

Closing Declaration – UCCI Caribbean Conference 2014

(Presented by Prof. Trevor Munroe, Executive Director NIA Visiting Honorary Professor, Sir Arthur Lewis Institute, UWI on behalf of the Conference Committee)

The UCCI Caribbean Conference 2014 “Towards a Corruption-Free Caribbean; Ethics, Values, Trust and Morality” held between the 19th and 21st of March 2014, constituted a significant success and marked an important milestone in the Caribbean’s engagement with anti-corruption issues on a broad basis. Throughout the Conference, participants and attendees expressed fulsome praise and sincere appreciation for the UCCI Board of Governors, President, Conference Co-Chairs and committee members as well as to the sponsors and Government of the Cayman Islands for their contribution to this exceptional event.

In scale and quality the conference was unprecedented across the region. It brought together 120 presenters from 15 countries in the Caribbean but as well from North America, Europe and Africa. The Conference was **multi-sectorial**. Leaders of government, members of legislatures, and representatives of the private sector, civil society, tertiary institutions, churches, and media houses came together for the deliberations.

The conference was also **multi-disciplinary**. It drew on expertise and experience of political scientists, sociologists, psychologists, ethicists, theologians, environmentalists, attorneys-at-law, medical scientists, accountants, and, very importantly, present and past officials of anti-corruption commissions and authorities.

Opened by Her Excellency the Governor Helen Kilpatrick, the conference conducted its work in no less than 16 plenary sessions. The formal opening, chaired by Professor Trevor Munroe, Executive Director of National Integrity Action, Jamaica, received with great appreciation a comprehensive keynote address from Dr. Huguette Labelle, Chair of the Board of Transparency International, the world’s leading anti-corruption non-governmental organization with chapters in over 100 countries.

Subsequent plenaries benefited from outstanding and thoughtful presentations including that from Dr. the Hon. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Minister of Finance for the Federal Republic of Nigeria and former Managing Director at the World Bank; from the Hon. Perry Christie,

Prime Minister of the Bahamas; from the Hon. Andrew Holness, MP, Leader of the Opposition in Jamaica and former Prime Minister of Jamaica, among others. Dr. the Hon. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, who had had to change his plans to travel to the conference because of urgent matters at home, sent his message and a senior member of his government to present it. The Premier of Bermuda also sent a senior official to represent him.

In addition, much discussion took place in four pre-conference workshops, nine round tables and twelve panels, attended notably by students of UCCI as well as the public. Attendees interacted appreciatively with invited presenters.

The subjects covered in plenaries, panels, round tables and workshops were extraordinarily wide-ranging, comprehensive and of special relevance to the current challenges facing the Caribbean and the wider, global community in more effectively combating corruption and building integrity. Amongst the subjects were those related to:

Ethics –

- The role of tertiary institutions' in safeguarding ethical standards,
- Teaching civic values to the present generation,
- The role of the church in preserving and enhancing ethics and, very significantly,
- Ethics relating to different sectors, namely, medicine, law, sexual relations, the environment, and sports.

Role of Technology - this was offered especially in the context of relation to curbing corruption and engaging the citizenry in that process.

The Sphere of Culture – this focus was presented particularly with regard to the culture of leadership; the culture of compliance with codes of conduct, particularly in the public service; the culture of the media; and, very interestingly, the culture of Dancehall.

The Dimension of Institutions – this was delivered particularly with regard to the strength and weaknesses of National Integrity Systems in the Caribbean; anti-corruption frameworks; different models of anti-corruption institutions – whether single, multiple or unspecific anti-corruption agencies; the role of the bureaucracy, particularly with regard

to the implications for corruption of levels of efficiency. In addition, the need for robust financial services' regulation was stressed.

And, finally, not to be left out, discussion also focused on the critical importance of **the private sector and civil society organizations** in combatting corruption and building integrity.

During the course of the conference there were much lively debate, penetrating questions and insightful answers. Out of all of this emerged a consensus regarding a number of areas of growing concern. Amongst these – though certainly not exhaustively -- were the following:

1. The effects of corruption are truly multifarious and interconnected, negatively impacting the political, economic, social and environmental sectors of societies. From the political side, corruption impedes democracy and the rule of law, erodes the legitimacy of public institutions, and brews cynicism among the populace, thus reducing the population's participation in public policy and decision-making. It can also lead to political instability. As important, corruption in public administration subverts formal processes, resulting in the inefficient provision of services.

From the economic perspective, corruption depletes national wealth, increases costs of goods and services and leads to unhealthy competition. It can cripple economic growth and development by reducing the level of direct investment and by causing significant distortions and inefficiencies.

From the social perspective, corruption leads to more inequality in society, causes political tribalism and even war, weakens civil society and increases poverty by marginalizing the poor. When citizens know of corruption, it affects their psychological health as they become angry and frustrated.

2. A critical step in limiting corruption and promoting ethics is to have strong and committed leadership at the top setting an example. As such, leaders must create a culture of transparency and integrity within institutions, instituting zero tolerance to corruption.

Further, this positive leadership must ensure that people throughout their institutions do what is right. They act by setting codes of ethics for all to follow, setting up policies, training systems, incentives and disincentives.

3. A vital element in promoting ethics and preventing corruption is to ensure a culture of transparency in the areas where it matters most -- at the heart of government, in the institutions that defend the public, offer security, and serve the public well.

4. Education is key in building strong ethical individuals in our society. A huge area of discussion at the conference was with regard to the potential of combatting corruption through education. The consensus was that the most effective strategy lies in incorporating ethics in the education system from the youngest classrooms through to the PhD level.

Teaching ethics throughout the education system will sow the seeds for better societies. With nearly a fifth of the world's population between 15 and 24 years old, young people have the potential to stop corruption both as the citizens of today and as the leaders of tomorrow.

5. We should not overlook how interdependent ethics in one society is upon global society. The opportunity to escape detection and penalty for corruption in one country can undermine efforts to prevent corruption in another.

Every country, therefore, has a responsibility to introduce effective anti-money laundering measures: anonymous firms and secret bank accounts should not be used to launder the proceeds of corruption. It's a question of integrity, investor interest and of reputation for all countries.

6. There must be recognition, however, that values and morality, trust and ethics in government require more than legislation. It cannot be relegated to commissions instituted by government to measure the probity and integrity of politicians and public officials or to introduce laws or codes of ethics. The attainment of these values requires the integrated effort of the entire society and its constituent elements and institutions – legislative, executive, political, judicial, religious, civil -- all engaging with each other to ensure transparency and accountability and good governance.

Caribbean citizens must be encouraged to remind themselves that personal example is still the most powerful and credible influence upon others and the most persuasive of teachers.

7. In so far as institutions are concerned there was much discussion, summarized as follows:

a. Every Caribbean country should consider, as a matter of priority, the appropriateness of the establishment of a single independent anti-corruption state agency, with specialist resources. These capabilities must include exclusive criminal investigatory and prosecutorial jurisdiction, and full police powers of arrest and detention. These powers must extend to all corruption offences.

b. Every Caribbean country should develop, design, and institute, as a matter of urgency, legislation and regulations to register political parties to regulate party funding and campaign financing.

c. Each Caribbean country should:

- establish an independent procurement regulator to monitor and to investigate the award of government contracts, sub-contracts and licences, with the objective of ensuring probity, transparency, competition and value for money in the said awards. It is imperative that the regulator be given the power to halt proposed awards in instances of suspected irregularity or impropriety. Equally imperative is the need to apply strong penalties for breaches of procurement guidelines.
- give consideration to the public filing and disclosure of assets, income and liabilities for all parliamentarians and critical level public officials.
- Impose tough criminal and civil sanctions upon private sector entities for the bribery of public officials and require them to develop, implement and enforce company-wide anti-bribery compliance programmes.
- consider significant improvement to the remuneration of media workers, especially journalists across the region, as a way of increasing the likelihood of 'bolder' journalism. At the same time, re-examining libel laws across the region

with the objective of encouraging more media freedom and less tame journalism.

g. The development of nonpartisan and strategically planned grassroots community organizing is crucial in order to continuously remind elected officials that they in fact answer to the greater electorate and not political factions.

The mantra of UCCI Caribbean Conference 2014 was **Connect, Share, Inspire**. The Conference did **connect** with the broadest cross-section of Caymanian society which attended its many sessions and tuned into the many radio discussions in which invited attendees participated; it **shared** in the rich diversity of experience and expertise of the speakers in plenary, panels, round tables and workshops, and it **inspired** many to convert words into deeds and talk into action in more effectively combating corruption and building integrity.

In the motivational words of the Hon. Minister of Finance from Nigeria, “I don’t if we will ever have a corruption-free world in either Nigeria or the Caribbean, but I can tell you that a combination of real-life tools, coupled with endearing and supportive value systems, can make a huge difference. Where there is political will, brave men and women willing to fight, and a drive to build institutions and apply them properly, corruption can be fought.”

At the end of the proceedings, all participants left motivated and energized with the refrain of the outstanding UCCI choir which performed in the uplifting cultural interlude at the conference’s opening: **“It’s been a long time coming, but change will come; oh, yes, it will.”**

March 21st, 2014