” the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, [told](#) the UN Human Rights Council.

She noted that from 2000 to 2009, developing countries lost \$8.44 trillion to illicit financial flows – equivalent to 10 times more than the foreign aid they received.

The money stolen through corruption every year, she pointed out, is enough to feed the world’s hungry 80 times over, while bribes and theft swell the total cost of projects to provide safe drinking water and sanitation around the world by as much as 40 per cent.

Noting the growing awareness of the intrinsic links between human rights and the struggle to combat corruption, the High Commissioner told the panel on the ‘negative impact of corruption on human rights’ held in Geneva, that “there here is an urgent need to increase synergy.”

She flagged the need for greater coordination to implement international human rights conventions and the UN Convention against Corruption, the legally binding, global anti-corruption instrument promoted by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime ([UNODC](#)). So far 165 countries have become Parties to the Convention.

Ms. Pillay also called for stronger policy coherence and collaboration between UNODC, the UN Development Programme ([UNDP](#)), her Office, civil society and the intergovernmental processes in Vienna, Geneva and New York.

With an increasing emphasis on creating a post-2015 development agenda – a set of new anti-poverty goals to take over from where the Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#))

leave off – Ms. Pillay said her office is increasingly “convinced that efforts to combat corruption are most effective when coupled with an approach that respects all human rights, including those of the accused.

“As we continue to clarify the links between corruption and human rights, groups working to combat corruption locally and internationally will see more clearly the value of working with agencies in the field of human rights,” Ms. Pillay said, adding that the reverse was also true.