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Fighting fraud on a global scale: International investigators discuss avenues for further cooperation

Over 130 investigators from 40 international agencies, financial institutions and United Nations bodies attended the 15th annual Conference of International Investigators (CII) held in Riva del Garda, Italy on 8-10 October. This year's edition was hosted by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) and focused on the broad theme of delivering justice through international cooperation in fraud and corruption investigations. In a context where investigations are increasingly cross-border, the Conference provided an opportunity for practitioners in international organisations to exchange views and expertise.

The CII is an annual event launched in 1999 as a platform for the investigative offices of international organisations and financial institutions to meet and exchange views on the challenges they face in fighting fraud and corruption. Previous conferences were hosted by the African Development Bank, the World Bank, the EIB and the United Nations.

In his opening remarks, the Director-General of OLAF, Giovanni Kessler, noted that *"in order to cooperate successfully, investigators need to know each other well. Gatherings such as the Conference of International Investigators create excellent conditions for us to sustain mutual trust and to further develop the right tools to communicate and share information in a timely and efficient manner. In an ever more globalised world, the only success in anti-fraud investigations can come through international cooperation between all the institutions gathered here today."*

Leonard McCarthy, Integrity Vice-President of the World Bank Group talked about the growing global threats such as economic crime, organised crime and corruption. He also referred to possible solutions to better counter these: *"Our structures must rise to the challenges. Our guard must always be on, that is why we have to work together to ensure the integrity of our activities."*

The Franz-Hermann Brüner Memorial Lecture honours the contribution made by the former Director-General of OLAF to the global fight against fraud and to developing the CII network. The lecture was given by Francine Gross from the FBI's Economic Crime Unit. She underlined the ever-evolving threat of money laundering and the need for greater engagement with foreign law enforcement partners to better address this threat in complex financial fraud investigations.

During the Conference, participants shared views on: how to proficiently analyse incoming information of potential investigative interest; gathering evidence and the subsequent admissibility of such evidence in Court; the protection of the rights of persons concerned; organising efficient joint investigations and on the swift recovery of funds.

In her closing remarks Petra Kneuer, Director of OLAF Investigations and Chair of the conference stressed: *"International cooperation is the only effective solution to counter fraud across borders. Let us continue to work together, to share our experiences and learn from each other."*

OLAF

The mission of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) is threefold: it protects the financial interests of the European Union by investigating fraud, corruption and any other illegal activities; it detects and investigates serious matters relating to the discharge of professional duties by members and staff of the EU institutions and bodies that could result in disciplinary or criminal proceedings; and it supports the EU institutions, in particular the European Commission, in the development and implementation of anti-fraud legislation and policies.

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