

Attorney General John D. Ashcroft's Remarks at the **Second Global Forum on Fighting Corruption**

The Hague, Netherlands, May 31, 2001

Introduction

Your Majesty, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of the United States, I would like to express my government's great appreciation to Minister Korthais, his colleagues within the Government of the Netherlands, and all the members of the Organizing Committee, for all your hard work in putting together this **Forum**. You undertook a Herculean task, and you have succeeded wonderfully.

Increased Interest in **Global Forum**

Two years ago, when the United States hosted the First **Global Forum** in Washington, more than 50 ministers and several hundred other representatives from over 90 countries participated. We considered that to be a significant achievement, but **Global Forum II** has attracted more than double the number of ministers and several times the number of experts, with representatives from more than 120 countries.

New International Understanding and Candor about **Corruption**

These extraordinary numbers are directly attributed to the excellent organizational work of our Dutch hosts. I believe, however, that the presence here of so many high-ranking officials from around the world also reflects the remarkable emergence in the last few years of an international willingness to acknowledge the existence of serious **corruption** within one's own country. There is a consensus that the time is ripe for collective international action against a problem shared by all nations of the world.

Corruption is no longer seen as an accepted cost of doing business; it is no longer tolerated as an unavoidable aspect of government. It is now widely recognized that the consequences of **corruption** can be devastating: devastating to economies, devastating to the poor, devastating to the legitimacy and stability of government and devastating to the moral fabric of society.

What makes this new understanding all the more remarkable is that it is accomplished by a new