

Remarks by Deputy Secretary Justin G. Muzinich The Partnership to Combat Human Rights Abuse and Corruption

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Thank you all for being here. It's great to be with you today. We are excited to host this event to bring together Treasury and other government officials, civil society, and financial institutions to discuss ways that we partner to combat human rights abuse and corruption around the globe.

When government officials abuse their positions for their own financial gain, they undermine the rule of law, take from their own people, and perpetuate violent conflict. Too often, we see corrupt officials commit terrible violence as part of their campaign to cling to power and to the spoils of their activity.

Treasury has demonstrated its resolve to identify and hold accountable human rights abusers, facilitators of human trafficking, and corrupt actors who undermine peace, stability and the rule of law.

Today is an opportunity for all of us who are aligned in this fight to better understand one another's authorities, capabilities, and priorities in combatting human rights abuse and corruption.

We all have important roles to play.

First, I'd like address NGOs and the private sector.

NGOs have an invaluable level of detail and expertise of the goings on within a country based upon their focused and direct, on-the-ground experience. NGOs are extremely helpful in enhancing Treasury's historical and situational awareness.

We look to you to be our eyes on the ground both to track individual crimes and abuses and, more broadly, to understand when whole governments bear responsibility. In South Sudan, for example, we have closely followed the government's repeated use of extra-judicial killings and human rights abuse to silence political dissent, maintain the political status quo, and stoke ethnic divisions that have simmered since South Sudan's formation. For that reason, today, we

are designating two cabinet-ranking officials in the South Sudanese Government for their role in inhibiting political unification, expanding the conflict, and profiting from South Sudan's war economy. NGOs have provided documented findings and brought international attention to South Sudan, which helped support today's designations.

Separately, financial institutions and the private sector have the ability to identify and act against illicit activity, amplifying the effect of our actions. When Treasury takes action, the private sector immediately responds. By blocking funds or rejecting transactions, you take away the financial fluidity of malign actors.

Additionally, the private sector can help Treasury identify new areas of increased risk, as well as the trends, means and methods illicit actors use to abuse the financial system.

As an example, FinCEN is using information provided by financial institutions through Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs) to proactively identify new trends in human smuggling and human trafficking.

Let me now take a minute to highlight Treasury's work to combat human rights abuse and corruption around the globe.

Treasury has imposed direct consequences through sanctions on over 700 individuals and entities with links to human rights abuses and corruption around the world, including in South Sudan, the DRC, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Mexico, Syria, Iran, Cambodia, Burma, China, and Russia.

We have issued numerous advisories through FinCEN providing detailed information about the typologies of malign activity that we see. These advisories expose illicit networks and provide red flags to financial institutions and other interested parties who are tracking bad actors.

We consistently work with foreign governments, the financial sector, and business communities to identify and financially isolate our targets.

It's important to remember that Treasury actions don't just block assets or prevent illicit flows, they cause corrupt officials and those who facilitate illicit activity significant reputational damage. This can result in dismissal from formal commercial or official positions, and trigger the initiation of investigations or legal proceedings.

It is this combination of direct action and the threat of additional actions that pressures these malign actors to change their behavior.

To conclude, today you will hear Treasury employees expand on our various financial tools and authorities, as well as the type of information and evidence that supports these efforts. You will also hear from NGOs and financial institutions about ways to share information about known and suspected illicit activity.

Combatting corruption and human rights abuse is in the best interest of the business community, the U.S., and humanity. You are all key partners on the front lines of these critical issues

I know it will be a mutually beneficial day, and I look forward to our work together as part of this effort.