

Parliamentarians play essential role in combatting corruption: NA Speaker

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Hon. Abdoulie Bojang, Speaker of the National Assembly, has said parliamentarians play an essential leadership role in combatting corruption throughout the legislative process, and in their oversight and representative functions.

Hon. Speaker Bojang was speaking at a one-day sensitization workshop on the Anti-Corruption Act 2012 organised by African Parliamentarians Network against Corruption (APNAC)-The Gambia Chapter on the theme: "Let each enlighten one."

APNAC was formed in Kampala, Uganda, in February 1999 by African parliamentarians, and since its formation it had been engaging in promoting accountability, and public participation in the processes of government, as the best way to control and fight corruption.

The network recognizes that parliamentarians play an important role in combatting corruption throughout the legislative process, he said.

The aims and objectives of APNAC include, among others, to coordinate, engage and strengthen the capacities of African parliamentarians to fight corruption and promote good governance; advocate for inclusion of anti-corruption measures in government priority programmes, and develop links with oversight committees of parliament and parliamentarians across Africa.

Corruption is undoubtedly one of the greatest constraining factors to economic and social development in the African continent, as it stifles economic growth, Speaker Bojang added.

Corruption is a disease that threatens the hopes of the poor for a better future for themselves and their children, he continued.

It drains finances that might otherwise go to programmes that bring education within reach of poor children, or that offer health care to the ordinary citizens, he continued, adding that corruption diverts funds intended to provide essential services that are critical in the eradication of poverty.

Honourable Cherno Jallow, chairman of APNAC -The Gambia Chapter, said corruption is as old as mankind and its complete eradication is an illusion, but to control and minimize it is a possibility.

Although there are several conventions dealing with corruption and bribery, there is no single globally-accepted definition of corruption.

Therefore, he added, this also contributes to the complexity of the fight against corruption.

The National Assembly Member for Upper Niimi added that it was a long journey, but it was better late than never.

Hon. Cherno Jallow thanked the National Assembly Authority for giving them the courage and support by footing the bill for the workshop.

Mododou A. Sise, assistant Clerk at the National Assembly, who chaired the workshop, said the sensitization workshop was timely and complemented the government's efforts under President Yahya Jammeh.

Gambia: Anti-Corruption Assessment Tool for Parliamentarians - UNDP

As the headline to this opinion column states, we are aware that there is a "tool" produced by the UN to support implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC).

We reproduce below the Forward Statement of the Anti-Corruption Assessment Tool for Parliamentarians by the UNDP and GOPAC- the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption. It states as follows:

Corruption is undeniably one of the most serious impediments to human development. It undermines democracy and the rule of law, leads to violations of human rights, distorts markets, erodes quality of life, and allows organised crime, terrorism, and other threats to human security to flourish.

Corruption hinders efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), by obstructing unfettered public access to social services and diverting resources away from investments in public infrastructure, public institutions and social services.

Although it affects all social classes and all groups, the effects of corruption are most severe for women, the poor, and marginalized sections of the population.

Each year, corruption diverts more than 5 per cent of global gross domestic product (GDP).

Money laundering is the world's third-largest business, worth about US\$500 billion a year.

The tremendous growth in the global dialogue on corruption over the past two decades is a result of greater awareness of these negative consequences.

Fighting corruption is now at the forefront of citizens' demands and is a key topic in national global development discourses, including in consultations on the post-2015 development agenda.

The United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) has achieved near universal ratification, and has created a global momentum in support of the fight against corruption.

UNCAC is the first legally binding global instrument against corruption that provides States parties with a set of standards, measures and rules that they can and must apply in their respective countries.

The UNCAC review processes encourage multi-stakeholder engagement at the national level, but participation of stakeholders such as civil society and parliamentarians is optional.

The Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) recognize that parliamentarians play a critical role in UNCAC implementation.

While it is the executive branches of governments that sign UNCAC, it is countries' parliaments that are responsible for enacting legislation necessary to meet treaty obligations.

Once a national anti-corruption authority is established, it is national parliaments that must monitor the authority and the implementation of anti-corruption laws.

Using their oversight powers, parliaments must be diligent in ensuring that sufficient resources are allocated to ensure adequate implementation of UNCAC.

The Convention includes provisions for member States to report their progress to the international community, and for the international community to share in the monitoring of States' progress.

Parliaments should play a robust role in this reporting and monitoring cycle.

UNDP and GOPAC produced the Anti-Corruption Assessment Tool for Parliamentarians to support their vital role in the UNCAC system.

The tool was jointly and successfully tested in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco and Timor-Leste.

It is specially designed for parliamentarians and focuses on their role in ensuring effective UNCAC implementation.

The above analysis of corruption is just the forward statement of the Anti-Corruption Assessment Tool for Parliamentarians by the UNDP and GOPAC- the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption.

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