

"7TH GLOBAL FORUM ON REINVENTING GOVERNMENT"

Ladies and gentlemen:

I consider it a great honour and privilege being invited to give a keynote speech at this 7th Global Forum representing the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions – INTOSAI - and the Austrian Court of Audit.

Ever since its foundation, INTOSAI has successfully and proactively coped with political and social change and with the resultant challenges for government audit. As General Secretariat of INTOSAI, the Austrian Court of Audit plays a pivotal role in facilitating technical expertise and organisation.

INTOSAI is an autonomous, independent and non-political organisation which aims at promoting government audit on a worldwide scale by sharing and building know-how. As such, it is ideally positioned to strengthen the expertise, reputation and influence of INTOSAI with its 186 members has for many years co-operated closely with the United Nations. It enjoys NGO status with the United Nations, and special consultative status with ECOSOC, the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

The longstanding co-operation between INTOSAI and the United Nations is highlighted by a series of jointly organised UN/INTOSAI-Seminars and Symposia in Vienna, all of which have been devoted to issues of topical interest such as "Value and Benefits of Government Audit in a Globalised Environment" in spring 2007.

In pursuing its activities and the goals of its Strategic Plan, INTOSAI contributes to the implementation of the UN Development Goals: It has established strategic partnerships between INTOSAI and related institutions such as (private) audit institutions (like the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) and the Institute for Internal Auditors (IIA)), and institutions which have a strategic interest in boosting the economic and social development of the international community (like the World Bank and the Regional Development Banks).

These activities of INTOSAI on the other hand enable the United Nations to mobilise the specific benefits of international government audit to target their prevention and combat of waste, mismanagement, corruption and money laundering, ensuring open, transparent,

prudent and reasonable public financial management for the benefit of states and societies.

According to its Strategic Plan for the years 2005 to 2010 INTOSAI pursues four strategic goals:

- (1) Professional standards and accountability;
- (2) Institutional capacity building;
- (3) Knowledge sharing and knowledge services;
- (4) Establishing a model international organisation.

The first three goals serve Supreme Audit Institutions globally and are designed to assist INTOSAI members in successfully coping with the challenges which government audit is facing on a worldwide scale.

As a standard-setting body, INTOSAI is to elaborate and further develop audit standards for different SAIs, in co-operation with other organisations acting for the private sector such as IFAC. It also intends drawing up benchmarks and best-practice studies to promote international knowledge management.

In line with its strategic goals, INTOSAI's specific contribution consists in

- providing comprehensive and consistent general principles;
- developing and ensuring sustainable quality assurance of external government audit at multiple levels, ranging from worldwide acknowledged standards for guiding principles for and their constitutional position (as laid down by the Lima Declaration, the "Magna Carta" of external government audit) to the development of international audit standards and methods (such as for performance audit, audit of privatisations, environmental audit, internal control and many others); and
- education and training of audit staff (most successfully accomplished for many years by the INTOSAI Development Initiative (IDI) under the auspices of the Supreme Audit Institution of Norway in close co-operation with the regional working groups of INTOSAI, and the International Journal of Government Auditing hosted by the US General Accountability Office).

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INTOSAI is proud to associate itself with the work of this Symposium, as the United Nations and INTOSAI have indeed several common goals and have undertaken complementary activities in promoting economical, efficient, effective, responsible and responsive public financial management in developing countries and economies-in-transition in the last 40 years.

Indeed, to my mind, the emerging economies and developing countries are the ones to benefit from the achievements of INTOSAI and its partners, as far as the consolidation of public institutions and in particular the development and enhancement of external public audit are concerned. The mutual exchange of experiences and the partnership between Supreme Audit Institutions and international stakeholders will add to this positive development, contributing their part to establish and consolidate parliamentary and democratic systems by fostering citizen participation in political decision making processes.

The aims of this Global Forum correspond perfectly with the aims of Supreme Audit Institutions in seeking ways to improve trust in government and the quality of governance for the sake of citizens and more generally for the civil society.

In this respect it is my great personal pleasure and honour to have been invited by the United Nations to participate in this Global Forum on behalf of INTOSAI. The invitation is a credit to INTOSAI and its achievements and a convincing proof of the excellent co-operation between the United Nations and INTOSAI. INTOSAI would be pleased to maintain these direct contacts and increase its co-operation in the future – contributing in a spirit of shared responsibility to the economic and social development of all members of the world community, and in effect enhancing democratic developments and maintenance of peace.

As an illustrative example of international co-operation in that context I should like to refer to the INTOSAI Initiative in the wake of the flood disaster in South East Asia. This initiative was aimed at setting up a joint platform to pool the capacities and technical expertise of government audit to provide assurance to victims and major donor countries that aid funds were being properly managed and used for the intended purpose. INTOSAI established a Task Force on the Accountability for and Audit of Disaster-related Aid in 2005, and discussed the gathered experiences in an International Symposium on Strengthening Global Government Audit, which was held in the Austrian Parliament building in Vienna in 2006, and whose participants included representatives from the

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European Union and the Division for Public Administration and Development
Management of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

The conclusions of that International Symposium – the Vienna Declaration – contain recommendations to various stakeholders of international disaster-related aid (including Parliaments, governments, aid organisations, multinational institutions, Supreme Audit Institutions), to ensure that public funds managed by the state in trust for its citizens are used as intended for aid projects in a transparent, efficient and effective manner.

Another symposium, the 19th UN/INTOSAI Symposium on the "Value and Benefits of Government Audit in a Globalised Environment" was held in co-operation with the United Nations, in spring 2007 in Vienna. The Symposium was notably designed to find out how Supreme Audit Institutions could make their achievements transparent, measurable and readily perceivable. This could be done by indicator systems, performance reports, intellectual capital reporting, track records, peer reviews etc. to provide useful information for internal and external reporting. Bearing in mind that accountability requirements to citizens, parliaments and the broad public forum of the media are growing, this is particularly relevant: with globalisation and public funds flowing across national borders, government audit institutions will be bound increasingly to commit themselves to these requirements. INTOSAI is going to develop an internationally applicable framework for the measurement of the values and benefits of government audit.

Coming to an end of my statement I want to express my sincere conviction that in a globalizing and democratic world, participatory and transparent governance is vital to achieving economic growth, social justice and equity. Audit is an important tool of checks and balances and remains an integral part of this emerging governance culture.

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) proposes that SAIs and the audit community at large improve their impact by taking into account the growing voices of what have become known as "alternate watchdogs," including civil society organizations and the media.

By sharing information and knowledge on a wide scale, rationalising our financial input with a view to the best possible value for money, setting an example as a model organization and learning from best practice, I am confident that INTOSAI is creating benefit not only for its own members, but – mobilising synergistically the strengths of its

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partner institutions, including the United Nations - for civil society as a whole, and will redraft the map of government audit in years to come.

A conceivable approach in that context would be the establishment of a joint platform between NGOs, Civil Society Organisations and the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI) to identify co-operation projects and translate them into concrete action.

In fact, that course of action should be taken up in the final conclusions and recommendations of this Global Forum.

On behalf of INTOSAI, I wish all the distinguished participants a productive discussion in the course of this meeting.

Thank you for your attention.