

## **Opening Remarks**

**Ambassador Stephen Mull**

**International Conference on Public Corruption**

**Presidential Palace, Warsaw**

**December 10, 2012**

Thank you very much. We at the U.S. Embassy value the work being done at the Central Anti-Corruption here in Poland and look forward to continued Polish-American cooperation.

I appreciate the opportunity today to speak to all of you here who are dedicated to the challenging task of combating public corruption.

The European Union and the United States share common values of democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights

and fundamental freedoms. And we recognize that transnational crime and corruption pose a threat to these shared values.

This recognition has resulted in valuable transatlantic cooperation in the pursuit of justice, freedom and security and is reflected in our agreements on extradition, mutual legal assistance, and many other areas of law enforcement. I salute each of you as partners in this joint U.S-EU effort to root out corruption.

Today we are using our strong partnership to strengthen institutions combating corruption throughout the world and to ensure they play a vital role. We also continue to cooperate in promoting and implementing key international instruments, in particular the U.N. Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and the U.N. Convention against Corruption.

Every democratic nation relies on public confidence and trust in its government officials and institutions. And the fact is that government representatives in the vast majority of cases deserve that trust and live up to the high standards that they are pledged to uphold.

But, unfortunately, any incidence of public corruption undermines public faith in all of us and the basic understanding that is the foundation of any democracy: that public officials – whether elected or appointed -- will perform their duties for the common good and not betray that trust for private gain.

Public corruption can also deter foreign investment and stifle economic growth because foreign investors need to have confidence in the integrity and impartiality of a nation's legal and administrative systems. Corruption has repeatedly been identified as a key obstacle to foreign direct investment because it increases business risks and costs.

Public corruption also poses a fundamental threat to national security. It can affect every facet of society -- from how well our borders are secured and our neighborhoods are protected to verdicts handed down in courts and to the quality of our roads and schools.

Corrupt public officials allow illicit drugs and weapons to flow freely; they permit organized crime to operate with impunity; and they can open the door for terrorists who threaten our way of life.

You will hear more during this conference about one recent case. Neil Campbell, an Australian national, was arrested by authorities in India and extradited to the United States for accepting a bribe while doing work for an international aid organization in Afghanistan. Campbell solicited Afghan contractors for kickback payments and then traveled to India expecting a \$180,000 payment. His arrest and subsequent conviction in a U.S. court was the result of an intensive

investigation led by the FBI and other U.S. agencies but that required close international cooperation.

The United States for many years has taken a strong stand against bribery of not only public officials in our own country but also foreign officials. The Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, dating back to 1977, makes it unlawful to bribe a foreign official for the purpose of obtaining or retaining business.

In closing, I hope that this conference will further strengthen our transatlantic cooperation in helping make Europeans and Americans more secure as we face the challenges of transnational crime and corruption.

I believe that for my government and the governments that you represent, there is no level of acceptable corruption. Ultimately, it does not matter if it is millions of dollars, or merely hundreds. There is no level of acceptable corruption. The violation of trust is the same. The damage to our democracies is the same.

Thank you very much.