

COMMEMORATION OF THE 2018 INTERNATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION DAY



Political leaders, government officials, business community, legal bodies and lobby groups to join forces against corruption

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10 December 2018 - The Public Service Commission, in partnership with the United Nations and the University of South Africa (UNISA), commemorated the 2018 International Anti-Corruption Day on Monday in Pretoria, under the theme “**United against Corruption: Working together to enhance an environment where the rule of law prevails**”.

International Anti-Corruption Day (IACD) is commemorated annually on 09 December in recognition of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, which was signed at the High-level Political Signing Conference in Merida, Mexico, from 9-11 December 2003, and is the only legally binding universal anti-corruption instrument. This year’s anniversary is a milestone, as it marks 15 years since the Convention was adopted by the General Assembly. In her opening remarks, UNODC’s Representative for Southern Africa, Ms. Zhuldyz Akisheva, stated “I’m proud to highlight that South Africa was one of the first signatories to the Convention, which it signed on 9 Dec 2003 and ratified on 22 Nov 2004”.

On International Anti-corruption day, UNODC Executive Director, Yury Fedotov, stated that “thanks to the Convention, nearly every country in the world now has laws in place making corruption a crime. The international community has recognized that combatting corruption is essential for preventing and addressing root causes of conflict and violent

extremism, building peace and protecting human rights”. In this timeframe, it has achieved near-universal status, with 186 States Parties.

Corruption is a serious crime that can undermine social and economic development in all societies. No country, region or community is immune. Therefore, this day provided an opportunity for political leaders, governments, business, legal bodies and lobby groups to join forces against corruption, as it is one of the biggest impediments to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



The programme of the event focused on the issues of the progress in establishing a relevant anti-corruption policy framework in South Africa, e.g.

National Anti-Corruption Strategy, as well as on specific issues around whistleblower protection and illicit financial flows. These issues, if addressed, will enhance the accountability, transparency and integrity of the Government’s efforts to prevent corruption at all levels. At the event, Advisor R.K Sizani, Chairperson of the Public Service Commission, highlighted that the loss of revenue in South Africa due to corruption, might be greater than what the country receives in official development assistance, and therefore urged “everyone to have a zero tolerance against corruption by building a value system which is embedded on ethics and transparency”.

Ms. Bekele-Thomas, UN Resident Coordinator, highlighted Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index and noted that South Africa has dropped from 64th to 71st in the ranking, indicating that perceived corruption levels in the country have increased over the past 24 months, effectively reversing the improvements made over the preceding periods. Ms. Bekele-Thomas noted the difficulties of



estimating the cost of corruption because of the sheer secrecy of the practice, stating “it is worth noting that the Department of Economic Development has estimated that corruption costs the SA gross domestic product (GDP) at least R27 billion annually as well as the loss of 76,000 jobs that would otherwise have been created. As staggering as this figure is, there are suggestions that it could be an underestimation of the real cost of corruption to the economy and in an environment where the creation of jobs is a priority the jobs lost to corruption are critical”.

We also underestimate the cost and impact of corruption because our framing of corruption tends to limit it to activities that entail the illegal transfer or movement of money for personal gain. The reality however is that corruption includes public inefficiencies, wasting of resources and irregular expenditure. In this regard, Ms. Bekele-Thomas stated that we have to pay special attention to the annual figures released by the Auditor General on wasteful and irregular expenditure of the state and in this regard the AG quotes figure of up to R79 Billion of wasteful expenditure. When including these figures, conservative estimates of public sector corruption must well exceed R100 Billion. By all accounts, these figures are staggering and are a material diversion of much needed public resources from schools, clinics and much more.

The ARINSA Community increases the effectiveness of members' efforts, individually and collectively, on a multi-agency basis, in depriving criminals of instrumentalities of crime and illicit profits.

For more information, please visit:

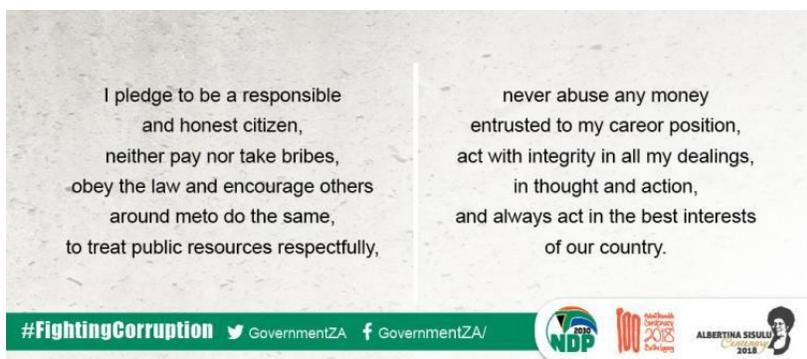
<https://new.arinsa.org/>

In regards to private sector corruption and its impact on development, Ms. Bekele-Thomas stated that “we would be amiss if we did not reflect on illicit financial flows out of the continent and their impact on development financing. Some of the figures quoted in this regard are absolutely staggering: between \$1.2 trillion and \$1.4 trillion has left Africa in illicit financial flows between 1980 and 2009—roughly equal to Africa’s current gross domestic product”. Ms. Bekele-Thomas went on to state that contrary to popular

belief, money stolen by corrupt governments is insignificant compared to the other forms of illicit outflow. The most common way illicit money is moved across borders is through international trade. This is an area of corruption in the continent we have to understand better for us to be able to deal with it, our tax and prosecuting institutions must ensure that they attract and develop the requisite skills to deal with these complex crimes.

Key institutions including the South African Revenue Services (SARS) and the Financial Intelligence Centre have come together to set up a multi-agency, multi-disciplinary team to coordinate efforts aimed at cracking down on illicit financial flows. The National Prosecution Authorities of South Africa is leading the regional cooperation efforts in addressing money laundering, which is called the Asset Recovery Inter-Agency Network of Southern Africa (ARINSA), which now has 16 members across the Region.

Several moving accounts of first-hand testimonies from whistleblowers were shared with the audience. Every example had one thing in common—the need to provide greater protections for whistleblowers. All participants of the event expressed this view and called on the Government to do more to ensure that whistleblowers are protected when they report wrongdoing and misconduct. The Office for Witness Protection National Prosecuting Authority spoke on providing protection for whistle blowers and the role of the Witness Protection Unit.



Corruption is one of the biggest impediments to achieving the SDGs. That is why the United Nations calls for the Global action to address corruption. Hence the slogan of this year

campaign for the commemoration of the International Day Against Corruption is “United Against Corruption for Development, Peace and Security”. Everyone has the power to

stand and fight against corruption and we must work together. UNITED. Tackling corruption is vital to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The event concluded with audience members, including political leaders, government officials, business community representatives, legal bodies and lobby groups being called upon to join forces against corruption, and to recite a pledge to do so, together (see below). The conference also had an exhibit hall to display materials and publications related to corruption. UNODC distributed manuals and tools on an anti-corruption strategy, whistleblower protections and illicit financial flows.



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