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Harieta Baldwin, MP from the UK: the more active civil society is, the more effective it is in limiting corruption

Press release, 28 May 2022

The Seimas continues to host the Spring Session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA). When presenting the draft Report on Strategic and Economic Challenges Posed by Corruption at the meeting of the Economic and Security Committee, Harriett Baldwin, MP from the United Kingdom, spoke about the threat of corruption to national security.

Having started her report with one of the strongest examples, namely, details about the situation in Afghanistan, the politician briefly noted how the situation was much undermined by corruption. According to her, it was

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Nevertheless, Ms Baldwin's report focused on the importance of tackling corruption from Russia and recognising the mistakes made by Western countries. 'We have seen how in a way we have been ourselves unwittingly undermined by corruption from Russia, because corruption remains a central element in Russia's hybrid **policy** tool kit. It can certainly be argued that we have been far too passive in the face of this challenge. Our societies were reluctant to recognise that we were dealing with the kleptocratic regime that was harbouring a longer-term ambition to redraw the map of Europe,' said the MP from the UK and stressed that adopting stringent anti-corruption policies should be part of our collective response to the Russian challenge.

'Corruption has been such a powerful tool of hybrid warfare for Russia as well. The Kremlin has systematically used corruption to compromise leaders beyond its borders. It deploys bribery to win contracts for its energy firms, to degrade its competition, and to fund pro-Kremlin political movements even in NATO countries. We have to take measures like sanctions and seizures of assets. In the UK, our goal is to make it impossible for Russia's leaders to recycle their ill-gotten gains through our economy. I know that in all of your capitals similar efforts will be underway,' said Ms Baldwin. According to her, corruption corrosively undermines states and cripples the rule of law, can enable terrorist and criminal networks to operate with impunity, and subverts our economic potential.

The Report on Strategic and Economic Challenges Posed by Corruption explores how corruption hollows out states and weakens national military forces by diverting resources, equipment and personnel to criminal activities that undermine capabilities while undermining morale, good order and discipline. 'Corruption also erodes democratic governance, particularly when it becomes a vehicle by which governing elites cling to power. In these cases, insiders seize public assets for their private use and avoid scrutiny through the control of key institutions like the judiciary, the military,

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She was pleased that even prior to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the US Administration had indicated that it would make anti-corruption a key domestic and foreign **policy** priority. The Congress has been advancing the so-called counter-kleptocracy agenda, which has bipartisan support.

The MP from the UK stated that anti-corruption initiatives have become key priorities for institutions like the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations and more specialised bodies like the Financial Action Task Force. The OECD Convention on Bribery establishes legally binding standards to criminalise bribery of foreign public officials in international business transactions and offers an array of related measures to achieve these aims. The Convention is the first and only international anti-corruption instrument that is focused on the supply side of bribery transactions.

According to Ms Baldwin, NATO recognises the links between security and corruption and is increasingly seeking to address the problem through the Building Integrity Programme.

'NATO's Building Integrity Programme seeks to encourage Member States and partner countries to engage in self-assessments of corruption within their own countries and militaries. The fight against corruption demands societal resilience. This can be achieved from the development of comprehensive strategies that include judicial and police reform, strong anti-corruption legislation and recognition of the key role played by a free press able to operate beyond the control of the state and governing elites. Civil society also plays a fundamental role in demanding transparency and democratic accountability. The more active civil society is, the more effective it is in limiting corruption. So efforts to reign in civil society, outlaw civil society groups and undermine the free press, even in NATO countries, pose a direct threat to democratic governance,' said Ms Baldwin.

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rightful place in our Alliance and could play an important role in the fight against corruption in the national security sector.

The Spring Session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly takes place in the buildings of the Seimas, Vilnius, on 27–30 May 2022.

The meetings of the Committees and the Plenary Session are webcast live on the Seimas' website and YouTube account [Atviras Seimas](#) (Open Seimas). Photos from all the events are published on the Seimas [Flickr](#) account. They are free for use provided they bear the following indication of the source: Photo by Olga Posaškova or Džoja Gunda Barysaitė, Office of the Seimas.

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