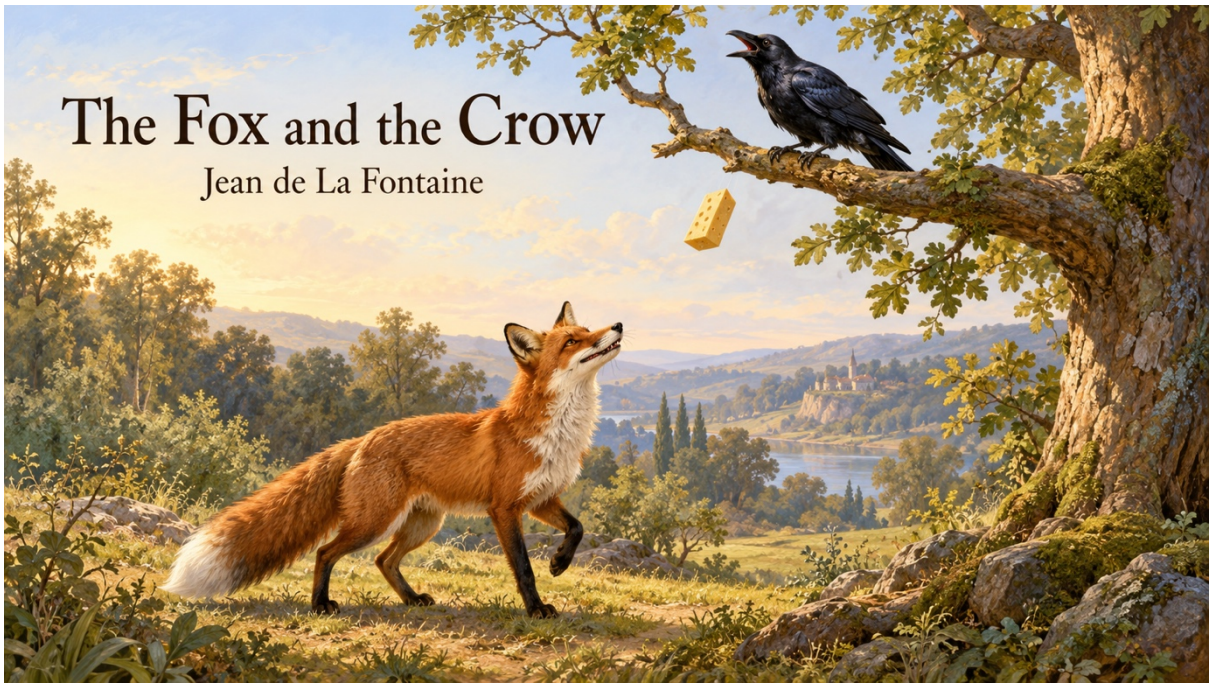


What I am about to present is not simply my story. It is the story of our society and its system of governance. It is also the story of those who act according to their conscience, their beliefs and their values—even when doing so comes at a personal cost. It can also be your story, that in two ways.

To ask yourself :

• How would you respond if a case like mine were brought to your attention?
• What would you do if you witnessed misconduct by senior management? Would you challenge it, even at the risk of losing your job?

Slide 2 The fox and the crow



In the later years of my professional life, my story became inextricably intertwined with that of Nestlé. And, perhaps much to the company's discomfort, my experience has now become part of its history.

My story with Nestlé began like the fable The Fox and the Crow.

You may remember the story. The crow is perched on a branch, holding a piece of cheese in its beak. The fox, wanting the cheese, begins to flatter him: How magnificent you are! With such beauty, your voice must surely be just as wonderful!

Flattered, the crow opens its beak to sing. The cheese falls, and the fox rushes to pick it up.

That's how, in 1998, when I was acting director of Food Safety at the WHO, Nestlé's director of quality approached me.

I can still hear him saying to me:

"You're a remarkable communicator."

"You're recognised all over the world."

"You're a visionary."

"We need someone like you."

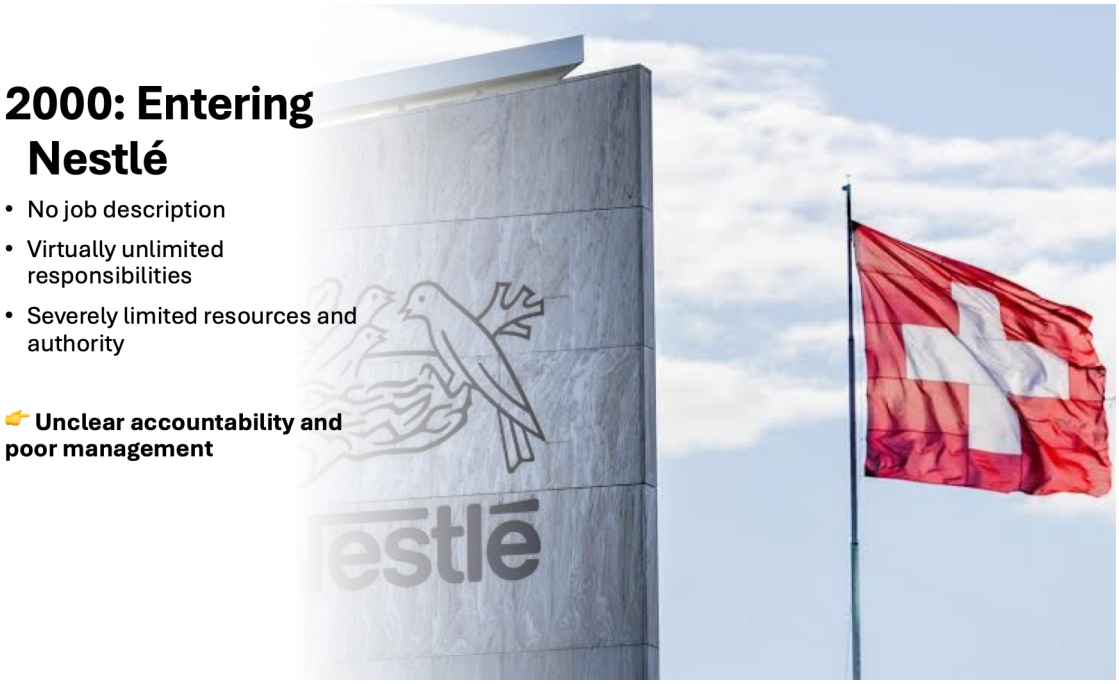
For nearly two years, Nestlé tried to recruit me, promising me, so to speak, the moon and the stars.

And finally, in 2000, I ended up accepting.

I became the head of food safety for the entire group.

I thought I was taking an important position in the company. I did not yet realise how little food safety counted, or that this decision would shape the next twenty-six years of my life and beyond.

Slide 3 Entering Nestlé



When I joined Nestlé in July 2000, the world had just experienced several major food safety crises: mad cow disease, the dioxin crisis and a rise in certain foodborne illnesses. Food safety was emerging as a major global concern.

My position was new. Yet I had no job description. Despite my repeated requests throughout my ten years at Nestlé, I never received one. My role, responsibilities and authority remained ambiguous.

Years later, in court, the human resources director quite bluntly explained that, at Nestlé, executives at a certain level did not have job description; they were simply expected to define their own responsibilities and duties.

This may seem like an administrative detail.

It isn't.

When responsibilities are not clearly defined, everyone's sense of accountability can begin to fade.

When no one knows exactly who is responsible for what, as soon as something goes wrong, everyone can say:

“That wasn’t my responsibility.”

And when a particularly difficult problem needs to be handled, it becomes very easy to pass it on to someone else.

Without clearly defined responsibilities, expectations, or boundaries regarding my role within a company as vast as Nestlé, my work became never-ending. Some days, I was accused of infringing on others’ responsibilities; other days, I became the scapegoat for their failures.

Time and again, difficult problems ended up on my desk.

But when I identified serious shortcomings requiring decisive action or additional resources, I often lacked both the authority and the means to address them.

So, I found myself in a strange situation: I had immense responsibility for food safety, but insufficient authority and resources to fulfil it.

Responsibility without authority. This is one of the most dangerous combinations that can exist within an organisation.

Slide 4 The Failures Beneath the Surface



At first glance, Nestlé seemed like the perfect company on paper. I remember that, at his retirement party, a colleague said, “I love this company. Nestlé is a good company.” Then, after a moment’s thought, he added, “on paper.”

Slide 5 The Failures Beneath the Surface



Gradually, however, I discovered all kinds of problems.

These existed at two levels. At one level, there were operational failures: lapses in factory hygiene, shortcomings in procedures and the implementation of risk management systems, and failures of ethical conduct. These led to violations of food safety standards and negligence in food safety management.

At another level, there were failures related to corporate governance and company culture. These included unethical decision-making; inadequate resources and capacity; gaps in competences; conflicts of interest; procedural and systemic weaknesses; a lack of transparency and accountability; and management through fear, harassment and unfair dismissal. I discovered that asking a question could put your career at risk; objecting to a management decision was not a good idea. I was told that, at Nestlé, “the boss is always right”.

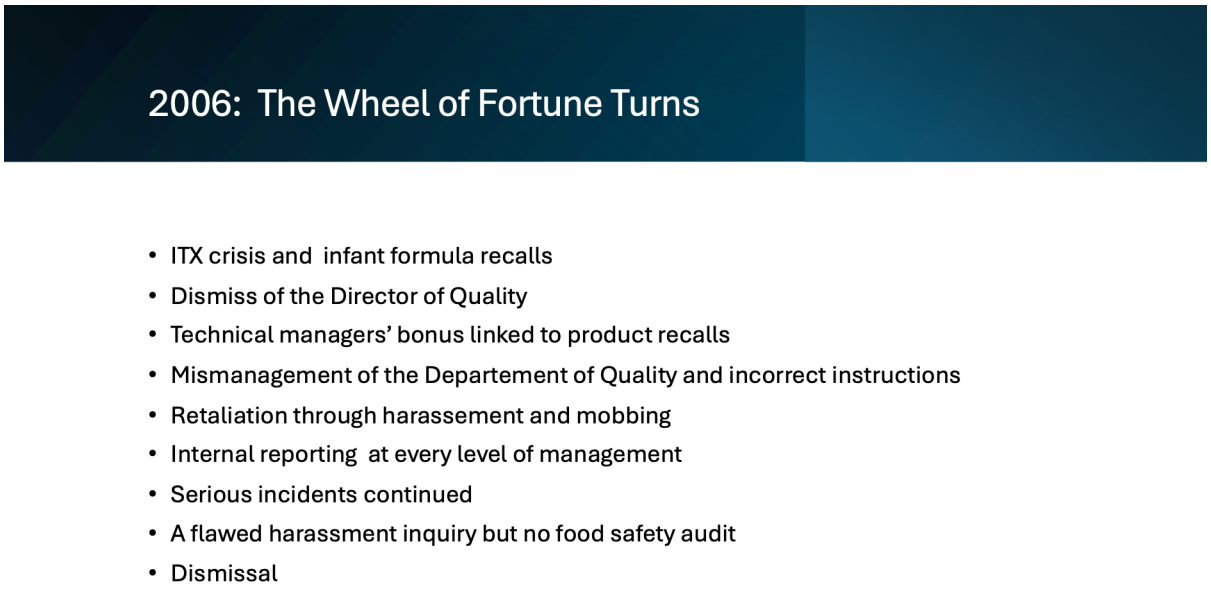
All of these failures relate to leadership character and our system of governance.

Against this backdrop, I had to fulfil what I perceived as my responsibilities. I was constantly on watch to ensure that gaps were addressed and shortcomings corrected. Amongst other things, I reviewed and revised the company’s approach to food safety management, built capacity to tackle emerging food safety issues, assisted in managing

major crises, made recommendations on research, and devised strategies to do more with fewer resources — all while the company was making profits running into the billions.

Sometimes, as the corporate food safety manager, I had to highlight potential risks or challenge products and practices that I considered unacceptable. Such situations can create antagonism between colleagues, especially in an organisational culture that tolerates, or even facilitates, the deceit, trickery, fear and favoritism / cronyism that I sometimes experienced at Nestlé. This earned me some enemies. Nevertheless, during the first six years—my "honeymoon period"—my hard work, vision and outspokenness were appreciated. My annual performance was consistently rated as exceeding expectations.

Slide 6: The Wheel of Fortune Turns



In September 2005, the tide turned. Nestlé faced a major crisis involving infant formula contaminated with ITX, a chemical that had migrated from the printing ink used on the packaging. Disagreements arose with the Italian authorities over the recall of the products. Nestlé's Director of Quality decided to recall all the affected products from European markets. This decision costed him his post and he was dismissed. A few weeks later, the Chairman of the Board- who was also the CEO of Nestlé-, Mr Peter Brabeck, requested that technical managers' bonuses be linked to product recalls—a policy that would penalise managers who voluntarily recalled products.

This major policy change may have contributed to the difficulties I would later encounter. Those who advocated transparency and defended ethical practices could be seen as a

threat not only to company profits but also to managers' personal bonuses. This policy may also have discouraged product testing; thereby creating an incentive to avoid detecting contamination.

A new Director of Quality was subsequently appointed. To my misfortune, he was someone with whom I had previously had serious disagreements regarding food safety.

Years earlier, I had discovered that he allowed baby cookies posing a choking hazard to remain on the market despite numerous consumer complaints. In France, parents had recounted terrifying experiences in which their babies had choked, but the new director had completely ignored them.

He had also allowed infant formula to be marketed in violation of Chinese standards, despite my earlier warnings. This also led to a major crisis.

These are just a few examples.

Then that person became my superior.

From that point on, the functioning of the department deteriorated dramatically. The new Director established a climate of fear.

Communications broke down.

Weekly meetings were cancelled.

Staff roles and responsibilities became increasingly unclear.

Many experts and experienced staff were moved out of the department. Young and less qualified employees were brought in.

At the same time, in retaliation for the positions I had taken on food safety and my efforts to promote transparency and compliance, the Director of Quality subjected me to psychological harassment:

My projects were gradually stripped away.

My team was dismantled.

My instructions were blocked.

Information was withheld from me.

My professional opinions were denigrated.

I was isolated.

Constantly humiliated.

Discredited.

These and many other measures were intended to undermine my authority and prevent me from fulfiling my responsibilities effectively.

He even took actions likely to undermine food safety management, exposing me to blame or creating conditions in which I could make errors.

Gradually, the department responsible for guiding food safety at one of the world's largest food companies began to lose its expertise and cohesion.

We were supposed to steer food safety efforts within a massive international organisation and step in when major crises arose. Yet, our department was being drained of its soul and lifeblood.

The situation was ripe for failure.

As Head of Food Safety, I could not remain silent.

In accordance with company policy, I raised my concerns at all levels of management: the Director General of Operations; the Director General of Technology; the Director of Human Resources; the Director of Finance; the Compliance Manager; the Corporate Risk Manager; and the Director of Corporate Governance. All to no avail.

Despite my repeated warnings, senior management failed to address my concerns and act on my complaints. The consequences I had feared began to materialise. During this period, a series of serious food safety incidents occurred, some of which, in my view, could have been prevented. In France, children continued to choke on Nestlé products. In the United States, pets were intoxicated after consuming pet food adulterated with melamine. In China and South Africa, again Nestlé products were found to contain melamine. In the United States, people became ill after consuming cookie dough contaminated with the killing bacteria E. coli O157.

After three years of psychological harassment, instead of having my allegations examined, I was offered an inconsequential position at the Nestlé Research Centre—a role that the Director of Operations described in court as a "thankless task" (un travail ingrat). I therefore reiterated my proposal for an audit of food safety management as a condition for considering a transfer. Although our department had never undergone such an audit during my ten years at Nestlé, my request was rejected.

Instead, after more than three years of harassment and internal reporting, a scandalously flawed, unprofessional and biased inquiry was conducted into my allegations of harassment.

I—the very person who had experienced the harassment and reported mismanagement—was never interviewed.

The investigators did not know what my allegations were and did not even note that my name had already been removed from the company's organisational chart.

The witnesses I had suggested were disregarded; only witnesses selected by Nestlé management were interviewed. In the end, four people who had never met me signed a report concluding that there had been no harassment.

You don't need to be a lawyer.

You don't need to be an HR specialist.

All it takes is a little common sense.

How can you investigate what happened to someone without ever asking that person for their side of the story?

To me, the investigation itself was a farce and yet another expression of disdain. Let us not forget that they took the initiative to recruit me and up to the date harassment started, my performance was consistently "above the expectations".

Slide 7 A Prison Without Walls



Overall, the harassment at Nestlé lasted four years, and it continued long after I left. It's hard to explain psychological harassment and mobbing to someone who's never experienced it.

You keep going to work.

You still have an office.

You still have a title.

On paper, you still belong to the organisation and bear responsibility for food safety.

But little by little, everything that gives meaning to your professional life is taken away from you.

People stop talking to you.

Information no longer reaches you.

Your responsibilities disappear.

Your professional judgement is ridiculed.

Your work goes down the drain.

You're excluded.

You become invisible.

No one officially declares that you no longer exist.

And yet, professionally, you are gradually being erased.

ECS Speech When Conscience Meets Corporate Power

The isolation and exclusion from the professional world felt like a prison—a vast prison without walls, but a prison nonetheless. No one speaks to you, no one sees you, and no one hears you. The daily humiliations felt like being lashed over and over with a whip. At times, the suffering was so intense that death seemed preferable to continuing to endure the harassment.

Finally, I turned to AXA, my legal protection insurance company. AXA reviewed my situation and concluded that I had been a victim of harassment.

Their lawyer asked to meet with Nestlé's CEO.

He received no response.

Shortly after, I was fired—abruptly and amid general indifference.

And, unfortunately, I reached the same conclusion as La Fontaine in the fable of the Wolf and the Lamb: "the argument of the strongest is always the best".

Slide 8 A succession of controversies



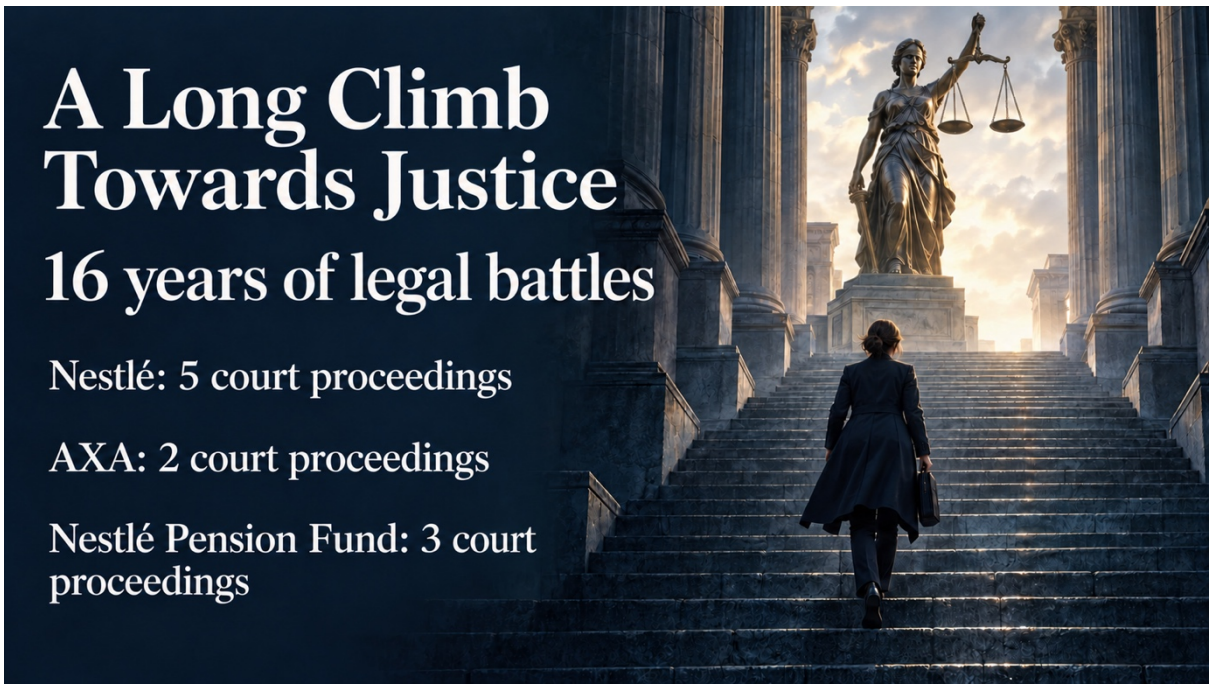
I left Nestlé, but the problems remained. The company's refusal to examine and reform its culture and practices meant that the mismanagement continued. In the years that followed, Nestlé became embroiled in a series of serious controversies:

- children continued to choke on Nestlé products;
- a deadly outbreak of E. coli O157 associated with frozen pizzas killed 2 children and made another 53 seriously ill.
- alleged lead contamination involving Maggi noodles in India;

- illegal treatment of mineral water and alleged fraud;
- contamination of an infant-formula with cereulide toxin and the handling of the resulting crisis;
- double standards in the nutritional quality of baby foods marketed in lower-income countries;
- and continuing allegations of harassement of employees and retaliation against whistleblowers.

These are only the cases that became public, alongside further allegations concerning environmental harm, human rights violations and undue influence on public policy.

Slide 9 A long climb towards justice



When I was dismissed, Nestlé offered me CHF 300,000, on condition that I take no legal action and with no admission of liability on its part. I was also warned that I was legally bound not to disclose any information.

I refused the money.

In 2010, I embarked on a new, long and difficult battle. It was, first and foremost, a battle for public health—for food safety and against the psychological harassment of staff—but it was also a battle for my dignity and credibility and, above all, for justice to be served.

Justice matters. It matters to victims, of course, but not only to them. When the judicial system functions as it should, it also serves a broader purpose: to prevent wrongdoing

from recurring and to deter others from engaging in similar misconduct. Justice is therefore not simply about repairing the past; it is also about protecting the future.

People sometimes ask me:

- Why did you turn down the money?
- Why didn't you just move on?

Because this situation was never just about my person or my job.

If it had simply been a personal conflict with a superior, perhaps I would have left. But I was convinced that unresolved issues remained regarding food safety and governance.

And I wanted them to be addressed.

I wanted the organisation to learn from them.

I wanted corrective measures to be taken.

And I wanted to prevent what had happened to me from ever happening to someone else.

So, I chose justice.

I knew what I was giving up, but I had no idea what that decision would cost me.

In 2011, I went to court.

I found myself fighting against Nestlé. But not just Nestlé.

Also, against AXA, my legal protection insurance provider, which had turned its back on me and was pressuring me to accept a settlement in exchange for my silence.

Then against Nestlé's pension fund.

Standing against me were multinational corporations, top executives, lawyers, and considerable financial resources.

On my side, there was just me, supported by a lawyer and a psychiatrist.

I had lost my job.

My health had seriously deteriorated.

My professional career was practically over.

And despite all that, I still had to prove what had happened.

The legal proceedings dragged on for years. Nestlé employed a series of delaying tactics to prolong the proceedings.

Procedural issues.

Appeals.

Delays.

Settlement offers.

Time and again, I was encouraged to accept a seven-figure out-of-court settlement on condition that I remain silent.

Meanwhile, the legal proceedings multiplied. When the Swiss disability insurance agency recognised the impact on my health of what I had endured, Nestlé's pension fund contested the decision in court.

I had to prove that I had not lied: that the intellectual activities I was still trying to pursue—writing, teaching and attempting, in one way or another, to stay professionally active and overcome severe depression—did not mean I was capable of resuming normal professional activity. Nor had they generated any income for me.

In 2012, I finally won my first battle. AXA was forced to cover part of the legal costs of my lawsuit against Nestlé. This created an extraordinary situation: AXA was funding a lawsuit against Nestlé even though its own CEO sat on Nestlé's board of directors and served on its audit committee. Yet, Nestlé's shareholders were not informed of this.

In 2015, I won another legal battle, this time against the Nestlé Pension Fund, concerning the recognition of the health problems resulting from the harassment I had endured. Yet, Nestlé's pension fund still refused to pay me my full benefits. Hence, for many years, I found myself deprived even of a minimum income. My battle with the pension fund continues to this day.

Overall, during the sixteen years that followed, I was involved in at least ten court proceedings: five against Nestlé, two against AXA and three against the Nestlé pension fund, which may have possibly acted in coordination with Nestlé.

Throughout this legal battle, I felt that the gravity and broader implications of the case had never been fully recognised. The case was essentially treated as a labour dispute. From my perspective, however, it went far beyond a professional disagreement. It involved a series of actions that I considered extremely serious, most of which, in my view, raised issues well beyond labour law—even if Swiss law did not necessarily classify them as criminal offences.

Slide 10: A bittersweet victory



In 2019, the first court recognised that I had been harassed by the Director of Quality. But, despite of this, I lost my case against Nestlé because the court found that the senior management had taken sufficient corrective measures: the proposed demotion—the "thankless task" I had been offered—and the flawed, unprofessional investigation into my harassment.

I found this decision so unfair, and the bias so obvious, that I felt compelled to challenge it before the higher cantonal court, without even considering my chances of success. I could not let such an arbitrary and unfair decision stand without challenging it.

Then I waited. Again and again.

A year may not seem particularly long in the context of the judicial system, but for victims living in uncertainty and anguish, a year seems endless.

On 7 January 2020, the Higher Cantonal Court reached a very different conclusion. It stated that Nestlé's senior management had taken no adequate measures to protect me or stop the harassment, apart from a belated and biased investigation three and a half years after the harassment began—an investigation the Court found to be a "sham". This was despite the seriousness of the situation and my numerous internal complaints from 2006 to 2010.

The Court also stated that members of Nestlé's management were complicit and had never sought to uncover the dysfunction within the department. They had thus contributed to violations of the Nestlé Group's internal regulations and Swiss labour law.

The Court noted the “underhand nature of the harassment” and the “serious moral suffering” I had endured because of the length and intensity of the bullying and harassment. It explicitly concluded that the actions of Nestlé’s management had destroyed me professionally and socially and ended my career, which it described as brilliant.

It took another three years of legal battle before Nestlé was finally ordered to pay a substantial portion of my lost salary and a symbolic sum of one Swiss franc for my suffering and the loss of my career.

This may be seen as a victory over the management of a giant multinational corporation and a global leader in the food industry. But for me, it remains bittersweet. My goal was never to win a harassment lawsuit. My goal was to improve food safety management and protect consumers as well as employees.

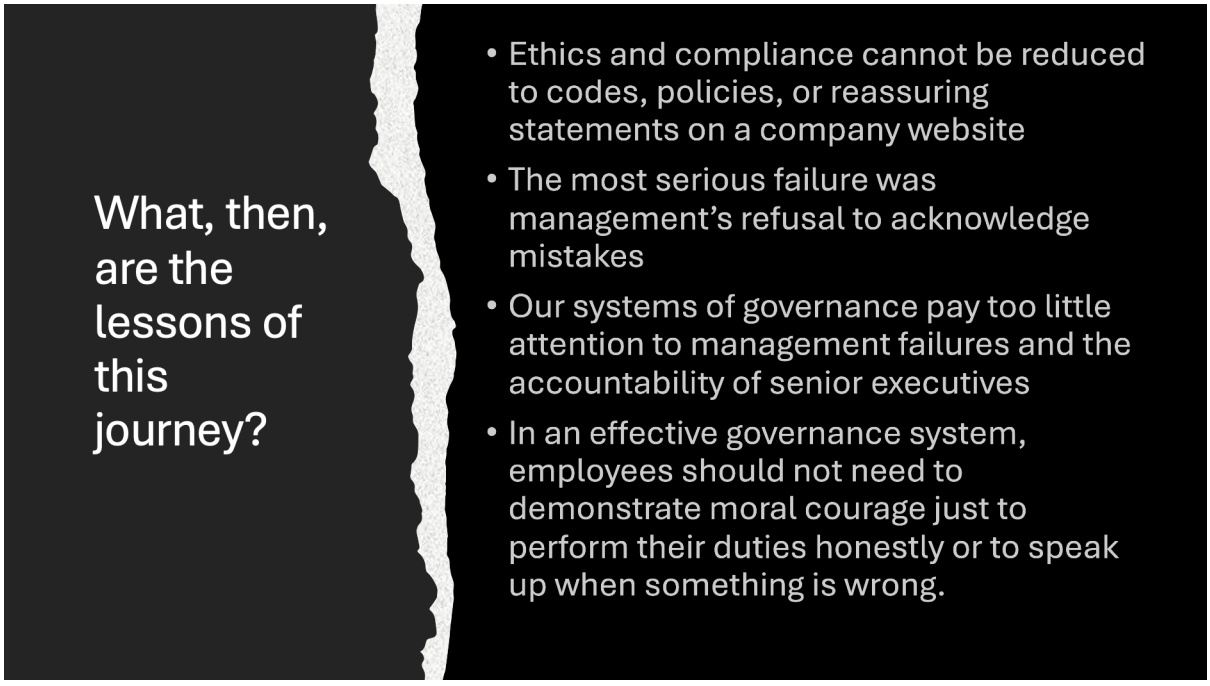
The price of that victory was extraordinarily high. This story has consumed 26 years of my life. I have spent much of that time in torment and anguish. I lost my career and precious years that I could have shared with my family and friends. My son’s life was also profoundly affected. I suffered considerable financial losses: I was never fully reimbursed for many of the expenses I incurred, and approximately 40 percent of the compensation paid by Nestlé was withheld in taxes.

But the greatest loss cannot be measured in money. Through this experience, I lost much of my faith in our authorities, our institutions, professional organisations and their members, the media and the judicial system. I still ask myself: why should doing one’s job properly require so many sacrifices?

Slide 11 What This Journey Reveals About Governance



Slide 12 What, then, are the lessons of this journey?



What, then, are the lessons of this journey?

Firstly, ethics and compliance cannot be reduced to codes, policies, training programmes or reassuring statements on a company website. Their true value is tested when an employee raises a troubling concern, when business interests conflict with public safety and when executives must question their own decisions.

ECS Speech When Conscience Meets Corporate Power

Secondly, in my experience, Nestlé management committed multiple violations in terms of professional conduct, food safety management, the treatment of employees and whistleblowers, and the handling of internal reports. However, the most serious failure was management's refusal to acknowledge mistakes or examine its own practices, even when the court of justice condemned them.

Thirdly, our systems of governance pay too little attention to governance failures and the accountability of senior executives. When a food safety incident occurs, a product recall brings the immediate crisis to a close without examining the conditions that allowed it to happen in the first place, such as corporate culture, organisational structure, resources and the competence, integrity, intellectual honesty and professional conscience of those in charge.

Slide 13



Lastly, my experience has exposed weaknesses that extend beyond one company.

In different aspects of my experience, I see parallels with other corporate failures:

The United Kingdom's Post Office scandal, where those reporting problems were blamed while the underlying system failures went inadequately investigated.

The BP Deepwater Horizon disaster in the Gulf of Mexico, where warning signs went unheeded.

The Costa Concordia tragedy, where a captain entrusted with the safety of passengers acted recklessly and failed to fulfil his responsibilities.

The Volkswagen emissions scandal, where fraud and deception undermined the safeguards intended to protect the public.

The UBS case involving whistleblower Stéphanie Gibaud, who was subjected to psychological harassment and subsequently dismissed.

And, in a different respect, the recent attack aboard Flydubai flight FZ1073 from Dubai to Tel Aviv on 30 September 2026, where the co-pilot attacked the captain and obstructed his ability to carry out his duties.

The sectors, facts and consequences differ. Nor does every case display every failure. Yet particular aspects of each remind me of my own experience: concerns dismissed, information concealed, authority misused, professional duties obstructed and responsibility dispersed.

For me, the common thread is the failure to confront problems within the organisation—and, too often, the tendency to discredit those who bring them to light. People who raise concerns can lose their careers, while those responsible for the underlying failures may escape accountability.

Then, when disaster strikes, everyone asks, “How could this have happened?”

When organisations refuse to examine their failures and learn from them, they leave the conditions for further harm in place. That is a fundamental failure of governance.

Slide 14



Employees who raise concerns may face years of hardship in seeking justice, while those responsible for the underlying problems may face no consequences. Conflicts of interest can go unchallenged, and executives, boards, regulators and political leaders may all shirk responsibility for addressing systemic failures.

“Whistleblowing serves no purpose if those entrusted with governance, risk management, compliance, safety, and employee protection fail to act with integrity and fulfil their responsibilities—and, above all, if no lessons are learned and no improvements are made to the governance system.”

In a well-functioning governance system, employees should not need to demonstrate exceptional moral courage just to perform their duties honestly or to speak up when something is wrong.

Slide 15 26 Years in Torment

I



I have never been in prison. Yet the 26 years since I joined Nestlé have felt like a prison to me. I have never known peace of mind. Even today, I am still fighting the Nestlé pension fund in court and trying to repair the harm this journey has done to my family and my life.