

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**Keynote Address by His Excellency Dr. Hage Geingob,
President of the Republic of Namibia, at the Official
Opening of the 6TH Annual General Meeting and
Conference of the Heads of Anti-Corruption Agencies in
Commonwealth Africa,**

May 31, 2016

Strand Hotel

Swakopmund

Check against delivery

**Director of Ceremonies,
Honourable Ministers,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Honourable Cleophas Mutjavikua,
Governor of the Erongo Region and
other governors present,
Honourable Councillors of Regional
and Local Authorities,
Her Worship the Mayor of
Swakopmund,
His Worship the Mayor of Walvis Bay,
Excellencies, Members of the
Diplomatic Corps,**

**Dr Roger Koranteng, Advisor on
Governance and Anti-Corruption,
Commonwealth Secretariat,
Director-General and Deputy Director-
General of the Anti-Corruption
Commission (ACC),
Distinguished Heads of Anti-
Corruption Agencies,
Regional Police commissioner;
Invited Guests,
Members of the Media,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

**Please allow me to welcome our
international delegates to the Land of**

the Brave. Poverty and all forms of corruption are however not welcome in Namibia!

The suspicion of corruption, real or perceived has eroded the global citizens' trust in the ability of their governments to deliver essential services. Governments have a duty to demonstrate political commitment to promote transparency and be accountable.

We believe in governance in partnership. The people are the

ultimate sovereigns, who have ceded their rights to govern to elected officials. As leaders, we need to apply the formula, Transparency + Accountability = Trust.

The people want and deserve dignified lives. Our people want employment, decent housing, quality education and good healthcare. These are reasonable, basic expectations which require us to act with a sense of urgency to remove all barriers which hamper the effective realization of the people's wishes.

It is the understanding of this urgent need to deliver, which compelled my declaration of war against poverty. It is the understanding of the urgent need to ensure inclusivity that prompted the construct of the Namibian House where no Namibian should be left out.

The vision of the Harambee Prosperity Plan and its urgent need for effective implementation has been wholeheartedly embraced by Namibians in the spirit of "Harambee".

This Kiswahili word, which means "*Pulling together in the same direction*", has become a rallying call for unity and an encouragement for all Namibians to work efficiently and effectively towards shared prosperity.

As President of the Republic of Namibia, I believe that transparency starts at the top. To set the tone, I engaged PriceWaterHouseCoopers, at my personal cost, to do a review of my assets and prepare my income and assets for public declaration. My wife

and I did not publically declare our assets to impress anyone or to be considered as the first in Africa to have undertaken such an exercise. We publically declared our assets because we are deeply convinced that accountability and transparency are important for shared, inclusive and sustained economic development, which in turn is required for poverty eradication. We have incorporated income and asset declarations as an annual target in the Harambee Prosperity Plan for all Ministers and all senior civil servants. I am pleased to

note that all Ministers have submitted their declarations of income and assets which will be assessed for potential conflicts of interest.

I am grateful that all Ministers understand and accept that these asset declarations may result in increased media scrutiny but ultimately, are in the interest of transparency and addressing real or perceived conflicts of interest. These, and other efforts, have been noticed and Namibia's ranking on the

Transparency International index rose with ten points in one calendar year.

As we work towards a public sector which is accountable and transparent, we call for a private sector with the same standards of accountability. As any good dancer knows, it takes two to dance kizomba. For an act of corruption to take place, there is always a corruptor and a corruptee, each as corrupt as the other.

I plead with the private sector to report corruption and not participate in it.

In the same vein, the 2016 Transparency International report noted that there are developed countries that are perceived to be relatively corruption free, yet their firms engage and promote corrupt practices in developing countries. Similarly, there are Western countries which are anti corruption warriors yet the proceeds of corruption from

developing countries easily find a way into their financial systems.

We need to debunk the hypocrisy and double-speak that paints corruption as a largely developing world, public sector issue. Corruption is a manifestation of human greed which needs to be rooted out and exposed at all levels.

While all corruption is destructive, it is important for us to distinguish whether corruption is endemic or not.

We aspire for a corruption free society but we are mindful that in any society, there will always be those who seek dishonest means of self-enrichment. We will however enforce zero tolerance for corruption as isolated corruption, which is not dealt with, can quickly gain momentum and become systemic corruption. This type of systemic corruption requires weak leadership, weak institutions and a weak democratic culture.

Systemic corruption increases the daily cost of living and negatively

impacts on service delivery in many ways, including misplaced spending priorities and inflated costs. Another way of looking at it, is when quality input goods in the construction process get substituted for lower quality goods which shortens the life span of infrastructure, and therefore inflates maintenance costs. Such corrupt practices also have negative macroeconomic consequences. One such well documented consequence is capital flight, that in turn, puts strain on the balance of payment positions of our countries. It is estimated that

billions of US dollars, that could have been used to develop our countries, leaves the continent due to corrupt practices.

As a nation which is a Child of International Solidarity, the theme for this year's conference which is, "Partner Exchanges and Peer-to-Peer Engagements in the Fight Against Corruption" is one which resonates positively within our psyches. The fact that the Conference intends to bring together all family members of the Commonwealth in Africa, to pull in

one direction against corruption, in the spirit of Harambee, is welcome. Also a cursory glance at the topics in the program speaks to the necessity of promoting transparency and accountability in the delivery of goods and services in public institutions.

Namibia's anti-corruption efforts were set in motion upon our attainment of independence in 1990. Structures that would ensure that transparency would be one of the cornerstones of our governance architecture were put in place. The Ad Hoc Cabinet Committee

on the Promotion of Ethics and combating of corruption was set up on March 5, 1997, to oversee a national consultative process with all sectors of society to define corruption and develop home-grown mechanisms to tackle it.

This process was followed by a National Consultative Conference in October 1998, where several recommendations were formulated, one being that a national anti-corruption unit or agency be established. These initiatives

eventually led to the passing of the Anti-Corruption Act of 2003, that established the Anti-Corruption Commission.

I would like to thank Mr. Paulus Noa and Ms. Erna Van der Merwe, in their capacities as Director General and Deputy Director General, as well as the entire staff of the Anti-Corruption Commission, for their dedication in carrying out this difficult task. Every time I read critique about your agency, I am pleased. A well-liked, popular anti corruption agency would

make me unhappy as the very nature of your mandate should automatically disqualify you from winning any popularity contests. I would like to encourage you to continue to aggressively and fearlessly pursue the corrupt and build a reputable Agency.

We have created the enabling environment to fight corruption by ensuring an independent judiciary, media that is regarded as the freest in Africa and a basket of regional, continental and international legal

instruments on the prevention and fight against corruption.

In addition to the Anti-Corruption Act, there is also the Prevention of Organized Crime Act which provides for measures to combat organized crimes and to seize assets and proceeds of crime.

The other preventative law against corruption is the Financial Intelligence Act which provides for the combating of money laundering.

This year we will further strengthen the accountability framework by the enactment of a whistle blower's protection Act. Other initiatives aimed at promoting accountability and transparency include:

- Introduction of a computerized procurement system before the end of the year, to minimize human intervention in the procurement process;**
- Alignment of SOE and Local Government procurement policies to the new public procurement act;**
and

- **Deployment of e-governance to key ministries;**

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the fact that corruption benefits a few at the expense of the majority. It is therefore imperative that we tackle it head on. As Ahmed Chalabi once said, *“The fight against corruption is not bound to high-profile arrests or high profile investigations. The fight against corruption is successful if you prevent corruption in the first place.”*

I therefore urge all participants to actively participate and make constructive inputs in order to ensure that our Anti-Corruption Agencies don't become bogged down in endless investigations, but that we become so effective that we prevent all forms of corruption from taking place in the first place.

With these remarks, it is now my honour to declare the 6th Annual General Meeting and Conference of Heads of Anti-Corruption Agencies, in

**Commonwealth Africa, officially
opened.**

I thank you.