



Press Release on the Second Policy Forum on the Role of NHRIs in preventing and Combating Corruption in Africa

November 23, 2018: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The [Network of African National Human Rights Institutions](#) (NANHRI) in partnership with [the African Union Commission](#), the African Union Advisory Board on Corruption, and other partners hosted more than 100 delegates from across Africa for the Second Annual Policy Forum held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to discuss the role of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) in preventing and combating corruption.

The November 23-24, 2018 Forum was held on the backdrop of the decision by the African Union (AU) declaring 2018 as the year of preventing and combating corruption, which costs the continent over \$148 billion annually¹.

The participants, who were drawn from the public and private sectors discussed the commitment of the various stakeholders in fighting corruption and its negative impact to development and fulfilment of human rights. They discussed steps made so far by various governments, good practices for sharing, the state of African NHRIs in the framework of preventing and combating corruption and the way forward. Notably, the Forum discussed the role of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) in preventing and combating corruption.

Given that corruption is a major obstacle towards the realisation and enjoyment of the economic, social and cultural rights, the Forum reaffirmed the role of NHRIs in preventing and combating corruption by offering immediate and long-term support to the government agencies, the judiciary, the legislature and other stakeholders in this process.

The Forum also reflected on the role of NHRIs in supporting security and other anti-corruption agencies in monitoring and investigating cases of corruption as reported by the public or on their own initiative. Besides tabling reports in parliament and other fora, the NHRIs should submit the evidence to relevant authorities like the office of the director of public prosecution for action. In addition, the NHRIs may take up litigation

¹ <http://afrobarometer.org/blogs/time-africa-move-talk-action-anti-corruption-fight>

of public interest cases in courts. If money meant for hospitals has been swindled, the NHRIs have responsibility of filing cases since access to healthcare is at risk.

However, the war on corruption is complex and dangerous, given the large sums of money involved. The people who are forced to pay or witness corruption may face reprisals from perpetrators. Research² has shown that at least 66 per cent of people who witness or have information on corruption do not report the matter to authorities for fear of retaliation. This is despite 55 per cent agreeing that ordinary people can fight vice. As safety of such sources is key, the Forum underscored the role of NHRIs in raising awareness of the public about their (NHRIs) role in securing whistle-blowers as well as providing an enabling environment like online anonymous reporting. In such cases, the people would be made aware that evidence is critical in securing conviction for economic crimes and NHRIs have witness protection mechanisms. This protection should also be extended to suspects who surrender proceeds of corruption..

Similarly, the NHRIs were challenged to work with civil society organisations (CSOs) in unearthing corruption in both public and private sectors. Through such collaborations, the NHRIs would bridge the information flow gap between and the government agencies fighting corruption and the CSOs and the private sector.

For sustainability of the efforts to prevent and combat corruption, empowering the public to not only take part in the budget making processes, but also in calling for transparency and accountability is key. An empowered society calls for accountability from the authorities as well as those charged with playing the watchdog role over others for results such as conviction and recovery of public assets, not processes only.

Over the years, the call for lifestyle audit especially on public servants has twisted the fight against corruption even further, with corrupt officers opting to hide the money in over sea accounts. Africa loses more than \$50 billion annually in illicit financial flows. This causes a deficit in the national, or county budget, therefore, negatively impacting service delivery to the public.

The Forum called on governments to work with the countries holding illegally gained wealth to ensure the repatriation of the funds and timely prosecution of the culprits. The participants also reiterated on the need for governments to check on opportunities leading to such vices.

Participants urged the governments to consider designating corruption as the 'enemy of the people' and a factor derailing their obligation of delivering their promise to the rights holders- the people of Africa.

Winning the war on corruption is key to achieving the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals' Agenda 2030-blue-prints that envision transformation of the continent to the *Africa we want where No one is left behind*.

² Ibid1

The Forum was attended by the more than 40 African NHRIs, Permanent Representative Committee members of African States to the AU, governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations, diplomats, scholars and various CSOs, among others.

About Us

The Network of African National Human Rights Institutions is a not-for-profit-organization that brings together 44 National Human Rights Institutions in Africa. Our Secretariat is in Nairobi, Kenya.

We work towards the establishment and strengthening of the African NHRIs, facilitating coordination and cooperation between and amongst members and linking them with other key human rights actors at the regional and international level.

We support our members through capacity building to meet their objective of protecting and promoting human rights at the national level.

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