



**Professor Patrick Lumumba in Sierra Leone giving public lecture on corruption**

The International Anti-Corruption (IAC) Day is here again. The Day is observed on December 9 every year, since the passage of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) in August 2003. It is meant to draw the attention of Governments across the world to tackle the scourge of corruption in order to ensure economic growth. Anti-corruption agencies across the world also use the Day to heighten public education and outreach campaigns on the ills of corruption and the benefits of a corrupt-free society.

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) normally conducts a week-long observation of this Day through a multitude of activities. In some years in the past, the Commission had conducted integrity and compliance awards, to honour and recognise individuals and institutions who have lived exemplary lives, and institutions that are compliant with anti-corruption measures respectively. There were also quiz and debate competitions, float parades and roadshows.

It is customary for past Commissioners of the ACC to make televised statements on the fight against corruption in the country. This year, President Julius Maada Bio addressed the nation, reaffirming his Government's zero tolerance policy to corruption.

A constant feature of the activities is the several radio and television programmes held to intensify public awareness on issues of corruption, as well as Muslim and Christian thanksgiving services.

A much anticipated event for this year's commemoration was the public lecture by Kenyan anti-corruption icon, Prof. P.L.O. Lumumba who spoke on the topic "Retracing the 'Athens of Africa': The Centrality of the fight against corruption in achieving President Julius Maada Bio's vision of a reborn prosperous Sierra Leone." The event took place at the Adjai Crowther Amphitheatre, Fourah Bay College on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> December, 2018.

The United Nations and anti-corruption agencies marking the Day every year prefer to use the nomenclature 'observe' in place of 'celebrate'. This does not, however, prevent some people –including journalists- from asking: "What is there to celebrate?" ACC Staff are always quick to respond by outlining the gains made by the Commission in combating graft.

This year, the reasons to celebrate are many.

**Recoveries.** The ACC has recovered close to Ten Billion Leones, a whopping sum that is far higher than all what the Commission recouped between 2000 (when it was established) and June 2018. The Commission was able to achieve this in less than six months, starting late June 2018, when Francis Ben Kaifala Esq. assumed the mantle of leadership at the Commission. The recovery process is ongoing. The Commission is committed to protecting public funds, and also retrieving those from undeserving hands; which is why it has intensified efforts to recoup unpaid taxes and instructing double-dippers and those who misuse State funds to pay back.

Massive gain in 'Control of Corruption' indicator in MCC Scorecard. The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) is an initiative by the US Government to

provide aid to countries that have invested in ruling justly, economic freedom and investing in citizens. The MCC assesses these countries every year as a relative performance within its income category. To be eligible for selection, a country is required to pass a minimum of ten of the twenty governance-related indicators, including the democratic right and “control of corruption” indicators.

Before now, the country had only passed the indicator of control of corruption in the FY 2004 with 51%, FY 2005 (52%), and FY 2012 and FY 2017 (53%). In 2008, Sierra Leone scored 15% in the area of control of corruption, whilst the country score last year (termed as 2018 by the scorecard) was 49%. The good news this year is that, the country made a massive leap by passing this all-important indicator with a 71% score on the most recent scorecard.

**Cases.** The Commission has recently investigated many high profile cases- ranging from former Government Ministers to heads of public agencies, including revenue generating institutions. Some of the investigations have given a colossal boost to the recovery of unpaid taxes, stolen and misused public funds. Two former Deputy Ministers have recently been indicted for various corruption offences. The Commission has also recorded a one hundred percent conviction rate in all decided cases so far this year.

Strengthening of systems and practices of public institutions. Africa needs strong institutions, according to former President of the United States, Barrack Obama. The Anti-Corruption Act 2008 provides for the ACC to combat weaknesses in State institutions through systems and processes review in order to improve service delivery. It is through this exercise that the Commission is able to prevent and detect cases of double-dipping and mismanagement of State resources, among others. In a similar vein, an official of the African Union recently told the BBC about the Botswana experience in curbing corruption. He was quick to point out that, the Southern African country made it a policy to decentralize the fight against corruption, by encouraging public offices to handle corruption issues from within. The National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS) Secretariat of the ACC has established integrity management committees in many public institutions to

mainstream anti-corruption issues and enable them take ownership of the fight against corruption.

**Public education and outreach campaigns.** One of the strengths of the Commission is its strong public education and outreach team that responds to the information needs of the public, according to the Editor of the Concord Times Newspaper Abubakarr Sheriff Esq. The Department conducts daily public education activities across the country. These include; radio and television discussion programmes, customized meetings with institutions, community outreach meetings and articles in newspapers and magazines. In addition to the Commission's quarterly newsletter, there is now a monthly bulletin to inform the reading public about the activities of the Commission. Through their integrity and accountability clubs, the Commission has been reaching out to schools and tertiary institutions to instill in pupils and students the values of integrity, transparency and accountability.

**Political Will.** This is probably the most important support a Government can give to any country's anti-corruption campaign. 'Political Will' provides strong legislation to fight corruption. It gives absolute independence to anti-corruption institutions. It also ensures that anti-corruption agencies are provided with adequate and timely funds for their operations. The top political leadership will make public pronouncements of their zero-tolerance stance on corruption; and take measures to prevent political and administrative corruption. Other agencies of the State must be seen complementing the work of the anti-corruption institution. The ACC, under the current dispensation, seems to be getting much of the aforementioned.

**Civil society and Media.** They play an integral part in the fight against corruption. Under the DFID-funded Pay No Bribe campaign, civil society groups have been at the centre of taking anti-corruption messages to communities across the country. This has ensured action by public institutions to curb incidences of bribery. The media's support to the ACC also stands out. The print media has been outstanding in publishing ACC articles and press releases at no cost. This has greatly helped

the Commission in raising awareness on issues of corruption, as well as soliciting public support in the anti-graft campaign.