

**OPENING SPEECH BY MR ANIL KUMAR UJOODHA, DIRECTOR GENERAL ICAC
FOR THE 6TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SAFAC
07TH AUGUST 2006 – LE MERIDIEN HOTEL, MAURITIUS**

Hon. Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Human Rights, Jayarama Valayden,
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Chairman and Members of the Parliamentary Committee,
Chairperson and Members of the South African Forum Against Corruption,
Executive Director of the Human Rights Trust of Southern Africa,

Ladies & Gentlemen

It is my pleasure and privilege to welcome you in Mauritius on the occasion of the sixth annual general meeting of the South African Forum Against Corruption. I would like also to extend a warm welcome to the Hon. Minister, Mr. Jayarama Valayden, whose presence here bears testimony of his government's commitment to the fight against corruption. I thank him for devoting some of his precious time to address us this morning.

I would like to extend a particular welcome to the team of the Human Rights Trust of Southern Africa (SAHRIT) who have been organizing and coordinating this annual meeting with the Independent Commission Against Corruption. We have three days of hard work before us and I hope that before the SAFAC delegates leave the country, they will have some free time to enjoy.

Hon. Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is a direct linkage between corruption and poor governance and it is the same between money laundering and financing of terrorist activities. Corruption flourishes especially in countries where there is a lack of control mechanisms, a weak civil society, an absence of institutions specialized in the fight against corruption and more particularly an absence of political will. These are the main ingredients which pave the way for a culture of impunity, and that leads to what we call systemic corruption. We are all aware that without proper vigilance and effective countermeasures, corruption can occur anywhere.

However, fighting corruption at national level is not enough and needs to be complemented by regional anti-corruption strategies, measures and initiatives. This AGM will be an opportunity to merge “universal” elements. In fact, all countries will be sharing initiatives taken at national level and this will be highlighted in the country reports of countries present in the meeting.

Ladies and Gentlemen, if we want to get rid of corruption, we have to treat the cause and not merely the symptoms. In this context, there are a number of initiatives to be taken to achieve this goal. For example, public access to information, transparent and efficient government procedures, effective government oversight institutions and public-private dialogue are but a few of these initiatives.

A report discussed in 2002 at the African Union just before the AU Convention Against Corruption was proposed stated that the cost of corruption in Africa turned around 150 BILLION US DOLLARS A YEAR. This colossal sum could have well contributed for the upliftment of the poor. But, unfortunately with kleptocrats in power, huge sums were siphoned off to Swiss Banks.

Between 1995 and 2002, sub-saharan Africa received an estimated 114 billion US DOLLAR as bilateral and multilateral aid. Yet these countries have consistently

ended up at the bottom of the United Nations Development Human Development Report.

This situation has brought international donor agencies such as the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) to sever their support with certain countries. Other donor agencies or international financial institutions like the World Bank are also seriously concerned with the corruption problem in African countries.

Addressing businessmen last May in Seoul, South Korea,, World Bank president Paul Wolfowitz, said rich countries are deeply implicated in corruption in Africa. I quote: "For every bribe taker, there is a bribe giver and very often that bribe giver comes from a rich country." End of quote.

He, however, congratulated African nations for launching a campaign against corruption saying that rich countries have to cooperate to stamp out graft.

The IMF and the World Bank have instituted HIPC Initiative (Highly Indebted Poor Country Initiative), through which debt reduction is linked to countries that have developed transparency, accountability and a poverty reduction strategy. To date, 23 of the 27 countries under the HIPC Initiative are African.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

These are a few signals which we cannot afford to ignore. The concern about corruption in the Southern African region has increased. Regional cooperation as well as mutual and technical assistance are thus needed to fight corruption and money laundering on all fronts and in all nooks and corners of this Region. We are all conscious that corruption in one country can affect other countries in the region. But at the same time there is willingness to create a corrupt free Southern African Region to ensure that economic, social and political development is not impeded. With the

SADC protocol already in force, the next step is to ensure the implementation of the SADC Regional Anti-Corruption Programme.

The challenge at regional level are the adoption of well defined anti-corruption strategies and their implementation as well as the visible and tangible commitment from all of us to support regional cooperation in the fight against corruption.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is comforting to note that an Action Program 2006-2010 has been adopted at a round table meeting organized by the UNODC in Abuja in September last. This action program, in line with the UN Convention Against Corruption, proposes a whole gamut of initiatives to effectively fight corruption, money laundering and other crimes like drug trafficking in the African region. The setting of specialized independent institutions to fight corruption, regional and international cooperation for information sharing on dubious methods to collect proceeds resulting from corrupt acts, the restitution of ill-gotten wealth through corrupt activities, are a few of them.

As members of the South African Forum Against Corruption, we have been proactive and we have taken a number of initiatives to contain the surge of corruption in this region.

We have already embarked in this fight with the setting up of anti-corruption agencies and devising strategies to fight this scourge. The SAFAC has since its existence, been a platform par excellence to coordinate regional initiatives and to ensure capacity building with the objective to curb corruption.

With the SADC Protocol Against Corruption already in force, there are various issues that need to be addressed in view of the setting up of the SADC Anti-Corruption

Committee whose responsibility will be to oversee the effective implementation of the SADC Protocol.

SAFAC members, I believe, have a lot of expectations and look forward for the prompt implementation of the SADC Regional Anti-Corruption Programme. Bearing this in mind, the Management Committee which met in March this year, proposed the following theme for the 2006 SAFAC AGM: 'Implementation of Regional Strategy Against Corruption – Key to Regional Integration'. It is very assuring to note that implementation of regional strategy against corruption, which is considered as a major issue, will be given due consideration during the present AGM.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I would like to apprise you on anti-corruption initiatives taken here. ICAC Mauritius has elaborated a three-year Action Plan with a new vision and in line with our regional and international commitments, where the focus will be on the emergence of a culture of integrity and probity. Our goal is to make corruption socially and morally unacceptable to all Mauritians. Before devising the strategies and actions for the coming three years, the new Commission has conducted a strategic analysis of the ICAC's environment, constraints and weaknesses as well as international and regional obligations. In line with these obligations the Commission has decided to give a global dimension to the national corruption strategies. We are committed to take decisive measures to strengthen the moral fibre of our nation, without which underhand dealings will continue to be seen as a glorified national pastime thus consolidating a culture of impunity.

We all agree that it will take much time to bring changes in the mindset of people more so when these illegitimate activities have been so well tolerated for years in the

region. It will take time to heal the wound of moral decay and we will need patience and forbearance.

Hon. Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We cannot afford to work in isolation if we want to really fight corruption. We have developed a network with sister organizations in the region. We will be signing a memorandum of understanding in the coming days with our colleagues from Bureau Indépendant Anti-Corruption (BIAnCo), Madagascar. We hope to develop the same type of relationship with other organizations within our region and members of the SAFAC. This will enable us to implement regional programs designed to foster regional cooperation among governments and civil society networks committed to compliance with anti-corruption norms, standards and protocols. After this meeting, we will be having working sessions with our colleagues from Madagascar and Zimbabwe. In September next, we will be receiving a delegation of the anti-corruption agency of the Republic of Bénin.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

One of the main tasks during this sixth annual general meeting will be to discuss our respective roles in view of the forthcoming change, i.e, the metamorphosis of the SAFAC into the SADC Anti-Corruption Committee (SACC). This new platform is in itself a clear demonstration of regional cooperation in the fight against corruption. It inaugurates a new era for this region and characterizes the consolidation of democracy and respect of human rights. This new democratic space in this sub-saharan region will certainly allow our different anti-corruption agencies to work in closer cooperation to root out corruption. It will certainly enable us to design new strategies for more effective initiatives to strengthen, monitor and evaluate anti-corruption efforts in our region.

Ladies & Gentlemen,

Even if we have the best strategies and the finest laws, the fight against corruption will not be complete without the active participation and full commitment of the mass.

Our three-year Action Plan focuses on the need to have a dynamic civil society, active NGOs, a civil service where integrity and good governance are the basic imperatives, and more importantly a population committed to prompt responsiveness to anti-corruption efforts.

There is no statistical yardstick to measure the success in the fight against corruption. After thirty years of existence, the ICAC of Hong Kong is still putting a relentless fight against corruption. Changing the mindset of people by transforming a culture of impunity into a culture of integrity will only be achievable through long term efforts. It is up to us to sow the seeds of this new culture today otherwise all this will be little more than the shifting sands of illusion. We have no other alternative than to beef up our anti-corruption efforts at all levels of our different societies.

Hon Minister, Ladies & Gentlemen,

I thank you for your attention and wish the delegates a pleasant and memorable stay in our country.