

**ANTI-CORRUPTION CONFERENCE  
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**THEME:  
"FIGHTING CORRUPTION AND SAFEGUARDING  
INTEGRITY AMONG JUSTICE AND SECURITY  
OFFICIALS"**

**SESSION ON ETHICS IN PUBLIC SECTOR  
THE UGANDAN EXPERIENCE**

**TO BE PRESENTED BY:  
HON. MIRIA R-K- MATEMBE  
MINISTER FOR ETHICS AND INTEGRITY  
KAMPALA - UGANDA**

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

I feel honoured to be part of this important international conference dealing with the theme of **Corruption** which all modern democracies should critically and energetically fight against. I thank the organisers for including Uganda on the agenda. I wish to assure the distinguished participants that Uganda will take seriously the proceedings and recommendations from this conference.

### 1.1 SCOPE

Given the time limit, I shall concentrate on the importance, benefits and problems of the newly created **ethics directorate** in Uganda. I shall then attempt to show what is being done and planned on up-holding ethical standards among public officials, emphasise on internal controls and accountability, fair and impartial personnel systems, promotion of ethics training and counselling and policy on financial disclosures by public officials. I shall conclude with several challenges which should be courageously met if corruption is to go.

## 2.0 BACKGROUND

How to behave toward oneself and toward other individuals is a matter of making choices: whether to be friendly or unfriendly; whether to tell the truth or lies; whether to be generous or greedy; whether to study in order to pass an exam or to spend valuable study time watching television and cheat to pass it. These, and all other questions about how people act toward themselves and one another are dealt with in a field of study called ethics. At times ethics is morality. One word is derived from the Greek ethos, meaning 'CHARACTER', and the other from the Latin mores, meaning 'CUSTOM'. However, Ethics is primarily concerned with attempting to define what is good for the individual and for society.

It also tries to establish the nature of obligations, or duties, that people owe themselves and each other.<sup>1</sup>

In the case of public affairs, Ethics focus on the right and wrong behaviour of public officials by being fair and just in meeting society's expectation. Ethical standards and values call for discipline, integrity, dedication, loyalty, impartiality, professionalism, accountability, financial credibility, etc. Despite the existence of the Code of Ethics, (Standing Orders) unethical behaviour continues to plague our Public Services in form of corruption (bribery, fraud, embezzlement, etc.); abuse of office and power; violation of human rights; immorality in public and private life; wars and armed conflicts; poverty and underdevelopment; absence of adequate policies and absence of enforcement of codes of conduct/ethics.

Public officials become members of the Public Service from a voluntary choice of employment and not compulsion. By becoming a Public official an individual assumes privileges and obligations essential in conduct of public affairs. The Code of Ethics, therefore, sets standards of behaviour or conduct required of the leaders managing public affairs.

### **3.0 SITUATION IN UGANDA**

Uganda emerged from a situation of war 13 years ago. The present government therefore inherited a decayed system where the past governments had eroded ethics and codes of conduct which provided fertile ground for corruption to thrive unabated. The economy was weak and disintegrated, the civil service was oversized and corrupt and there was wide spread lack of confidence in the Police and Judiciary. The system was characterised by state inspired corruption, destroyed social fabric, destroyed infrastructure, destroyed economic systems, institutional breakdown all leading to moral decadence. There were extra judicial

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpted from Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia. Copyright c 1994, 1995 Compton's New media, Inc.

killings, extortion and looting of property from the people by the army; confiscation of private property by government; looting and stealing national assets by politicians and public officials, embezzlement of public funds and bribery.

Since the National Resistance government came to power it embarked on the process of restoring law and order, rebuilding the economy and restoring the infrastructure. Extra judicial killings by the army, extortion and looting property from the people by the army, confiscation of private property by government, looting and stealing national assets are now no more.

However, Government is still faced with the dilemmas of embezzlement and bribery involving public servants, political leaders and sometimes connivance between the two. The weakness to fight these is mainly due to lack of, human resources (expertise), lack of financial resources and the appropriate enforcement of the leadership code.

#### **4.0 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK**

Since 1986 the Government and people of Uganda have felt a great need to establish new public agencies or organs to fight corruption and abuse of office, protect and promote human rights and to defend strict observance of justice within the judiciary. These new organs include: **the Inspectorate of Government, the Uganda Human Rights Commission** and the newly organised **Judicial Service Commission**. All these three organs have become constitutional in the new Constitution of 1995.

**A Leadership Code of Conduct** for public officials up to a certain level, forms a chapter of our new Constitution. Other institutions include Directorate of Public Prosecution (DPP), Criminal Investigations

Directorate (CID), Auditor General all of which are key actors in enforcing mechanisms of accountability.

Last year (1998) the President of Uganda, in a Cabinet re-alignment, created a Directorate of Ethics and Integrity, headed by a Cabinet Minister, to monitor and address Corruption Cases in the public sector and promote ethics education of the citizens. I shall concentrate my remarks on this new Directorate which I am honoured to politically supervise.

The creation of this directorate has sent a very clear message to the public that Government is serious and committed to control and gradually decrease and eliminate corruption in the public sector.

The initial vision of this directorate is evolving and will go on being improved as we meet with more groups both within and outside the country. The vision stands as follows: **'To create an integrity system that will minimise opportunities for corruption and make corruption highly risky and to instil a sense of integrity in Ugandans with a view of creating a corruption free society where all resources utilisation is transparent and well accounted for'**. This **vision** is to be realised through establishing ethical standards and values that can guide the behaviour of public officials and citizens.

Our directorate has launched the open policy of involving all stakeholders in defining the mandate and vision of the ethics agency so that what comes out is a sum-total of people's aspirations and priorities which should form the programme of the directorate. This approach has created great interest in the public on the work being initiated by the new directorate. A new directorate allows for new strategies and approaches which the traditional anti-corruption agencies may not have tried before. It is strategically placed to link Government to the public, the legislature

and cause greater collaboration among Ministries and other public organs. It is expected to facilitate greater accessibility of the public with complaints. The presence of its leader in the weekly meetings of the Cabinet: the highest organ of the executive, helps to keep the issue of corruption on the top agenda of government. As the Directorate grows and gets more skilled professional staff, its impact both on the control of corruption and the education of the citizens on ethical conduct will also increase.

My humble appeal to all representatives of modern democracies here present is to seriously think of creating new but dynamic ethics agencies for anti-corruption and ethics education programmes in order to bring new attitudes and styles of work that can enhance better performance of Government.

**The functions and activities of the directorate as envisaged include:**

- ◆ Formulating policy, strategies and framework to fight corruption
- ◆ Follow up and ensuring enforcement and implementation of recommendations made by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and the Auditor General.
- ◆ Mainstreaming integrity in all Anti-Corruption Laws and Policies.
- ◆ Advising on appropriate short, medium and long term interventions.
- ◆ Conducting public awareness campaigns.
- ◆ Introducing courses on ethics and integrity in the school curriculum and other community training programmes in form of civic education.
- ◆ Building solidarity, collaboration and networking with the entire civil society: religious and cultural institutions, **mass media** and NGOs.

## **5.0 EFFECTIVE ETHICS SYSTEMS AND PROGRAMMES**

**5.1** It is within the above functions and in collaboration with all relevant organs that the Directorate of Ethics and Integrity promotes **standards of Ethical conduct for public officials**. As already stated the Constitution has a **Leadership Code of Conduct** for leaders and public officials. The responsibility for implementing this Code is given to the Inspectorate of Government. Our Directorate is interested in seeing this Code fully known by public officials in addition to fully knowing the specific Codes of Conduct for the Police, Army, Prisons service and Intelligence Organisations and the civil service.

**5.2** **The Internal Controls and Accountability** of public sector is in the hands of the Auditor-General, a constitutional office, whose report goes to Parliament and is scrutinised by the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament. Our Directorate again is vital in ensuring the implementation of the recommendations of the Public Accounts Committee, and continuous follow-up of the cases within the Government System.

**5.3** **Fair and Impartial Personnel Systems** are part of a transparent public service system. This is under the Public Service Commission. Our Directorate can provide the education and much needed checks against nepotism, discrimination, regionalism, clientilism and abuse of ethnicity. These injustices have grown deep into the hearts and minds of many public officials. It is behind the culture of 'eating with the big man', whereby when a relative or a person from a particular area is in a high position, many persons associated with him or her feel they should share public resources because of that connection.

**5.4 Ethics Training and Counselling** is one of the main functions of our Directorate. It is through training, civic education and public awareness and debates that we hope to sensitise the public to resist giving bribes to any public official; to get the courage to report any soliciting of bribes from any person; to value and protect public property and to form pressure groups against corruption. Already Uganda has a Transparency International group at the national level. Such groups are encouraged at all levels of local governments.

This training needs an empowering methodology which can effectively reach the people. It must utilise popular means of education such as drama, song, poems, art and practical demonstrations. It is a training which should fit each group of people: children, youths, the illiterate, the rural and urban, educated and illiterate.

#### **5.5 Effective coordination of the Anti-corruption strategy**

The directorate has a responsibility to coordinate and ensure progress of the government strategy to fight corruption. The strategy has several key actors all involved in handling corruption cases and it is for this reason that a strong monitoring mechanism is required, which the directorate ought to provide.

### **6.0 PROBLEMS**

**6.1** Any process which should involve all the people is never easy. People are the biggest force in the anti-corruption struggle. To become so, they need an empowering continuous civic education. They should themselves dislike corruption and stand for integrity. They should learn to utilise fully the constitutional, legal and cultural remedies to undermine corruption. They should cease 'praising' the corrupt or seeking for their favours. They should learn to reject corrupt candidates for elections. To succeed in this takes years but when it is done, the new culture of integrity



Corruption being everywhere, the problem becomes that of finding where to begin. The people of Uganda have expressed their views on where to begin, that is with the Police Force and the Judiciary. There is need of finding a methodology that can penetrate corruption and address its very roots especially in these two organs of the State.

**6.2** The economic-cum-political corruption is the most difficult to uproot. Often the economically corrupt public officials may have the support of politically corrupt leaders and vice versa. This is where the public agencies of ethics have to promote genuine democracy, based on clean leadership, as the answer to the eradication of corruption.

The more corruption is exposed, the more aggressive and closed in, many public officials and their institutions become. They try to put up barricades to prevent anyone from entering their 'corrupt' offices or undertake serious investigations. The challenge here is to have and promote fearless and courageous cadres who are prepared to expose all and to dismantle the hidden caves of corruption. Not many people have this heroism.

## **7.0 CHALLENGES**

The challenges our new Directorate of Ethics and Integrity is meeting may not be peculiar to Uganda. They may have an important message to other nations which are contemplating creating similar organs. Our short experience has revealed the following challenges:

### **7.1. DEFINING THE MANDATE AND VISION WITH THE PEOPLE**

The challenge is time-consuming but when done well gives a firm basis for such a Directorate, organ or agency. Ethics and integrity should be owned by the people, the sovereign people, in whose name all power and authority emanate.

## **7.2 CHOOSING A METHODOLOGY OR METHODOLOGIES FOR THE WORK OF ETHICS ORGAN**

Since no one agency can fight corruption single-handedly, the methodology needed should be able to promote co-operation, collaboration with all organs of Government and the general public. The strategy therefore should be on effective co-ordination and collaboration.

This strategy however is not easy to embrace by other agencies especially those with constitutional mandates and independence. The challenge is to bring together all agencies that are key in the fight against corruption to work towards a common goal.

## **7.3 NEED FOR A LONG-TERM VISION**

Changing behaviour is a very difficult thing. Wrong practices can only be removed by new and powerful values. These should also emanate from the public if they are to be lasting. This is where counselling is vital. Once a nation defines its vision, as we have been doing for the last two years to come up with a national vision for the year 2025, then programme can easily fit into such vision. People want a vision they can identify with; one which can become a reality. Ethics has the challenge to contribute to such a vision which can sustain the hopes and dreams of the orphans, the women, the persons with disabilities, the minorities, the refugees and the poor in society.

## **7.4 EXEMPLARY LEADERSHIP**

However much a directorate of ethics may do, if the values it stands for are not lived and promoted by some leaders at all levels of society, its work is undermined and compromised. An ethics directorate has the difficult work of continually challenging the leaders to be the example of integrity and incorruptibility.

## **7.5 TARGETTING THE CHILDREN AND THE YOUTH IN PARTICULAR**

To completely reverse the present situation of corruption, the Directorate of Ethics should target children and the youths right from the family and throughout their education. These can more easily absorb new values of justice and integrity. Parents teachers, religious leaders and societal leaders have an important part to play. How to devise such a programme which can reach to families and to every group is the challenge.

## **8.0 CONSTRAINTS**

The Directorate with all its ambitious programme is constrained by lack of capacity in terms of both human and financial resources. Lack of modern technology to facilitate information systems, appropriate investigations and surveillance, prosecution and judgement coupled with lack of skilled personnel is a big constraint to our newly established Directorate.

## **9.0 CONCLUSION**

In the limited time given, I have tried to share on the importance and benefits of our Directorate. I have shown how it is trying to collaborate with all similar organs of Government and the public. I have singled out some of the problems we are experiencing and concluded with some of the challenges we are facing. I am optimistic that with the support of Government and the People of Uganda, my Directorate will be able to make a real difference to the rampant corruption in the country. It is important that we continue to share internationally, continentally and regionally on this important theme in order to enrich each other in this work. Corruption cannot defeat the minds and determination of so many people all over the world who are united to uproot it. The contribution of this International Conference on this theme is therefore most appreciated.