Chair:
James Kenney, Global Director, Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, Chicago, USA
Rev. Marcus Braybrooke, International Interfaith Centre, Oxford, England

Panellists:
Jyoti Munsiff, Baha'i International Community, London, England
Dr. Amina Rasul-Bernardo, People Power Movement, Phillipines
Geo-Sung Kim, Transparency Internationa Korea, Korea´s Religious Groups Initiative for Anti-corruption Movement in a Religious Plural Society, Republic of Korea
Etienne Wibaux, UNIAPAC, Christian Business Ethics Program, France
Venerable Dr. Mettanando Bikkhu, Special Advisor to the World Council for Religions and Peace for Buddhist Affairs, Thailand
Charlotte Mwesggye, Informal Network of Faith-based Organisations against Corruption Africa/Jubilee 2000, Uganda
Dr. K. L. Rao, editor of the Encyclopaedia of Hinduism Project, University of South Carolina
Tomas Jelinek, President, Prague Jewish Community, the Czech Republic

All panellists took part in an interactive discussion, each speaking briefly on questions raised by the chairs or the audience.

Case   studies:
No case studies were presented during the session. Several panellists brought papers that will be made public on the inter-religious anti-corruption network website www.infoc.org.

As the workshop was convened, each of the chairs offered brief opening remarks. **Jim Kenney**noted the surprising absence of religious values and the non-involvement of the world's religious communities in most major anti-corruption efforts to date. He pointed out that, at Global Forum II in The Hague, a promising inter-religious effort was initiated to combat corruption. An excerpt from a statement issued by the group (INFOC) at the time reads:

"A globally diverse group of organizations has created an International Network of Faith-Based Organizations Against Corruption [INFOC]. These organizations are pledged to work together across lines of religion and nationality to fight corruption in individual countries, regions or international efforts. They hope to make the work of faith-based organizations in these efforts more visible and contribute to greater justice, accountability, transparency and integrity."

Mr. Kenney turned to **Rev. Marcus Braybrooke** who offered a brief history of the global inter-religious movement, identifying three key stages in its development:

1. The effort to overcome prejudice and mistrust among religions and to encourage dialogue.
2. In 1993, at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago, leaders of the major religious communities took a major step forward as they affirmed a number of basic moral values - including integrity and truthfulness as well as social and economic justice - shared by all religions. The document they signed was entitled Towards a Global Ethic: An Initial Declaration.
3. In 1999 at the second modern Parliament of the World's Religions in Cape Town, South Africa, in A Call to Our Guiding Institutions, religious communities called for significant dialogue and "creative engagement" with other guiding institutions - including government, business, media, education, intergovernmental organizations, science, and civil society - to address the most critical problems facing the human community.

Rev. Braybrooke pointed out that the current effort to shape an inter-religious response to the problem of corruption is a natural step for the evolving inter-religious movement.

The Chairs then invited each panellist to make brief **opening remarks.**

Amina Rasool Bernardo observed that the anti-corruption struggle needs a religious dimension. She insisted that the faiths *can* come together to address these issues. She cited the experience of the Philippines and the two periods in which religious groups have united to remove corrupt leaders from power.

Geo-Sung Kim pointed out that each religion has its own internal experience of corruption. *"The corrupt church,"* he said, *"can never challenge a corrupt society."* Religions must choose to bring their traditions

and avowed opposition to corruption to bear on their own practice and the examples set by their leaders and key organisations.

Etienne Wibaux posed a key question that most panellists addressed in their later remarks: What exactly is corruption? How is it defined? How is it recognised? He offered stories illustrating the complexity of the question. Panellists that took up his question later argued for the most part that only a personal grounding in religious, spiritual, and moral values can assist the individual to answer this question at a moment of critical personal moral choice. Many speakers referred to Mr. Wibaux' question when calling for moral and values in education (and the role of the religious communities in this regard).

K. L. Rao offered what many regarded as the best definition of the moral person: *"The person who thinks one thing, says the same thing, and acts in the same way."* He called for the religious communities of the world to forge together a shared commitment to "purify public life". He argued that the religions have demonstrated in many ways in recent years that they share sufficient common moral ground to provide a shared foundation for such an effort. He described a major anti-corruption effort in India - *Sadachara Bharati* - based on Gandhian principles. Such religious efforts, he said, can provide an essential dimension of the global struggle.

Charlotte Mwesggye described her own experiences with the Jubilee 2000 movement, as a faith-based initiative that brought enormous energy and inspiration for the world's religions to bear on a critical issue. She cautioned the group about the need for continued vigilance so that the movement itself is not corrupted. She maintained that an inter-religious anti-corruption effort must not be merely reactive, but must be proactive and prophetic. It must work for the good of all, not merely for the protection of the interests of business and government. She asked the group to consider how such an effort will measure its results.

Tomas Jelinek illustrated the concept of transparency (and the religious understanding of its importance) by recounting a Jewish wedding tradition in which the husband makes his promises to the bride in front of the entire community. He also drew on the Czech experience and that of the Jewish community in drafting a program of restitution for the corrupt property practices of the communist state. He cautioned that circumvention of the practices of a corrupt state may not itself be corrupt ("corruption of a corrupt system").

Jyoti Munsiff emphasised education as the indispensable tool for combating corruption. She asked whether faith-based organisations can make a practical contribution to the effort without letting their spiritual affiliations interfere in the process (she argued that this was possible). She offered several examples of very effective efforts by the international Baha'i community along these very lines.

Ven. Mettanando Bikkhu took up the issue of internal corruption of religious institutions. Arguing that there was no greater power to combat corruption, he noted that the power of religious leaders and institutions to corrupt should never be ignored. He argued that the individual reformer or "religious whistleblower" needs the solidarity and support of anti-corruption advocates from other religious traditions and communities.

Several panellists then shared some of their own experiences with corruption in their own cultures. There was broad general agreement that the problem is endemic, that it touches religions themselves, and that it cannot adequately be addressed without recourse to the shared moral values of the great traditions.

The Chairs then addressed the following **question to panellists**. A summary of their responses follows:

At previous international gatherings on corruption, an informal international network was created to begin to seek ways for the world's religious communities to address the problem. Today we've brought together persons from a wide variety of religious traditions, several of whom also represent key international inter-religious organisations.

If the existing inter-religious network (INFOC) could be significantly expanded, what would you like to see it do? Is there a role for such a network in assisting Transparency International and other groups in the global address to corruption? Can such a network be a resource to persons struggling against corruption within their own religious traditions? Can religions work together in this effort as they have in the Jubilee 2000 campaign?

Panellists strongly agreed that an inter-religious effort could help to catalyse efforts within individual religious communities. It was pointed out that the world's religious communities have strong convergence when it comes to answering the individual's question: Who am I? Their shared wisdom on the importance of seeing oneself and every other as a spiritual being is clearly relevant to the issue at hand. Religion, it was noted by several speakers, has enormous power to inspire. It can have a significant influence in this struggle. An inter-religious network can help to catalyse.

In an interesting cautionary note, however, several panellists urged the vigilant separation of church and state.

A number of panellists offered variations on a single persistent theme: the prophetic social-justice voice of religion, it is what needs to be heard now. (A number of members of the audience also echoed this theme.) Charlotte Mwessggye put it best: *"Globalisation really means one global family in which every member needs every other."*

The Chairs then invited **questions and comments** from the audience. Several highlights of this portion of the discussion follow.

There was very strong agreement that the religious theme has been marginalised in the international effort against corruption. Several persons argued that this was the "most urgent", "the best" or "the most important" issue being raised at the conference. One speaker wondered if the religions themselves were not too corrupt to rise to the challenge. Another insisted that no real progress can be made without recourse to the divine. One of the best statements of the day came when a speaker (or perhaps a panellist) opined: *"God plus one person makes a majority."*

There was strong audience support for a key point urged by several panellists: It is critical that there be a fundamental enhancement of the character of human beings. This is an effort in which the world's religious communities must play an active role; education, spiritual grounding, and moral instruction are essential.

As Jyoti Munsiff put it, with strong agreement from panel members, *"We have to distinguish the vital characteristics of religion from the distortions in its name. Religion is not something separate. Â It is your way of living, working, and relating to the world."*

Finally, the Chairs asked panellists for their summary thoughts. Those reflections are summarized in the Main Themes and Main Conclusions sections that follow.

In his concluding remarks, Co-Chair **Jim Kenney** pledged for the group that the effort will continue to further develop an inter-religious network committed to the anti-corruption struggle. He asked panellists and audience members to look at the web site www.infoc.org that was created after the inter-religious panel at The Hague. By mid-November, that web site will be updated with materials generated at this conference.

Main Themes Covered

1. There exists a serious spiritual vacuum in the current global anti-corruption effort.
2. Religion and religious communities have been marginalised in anti-corruption work and the religions themselves have contributed to that problem by their failure to emphasise corruption as a critical moral issue.
3. Corruption within each of the world's great religious communities is itself a serious problem and a dimension of the larger crisis.
4. The spirit of religious pluralism can add a great deal to an inter-religious efforts to combat corruption.
5. Issues of gender balance and the empowerment of women are essential to all anti-corruption efforts, particularly those on the part of the world's religious communities.
6. The importance of personal faith and a moral grounding cannot be underestimated. Education is the key and the world's religious communities have a major role to play.

Main Conclusions

1. The religious/spiritual dimension needs to be brought nearer the centre of the work of Transparency International.

2. The further development of a concerted international inter-religious network might offer a way to proceed toward the goal of more deeply integrating the world's religious communities into the global anti-corruption effort. As a next step, an outreach to the world's major inter-religious organisations was proposed. (Note: Five such organisations were represented on the panel.)
3. Religious communities must be encouraged to highlight the issue of corruption in morals/values education and to take up the anti-corruption challenge as a vital part of their efforts for justice.
4. International inter-religious attention to the issue of corruption will create a climate more conducive to the reform efforts within individual traditions and will offer some protection and support to religious reformers.
5. Participants were challenged to translate the concerns here addressed into action in their own lives and communities.