



# The Collective Action conferences and regional forums

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# The Collective Action conferences and regional forums

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Since 2014, the Collective Action conferences, organised by the Basel Institute on Governance, have provided a dedicated platform for shaping the global business integrity agenda. Over the past decade, they have evolved from discussing Collective Action as a concept to sharing good practices for its implementation and increasing the evidence base for the real-life impact Collective Action can have. The conferences have brought together leaders from the private sector, government, civil society and international organisations to exchange insights, forge partnerships and promote the adoption of Collective Action as a tool for tackling corruption.

**A** defining characteristic of these conferences is their tangible impact. Beyond high-level discussions, they have served as catalysts for action, influencing policy developments, strengthening the international anti-corruption community and leading to the creation and expansion of Collective Action initiatives worldwide. The Basel Institute's role has been critical, not only in convening stakeholders but in ensuring long-term engagement and knowledge dissemination.

*“Over the years, the Basel Institute on Governance has played a key role in promoting Collective Action as an effective approach to tackle corruption, including by hosting the annual International Collective Action Conference, and the B20 Collective Action Hub, two crucial initiatives that foster knowledge-sharing and a collaborative approach.”*

*It has been a true honor for the UN Global Compact to work in close partnership with the Basel Institute toward strengthening ethical business practices worldwide.”*

**Cristina Ritter**, Head of Anticorruption and Governance,  
United Nations Global Compact

## **Collective Action Conference 2014: laying the foundations for global cooperation**

The first International Collective Action Conference, held on 26–27 June 2014 in Basel, set out to position Collective Action as a practical approach to corruption prevention. At the time, corporate anti-corruption efforts were largely confined to individual compliance programmes, and the concept of collaboration as a business integrity strategy was still relatively new. The discussions focused on:

- The role of Collective Action within the G20/B20 anti-corruption agenda
- Best practices for public-private collaboration
- The need for stronger engagement between business and law enforcement

Bringing together 150 experts from all sectors, the conference provided a first-of-its-kind opportunity to discuss how Collective Action could support companies in resisting bribery and extortion.

The conference was widely recognised for its quality and networking opportunities, reinforcing the Basel Institute’s convening power. However, participants also highlighted areas for improvement, particularly the need for more practical, action-oriented guidance rather than purely academic knowledge products. This insight helped shape future conferences, ensuring a greater emphasis on real-world case studies and implementation strategies.

A key impact of the 2014 conference was its influence on international anti-corruption policy development. Following the event, the UN Global Compact invited the Basel Institute to contribute to its 2015 “Practical Guide for Collective Action Against Corruption”,

demonstrating how the conference helped establish the Basel Institute as a global leader in Collective Action expertise.

## Collective Action Conference 2016: moving from concepts to evidence-based practice

Held on 20–21 October 2016, the second Collective Action Conference built on the foundations of 2014 by shifting the focus from conceptual discussions to empirical evidence. With nearly 200 participants, this edition placed a stronger emphasis on documenting the effectiveness of Collective Action and identifying the factors that contribute to successful implementation.

The conference featured a call for papers, inviting practitioners and academics to submit research assessing the impact of Collective Action initiatives. The resulting contributions provided an empirical basis for discussions, reinforcing the importance of data-driven approaches. Key discussions focused on:

- The role of trust in anti-corruption Collective Action
- How to measure effectiveness and outcomes
- Lessons from Collective Action initiatives in Asia and Latin America
- Private sector and law enforcement cooperation



2nd International Anti-Corruption Collective Action Conference, Basel, Switzerland 2016.

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The conference was a resounding success, propelling the mainstreaming of Collective Action. It demonstrated that multi-stakeholder initiatives are not just a theoretical concept but are already yielding tangible results in various sectors. This marked a significant shift towards evidence-based decision-making, ensuring that Collective Action efforts are scaled up using proven methodologies.



2nd International Anti-Corruption Collective Action Conference, Basel, Switzerland 2016.

### **Collective Action Conference 2018: institutionalising Collective Action as a business norm**

By 2018, the Basel Institute's third International Collective Action Conference (14–15 November) had evolved into a platform for establishing Collective Action within corporate governance and regulatory frameworks. With over 200 participants from 40 countries, discussions focused on how companies, government and civil society could work together to integrate Collective Action into long-term compliance and risk management strategies.

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This edition introduced a stronger focus on the role of technology, including the use of blockchain and AI in compliance programmes. Sessions also examined how companies could leverage multi-stakeholder partnerships to build more resilient integrity frameworks.

The conference introduced a new format featuring panel discussions, deep-dive breakout sessions and a live demonstration of anti-corruption technology tools. Key topics included:

- The role of blockchain and AI in compliance and risk assessment
- How behavioural ethics can be used to drive Collective Action participation
- Certification in Collective Action: challenges and opportunities



3rd International Anti-Corruption Collective Action Conference, Basel, Switzerland, 2018.

A key indicator of the conference's impact was the broadening of its audience. In addition to representatives from 95 businesses, we saw increased participation from law enforcement agencies, financial institutions and regulatory bodies. This reflected a growing recognition of Collective Action beyond the corporate compliance sector, reinforcing its relevance to public policy and global economic governance.

## Collective Action Conference 2022: a turning point for mainstreaming Collective Action

After a hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 4th International Collective Action Conference took place on 30 June – 1 July 2022, marking a pivotal moment for the mainstreaming of Collective Action.

Following an inspiring keynote address, the conference featured panel discussions, workshops and networking opportunities.

The conference set up interactive workshops to give participants the chance to share experiences and lessons learned. Breakout sessions for the different stakeholder groups typically involved in Collective Action aimed at further carving out the respective stakeholder roles.



4th International Anti-Corruption Collective Action Conference, Basel, Switzerland, 2022.

What value does each stakeholder group bring to the table, and what does it take away? How can different stakeholders scale up their

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engagement and build stronger and lasting relationships? Those were the central questions participants reflected on.

On top of the breakout sessions, and to further increase networking opportunities, the conference showcased for the first time a Collective Action exhibition: during breaks, participants could browse the posters on display and speak to the 19 exhibitors at their booths. These practitioners had the chance to demonstrate their work to a wider audience and discuss their experiences developing and scaling up Collective Action in their specific context.

With over 200 participants, and 49% coming from the private sector, this edition saw a notable increase in engagement from development banks and international financial institutions, demonstrating how Collective Action was becoming an integral part of multilateral development banks' strategies. The conference also provided a space for 57 representatives of Siemens Integrity Partners to exchange insights, reinforcing the importance of corporate-driven initiatives in shaping global business integrity standards.

A key feature of the 2022 edition was also the inclusion of human rights as an emerging topic, highlighting the growing convergence between anti-corruption and broader ESG priorities.

A post-conference survey highlighted that 59% of participants agreed that Collective Action contributes to fairer market conditions.

### **Expanding the outreach: regional Collective Action forums (2023)**

Recognising the need to broaden access to Collective Action knowledge, the Basel Institute shifted its approach in 2023, bringing together local anti-corruption practitioners for two regional forums in Southern Africa and Asia-Pacific. This ensured that Collective Action discussions were tailored to regional contexts.

The Southern Africa Forum (31 May 2023, Johannesburg, South Africa) and the Asia-Pacific Forum (25 September 2023, Manila, the Philippines) combined attracted over 120 participants.

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The impact of these forums was significant, as evidenced by the post-event surveys:



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*“The Southern Africa Anti-Corruption Collective Action Forum has had a significant impact on The Ethics Institute’s (TEI) work in the region. By participating in the forum, TEI was able to extend its engagement with regional stakeholders and strengthen its commitment to advancing business integrity. The forum provided a unique platform for TEI to exchange knowledge and best practices with key actors from the private sector, civil society, and government institutions. The collaborative environment of the forum enabled TEI to identify new opportunities for collective action, particularly in terms of fostering partnerships and reinforcing existing anti-corruption efforts. It also allowed TEI to contribute to the development of a regional community of practice, which is essential for ongoing dialogue and shared responsibility in advancing business integrity.”*

**Dr Liezl Groenewald**, CEO of The Ethics Institute (TEI)



Southern Africa Anti-Corruption Collective Action Forum, Johannesburg, South Africa, 2023.

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Asia-Pacific Anti-Corruption Collective Action Forum, Manila, the Philippines, 2023.

## Collective Action Conference 2024: strengthening global and regional networks

Held on 24–25 June 2024, the 5th International Collective Action Conference reaffirmed Collective Action as a core business integrity strategy. With just under 200 participants, this edition showcased strong private sector representation (30% of attendees), demonstrating the increasing interest from businesses towards Collective Action.

The 2024 conference built on the success of new formats at the previous global event. We have organised another Collective Action exhibition and arranged three breakout sessions. These focused on:

- Good governance: leveraging Collective Action and ESG
- Human rights and anti-corruption: Collective Action as a strategy for closer cooperation
- Communicating impact of Collective Action initiatives

The conference was also the occasion to interview experts and Collective Action practitioners from diverse



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backgrounds, expanding its impact beyond in-person discussions. The interviews were recorded and later shared with the wider public.

Survey results confirmed the event's success, with 100% of respondents reporting satisfaction. However, a drop in perceived sustainability of Collective Action initiatives (from 92.3% in 2022 to 78% in 2024) indicated the need for stronger long-term engagement strategies.



A follow-up webinar in September 2024 continued discussions on how to integrate Collective Action into corporate compliance and risk management strategies.



5th International Anti-Corruption Collective Action Conference, Basel, Switzerland, 2024.

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Summary of conference participation in 2024.

### The Basel Institute's lasting impact

Over the years, the five global Collective Action conferences and two regional forums have played a transformational role in embedding Collective Action within global integrity standards. More than just events, these gatherings have served as catalysts for action, strengthening collaboration, advancing best practices, and reinforcing the notion that Collective Action is not just a theoretical concept but a practical and growing movement worldwide.

By providing a dedicated platform for practical knowledge sharing, capacity building and partnership development, the conferences have showcased concrete examples of Collective Action in action. They have allowed practitioners from diverse backgrounds and sectors to exchange experiences, learn from one another and collectively drive forward innovative approaches to tackling corruption.

For many professionals working in Collective Action, these conferences have been a key moment of connection and inspiration. Participants have consistently expressed their excitement at meeting peers from different countries, industries and backgrounds, all united by a shared commitment to business integrity. This sense of community has been further reinforced in recent years through the Collective Action Awards, celebrating achievements in the field and

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reinforcing that Collective Action is not only effective but something to aspire to.

One of the most valuable aspects of these conferences has been the opportunity for in-person engagement. Unlike hybrid or virtual events, face-to-face interactions have been instrumental in forging stronger relationships, deeper trust and long-term collaborations. A clear example comes from the 2022 edition, where informal discussions around the mentoring programme led to a shift from one-on-one support to a more community-based model for capacity building. This new approach was implemented shortly after the event, with quarterly group meetings introduced to foster peer learning on topics of shared interest.

Through moments like these, the conferences have helped shape a growing global community of Collective Action practitioners, supporting not only the launch of new initiatives but also the sustainability and evolution of existing ones. 🌱



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Beyond discussions and presentations, these conferences have fostered real connections and tangible outcomes. Participants have highlighted the lasting impact of the conferences:

*“I liked getting an understanding of what Collective Action is and how it should operate. With this knowledge, I will be able to easily create and participate in Collective Action in my country.”*

**Participant** at the 4th International Anti-Corruption Collective Action Conference in 2022

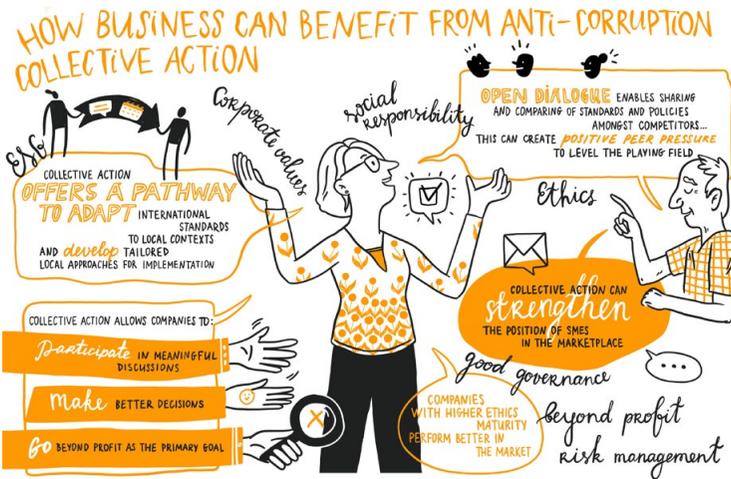
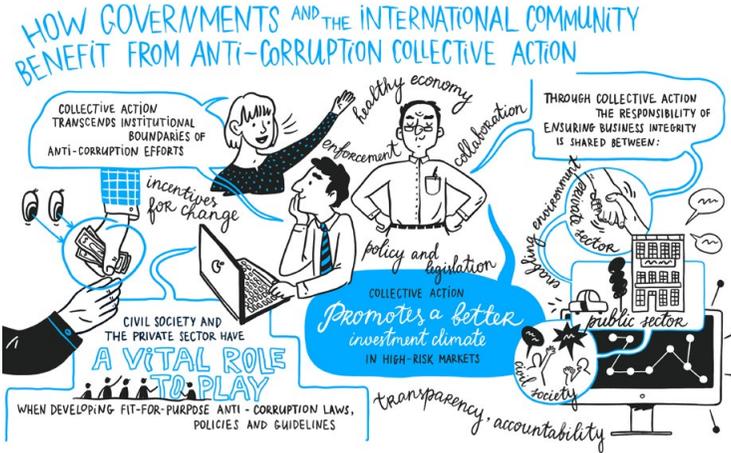
*“Networking at the event enabled me to discover new opportunities for future collaboration.”*

**Participant** at the Southern Africa Anti-Corruption Collective Action Forum in 2023

*“First, Collective Action gives SMEs a voice. It gives them a platform and a network where they can communicate their challenges. And second, being in a collective network gives SMEs access to tools and opportunities.”*

**Anke Struckmeier-Eickenberg**, Head of Compliance, METRO AG and Chair of the Steering Committee of Alliance for Integrity, at the 5th International Anti-Corruption Collective Action Conference in 2024

Graphic recordings summarising some of the panel discussions of the 2022 and 2024 conferences can be found below.



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