

A global convention on financial transparency

This is the transcript of video remarks from Tax Justice Network's chief executive, Alex Cobham, on the release of the Paradise Papers, 5 November 2017: <https://youtu.be/0lbxHMslQU0>.



We're here, again, seeing headlines all around the world about a major leak.

Headlines that show tax abuses, corruption and other forms of crime in country, after country, after country; and it's time we took the global action necessary to stop the problems underlying this. Not deal with individual criminality, but deal with the systemic nature of this problem. A problem that is not just about one law firm in a handful of jurisdictions; a problem

that's about major banks, major accounting firms, major multinationals, major law firms operating globally, and taking advantage of the failure to align national regulation and national taxation, to recognise that globalisation has taken us to a different place and created these global problems.

What we're calling for at the Tax Justice Network is for policy makers to come together globally, at the United Nations in a context where lower income and higher income countries have an equal voice in order to reach the global agreement that would eliminate these problems once and for all – and that means pursuing the policy platform we've put together: the ABC of tax transparency.

- **A** for the automatic exchange of tax information between jurisdictions: something that's begun happening, but really excluding most lower income countries and in which some of the biggest secrecy jurisdictions, like the USA, simply are not playing their part;
- **B** for beneficial ownership transparency: we need public registers in every country of the warm blooded human beings who own and control companies, trusts and foundations, to eliminate the anonymous transactions that are so often at the heart of tax abuses and a whole set of other crime and corruption; and
- **C** for country by country reporting by multinationals: we need that information in the public domain, showing on a country by country basis where multinationals have their economic activity and where they're declaring their profits and paying their taxes, so that we can hold them to account for the divergences that result from their profit shifting behaviour and make sure that jurisdictions that drive that like Luxembourg, or the Cayman Islands, or the Netherlands are also held to account and are being forced to stop the abusive practices that make it possible.

Global action, now, finally, to deal with this global systemic problem.

Otherwise, we'll be here again, in six months or two years seeing another leak, and saying: "Oh no, that's too bad, why does this keep happening?"

It keeps happening because we are not taking global action. And we must do – now.