

SERIOUS FRAUD OFFICE INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY

Background

In recent times, the SFO's international focus has extended to casework, policy and capacity building. It developed from a need to obtain overseas evidence and build closer strategic links. It began with engagement, particularly with the United States Department of Justice and the Securities and Exchange Commission but also through international and European networks such as Eurojust, European Justice Network, International Association of Prosecutors (IAP), World Bank and the Justice Assistance Network. We have undertaken capacity building since the early 1990s, for example, we sent members of the SFO to Chile to help develop their capability.

The SFO also receives frequent visits from foreign officials, examining ways to improve their effectiveness in investigating and prosecuting serious fraud and corruption. The Director and members of the SFO have met officials from about 75 different jurisdictions to discuss, assist and develop ideas to improve international efforts to address serious fraud and corruption. Many overseas economic crime units have used the SFO model for their counter-fraud and corruption initiatives. The SFO's multi-disciplinary approach is a template for other agencies in the investigation (and prosecution) of fraud and corruption offences.

Strategic Aim

The aim of the SFO's international strategy is to reduce the harm caused by fraud and corruption by proactive intervention to tackle offending in the UK and collaboration with overseas partners to help reduce domestic and foreign offending.

International Strategic Objectives

The SFO will aim to:

1. collaborate internationally at a strategic level.
2. use international intelligence to prevent fraud and corruption.
3. protect the interests of victims and witnesses inside and outside the UK.
4. provide operational assistance to our overseas partners.
5. assist in building the capacity of our priority overseas partners.
6. be a centre of excellence for investigating and prosecuting cross jurisdictional serious fraud and corruption.

Specific Objectives

Collaborate internationally at a strategic level

We will:

- (i) contribute to HMG overseas anti-fraud and anti-corruption strategies for UK corporates and individuals.
- (ii) support and actively engage in global anti-fraud and anti-corruption initiatives.
- (iii) promote overseas awareness of UK asset recovery law and the impact of financial crime on UK victims to ensure greater efficiency and co-operation in recovering illegally obtained assets.
- (iv) work collaboratively with national and international stakeholders in priority countries to share best practice and expertise in proactive interventions through focused investigation, prosecution and civil remedies.

Use international intelligence to prevent fraud and corruption

We will:

- (i) exchange and identify relevant information about emerging international fraud and corruption threats with the business sector and our international partners.
- (ii) identify obstacles to achieving the reduction of harm both within and outside the UK.
- (iii) profile priority countries through analysing and updating new information on our register of countries of interest.

Protect the interests of victims and witnesses inside and outside the UK

We will:

- (i) raise awareness of their interests to overseas partners.
- (ii) recover their assets wherever practical.
- (iii) support witnesses and whistleblowers outside the UK together with the police and FCO.
- (iv) recognise and respect the interests of our overseas law enforcement partners in cross-jurisdictional cases in accordance with the principle of comity among nations.

Provide operational assistance to our overseas partners

We will:

- (i) provide timely legal assistance to our priority partners through our International Assistance team.
- (ii) use our powers proactively to help overseas partners restrain and recover unlawfully obtained assets.
- (iii) maximise the efficient use of domestic resources by determining, at the earliest stage, the appropriate UK law enforcement agency to assist the overseas counterpart.

Build the capacity of our priority overseas partners

We will:

- (i) work with domestic partners as appropriate to design and deliver training to develop the skills and competencies required for overseas financial investigators and prosecutors.
- (ii) encourage visits, shadowing and mentoring of overseas colleagues to the SFO.
- (iii) where appropriate attach SFO experts to overseas enforcement agencies.
- (iv) maintain and enhance our relationships with those jurisdictions with whom we regularly collaborate in operational work while developing our links with countries which require our assistance.

Be a centre of excellence for investigating and prosecuting cross-jurisdictional fraud and corruption

We will fulfil this by:

- (i) meeting the objectives outlined throughout this strategy.

The Future

There has been a shift from a reactive to a proactive approach to our casework, policy development and capacity building in the international arena. Building upon our previous work, we aim to utilise intelligence, relationships with countries and recognise that countries requiring help, particularly in the area of capacity building, will evolve over time.

As part of this increased collaborative approach, we expect routinely to engage in joint investigations with the USA and European law enforcement. We also expect increased interest in our efforts to combat bribery and fraud in public bodies from Eastern Europe and the European Union.

The SFO will work collaboratively with its domestic law enforcement partners to maximise its efforts in an increasingly challenging financial climate. We are mindful that collaboration with domestic colleagues will ensure a more efficient use and/or distribution of resources which will avoid duplication in areas where the expertise should rightly come from the AGO, CPS, police or other relevant authorities.