

REMARKS BY AMBASSADOR JOYCE A. BARR
LAUNCH OF THE ZERO TOLERANCE FOR CORRUPTION CAMPAIGN
MONDAY, 27 MARCH 2006, 10:00
SAFARI COURT HOTEL

Your Excellency, President Hifikepunye Pohamba;
Honorable Ministers and Deputy Ministers;
Director of the Anti-Corruption Commission, Mr. Noa;
Deputy Director of the Anti-Corruption Commission, Advocate van der Merwe;
Executive Director of the Namibia Institute for Democracy, Mr. Keulder;
Members of the Diplomatic Corps;
Colleagues from the U.S. Mission;
Ladies and Gentlemen

I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak at this morning's launch of the Zero Tolerance for Corruption Campaign.

Mr. President, thank you for making the time to attend this launch. Your presence here today demonstrates your commitment to fighting corruption and your belief in and support of transparency and accountability in the public and private sectors in Namibia.

Mr. President, while Namibia has a good track record on corruption, you believe it could be better. You support the principle of zero tolerance for any corruption and the United States stands beside you and the national effort to make Namibia corruption-free.

The U.S. Government through USAID has supported Namibia's efforts to control corruption for several years. For example:

- We have provided funding to the Namibian Association of Local Authorities Officers to strengthen integrity systems in municipalities;
- Resources have been provided to the Namibian Institute for Democracy and community-based organizations to raise awareness of the consequences and the costs of corruption; and
- We have also given assistance to the Ombudsman's office to strengthen capacity to handle cases of malfeasance and corruption.

The U.S. Government will continue supporting Namibia's efforts to combat corruption. USAID recently provided approx. \$2.7 million Namibian dollars to the Namibian Institute for Democracy's Zero Tolerance for Corruption Campaign being officially launched today. I congratulate the Institute for leading this campaign and wish them success as they accelerate and expand this effort.

I would also like to acknowledge the presence of the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of the Anti-Corruption Commission and wish them well as they get the Commission up and running. Our funding for the Zero Tolerance Campaign can be used to help strengthen the capacity of the Commission. We look forward to working with you.

The U.S. Government's support for the Zero Tolerance for Corruption Campaign comes within the context of our long-term, on-going support to Namibia to strengthen democracy and governance. Through the Namibian Institute for Democracy (NID), USAID is providing financial support to the recently established Namibian Democracy Support Center to meet specific needs of Parliament and civil society.

Your Excellency, congratulations on your first year as President of the Republic of Namibia. The U.S. has been deeply impressed with how you have continued to build the strong economic, social, and political legacy Namibia created at Independence. Your focus on the challenges of poverty alleviation and the need to improve public services, especially in the rural areas, has captured our attention. Your determination to tackle fiscal mismanagement, waste, and corruption at all levels and in all sectors is a critical part of meeting these challenges. To paraphrase one of the points you made during your address at the 16th Independence Day celebration, corruption is an enemy of the Namibian people and a threat against Namibia's democracy, peace, security, and stability. We look forward to working with you and your administration in the year to come.

This year will also see a new partnership between Namibia and the United States. Namibia has become eligible for funding from the Millennium Challenge Account or the MCA, and has the possibility of competing for significant resources to help reduce poverty through economic growth. I know that your Government is working hard with partners in the private sector and in civil society to develop a proposal for MCA assistance. The importance we attach to combating corruption is illustrated by the fact that all countries receiving MCA assistance must meet the anti-corruption benchmark each year.

Mr. President, I want to assure you and others that we will also continue our long-term support of community-based natural resource management and basic education programs through USAID. This support is in addition to any MCA assistance Namibia may receive.

Finally, because you are taking such a strong stand against corruption, Mr. President, civil society-led initiatives like the Zero Tolerance for Corruption Campaign have the political backing to be effective. The time has come and the climate is right to stop the corrosive effects of corruption on this promising country.

Congratulations to everyone working on this important and historic effort.

Thank you.