

## **Anti-Corruption Youth Forum: *From Voice to Action***

***Address by Mrs R. Domah, Director of Corruption Prevention and Education Division, ICAC***

*August 2011*

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning. On behalf of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, I have the pleasure of welcoming you all at today's function which is a clear indication of youth engagement in the fight against corruption.

Over the past five to six years, we have noted the development of a vibrant enthusiasm among all our stakeholders including the civil society, NGO's, women's associations, public sector and, last but not least, the youth of this country. This coalition of forces translates the deep interest in joining hands together to contain the scourge of corruption.

Corruption has become a major concern in developed and developing countries. It is the battle of the 21<sup>st</sup> century for every country in order to achieve a higher economic development.

Ladies and gentlemen, civil society is key to the fight against corruption. Through their engagement and active participation, they can bring the desired change for a clean and fair society where there is a level playing field for each and every citizen irrespective of their social status. Ordinary citizens can heighten the anti-corruption cause.

Moreover, the younger generation which constitutes about 45% of the population has a crucial role to play in modeling of society where integrity is entrenched. Youth is the greatest assets that any nation can have. Not only are they legitimately regarded as the future leaders, they are potentially and actually the greatest investment for a country's development. The extent of their vitality, responsible conduct, and roles in society is positively correlated with the development of their country.

Ladies and gentlemen, the younger generation in Mauritius has been actively associated with the ICAC in our quest for an enhanced fight against corruption. A publication recalling their precious contribution during the last six years will be shortly launched. It is gratifying to note that, in parallel with the activities of the National Anti-Corruption Youth Working Group, youth

from different spheres - colleges, professionals and artists- have all joined the anti-corruption caravan.

In the formal sector, integrity clubs have been set up in 30 colleges in Mauritius and Rodrigues. This year, for the first time, ICAC has organised an inter-integrity club artistic competition and we intend to consolidate the structure already in place in secondary schools to further commit the students towards anti-corruption initiatives. In this respect, more competitions targeting integrity clubs will be organised and I take this opportunity to invite those secondary schools who have not yet set up integrity clubs at their respective schools to come forward in this endeavour.

In the informal sector, a team of youngsters from the community in the nine districts are bringing the anti-corruption messages closer to their respective regions. In this vein, a fresco competition has been launched in each of the nine districts of Mauritius. The winners will be announced in a few moments.

Furthermore, youth from different professional bodies is also contributing to reinforce a culture of integrity at national level. They have devised and conceived a user-friendly bookmark with a forceful message and will shortly embark, in collaboration of the ICAC on integrity building programmes at the level of the different professional bodies.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am sure there is one question that triggers the audience: Why so many initiatives targeting different segment of our young generation. The answer is simple – Our young generation today will be the future leaders of Mauritius and our aim is to instill a culture of integrity at the workplace and ultimately among the population. Most of you here either have just started work or will, in the very near future, join the world of work. So the move towards consolidating the anti-corruption movement starts now and it starts with you.

The process for a clean and corrupt free Mauritius is well under way. This is reflected by the trust the population through our different stakeholders have in the ICAC. Since 2006 to date, we have received some 6,400 complaints. And for this year, January to August only, we have registered some 1,200 complaints. If this trend continues, we would have received by the end of this year some 1,600 complaints. Arguably, this represents a huge amount of work on our staff.

Cases of corruption are thoroughly investigated and prosecuted. While the flow of prosecutions started in 2006, the number of convictions has increased to 69 with 75 persons convicted. These convictions encompass the various forms of corruption such as conflict of interests, bribery, traffic d'influence, abuse of office and use of threat and violence. Moreover, some 129 cases are awaiting trial at the Intermediate Criminal Court.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you are aware the ICAC has embarked on a vast education and prevention campaign aiming to instill a culture of integrity both at individual and collective levels. Some public bodies are already committed in the implementation of the Public Sector Anti-Corruption Framework as spelt out in the Government Programme 2010-2015 where government has reiterated its stance to curb corruption. The Public Sector Anti-Corruption Framework aims at improving institutional capabilities of public bodies to improve their anti-corruption infrastructure. As at date 12 public institutions have already put in place mechanisms to implement the framework and some 5 institutions have signified their firm intention to embark on this project and are thus seeking the assistance of ICAC in this respect.

We are determined to bring the fight against corruption to the next level to ensure effective service delivery to the population and the ethical and proper use of public funds. We are determined to reinforce the institutional framework of good governance to enhance our country, our society and our democracy.

Hence, we can safely say that the momentum for a graft free Mauritius has been set.

For this, we need the collaboration of all citizens and each and every member of society. We can write and speak all that we want about corruption; but if we want to dispense with it, we have to make a start ourselves. We must engage in some self-introspection about our role to fight corruption. I am making, here, a special appeal to the youth of this country to seriously reflect on the following issues:

- Is corruption harmful to you?
- How would you react when you witness an act of corruption?
- What is your role in the fight against corruption?
- What initiatives can you contemplate to make Mauritius a corrupt free society?

We don't need the answers but our dream is to see the youth of this country rise to high expectations. The fight against corruption deserves our undivided effort. Our success will depend solely on our will and efforts. The pledge of our younger generation present here is a strong signal to the whole community that the fight against corruption is on.

Ladies and gentlemen, with all of us together, we can win this fight.

I thank you for your kind attention.