

Opening Remarks by Mr Hubert René Schillinger, Resident Representative of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung at the FFF/FES Youth Conference on Anti-Corruption, 4-6 September, Rössing Foundation, Khomasdal, Windhoek

Mr Paulus Noa, Director, Anti-Corruption Commission

Rev Ngeno Nakamhela, Chairperson, Forum for the Future

Mr Samson Ndeikwila, Co-ordinator, Forum for the Future

Dear Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a privilege and a pleasure to also add a few remarks after our distinguished guest and keynote speaker of tonight, Mr Noa, the Head of the Namibian Anti-Corruption Commission, has given his brilliant presentation.

I am Hubert Schillinger and the Resident Representative of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung here in Namibia. I came here in January 2005, just about two month before President Pohamba made his first landmark statement about his administration's determination to attack head on of the biggest challenges of our times, namely the scourge of corruption, mismanagement and waste of public funds. Ever since I have followed with keen interest the different steps taken by the Namibian government in this regard.

In my remarks, I want to only briefly touch upon the importance of fighting corruption, the way I see it, and indeed the need for civil society to be part and parcel of a coalition of the willing, a coalition for transparency, integrity and accountability. There are people more qualified than I am to elaborate much more on that, as we have just heard during the comprehensive input by the Head of the ACC. What I will start with, is to briefly give you a background on the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), as I assume that FES is not widely known among this audience, and also relate to you why supporting anti-corruption initiatives is important for our vision, mission and fundamental values as well as the work we are trying to do.

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, is a Germany-based non-governmental organisation that seeks to promote democracy and social justice through capacity-building, policy research and development and the promotion of public dialogue together with our partner institutions. We are operating through a large network of field or country offices, like the one in Namibia which exists since 1989. As we speak there are more than 100 of these offices world-wide. In the case of Namibia we are co-operating with a whole lot of governmental and non-governmental organisations. The Forum for the Future is one of this organisations with whom we want to co-operate on a number of activities to which we jointly agree upon.

As I said, our core mission is to promote democracy and social justice. If you define democracy as public rule *by the people* (through the democratically elected representatives of the people in Government and Parliament), *with the people* (through active participation of stakeholders in public decision-making and policy implementation) and above all: *for the people*, it becomes clear that democratic governance means good governance. And that is were the fight against corruption comes in.

If you want democracy, development and economic growth you need a government who governs your country well. You need a government who tries its level best to combat mismanagement and the misuse of public funds. But you also need a population who shares the same values and holds its government to account. This is were we see the important link between democracy, good governance, public participation and awareness-raising among young and committed people, future leaders, like yourself.

Corruption is not new. Actually it is an age-old phenomenon and things like bribery, deception, the theft of public funds are nothing new. However, for much too long, the awareness of the corrosive effects on the state and its negative impact on economic growth, development and poverty reduction was widely lacking, although nobody ever disputed the ethical failings associated with corruption.

Corruption is also a world-wide phenomenon. Hence it is not limited to Namibia. Actually, from an international perspective, Namibia is not considered to be one of the “bad performers”, where corruption has taken endemic proportions. Not at all. Compared to many countries, especially in Africa, but even globally, it doesn’t do too badly. On the other hand, a quick look at some of the international corruption-perceptions indices, like the one of Transparency International, also reveals that Namibia certainly doesn’t belong to the shining stars with regard to the absence of corruption.

Corruption is also a very complex phenomenon. It comes in various forms and sizes. There is no single comprehensive, accepted or common definition of corruption, just an ever-increasing list of criminal offenses, which can be termed “corruption”, as Mr Noa just pointed out. The most simple definition of corruption points to the fact that corruption mostly amounts to the *abuse of public office for private gain*. Transparency International for instance defines it as “*the misuse of entrusted power for private gain*”. Corruption normally takes place at the interface of power and money. For most of us ordinary people however, corruption is a bit like pornography: you hardly can define it, but you know it when you see it.

It is not only that you know it, when you see it, but also that you can only fight it, when there are mechanisms in place that it can be seen ! Therefore, the aspects of openness, transparency, accountability and proper checks and balances in the public domain are key to effectively curb corruption. A culture of secrecy in government, on the contrary, always invites corruption and the abuse of power.

While transparency and accountability are key, both aspects are only part of a multi-pronged anti-corruption approach based on good and clean government. It is therefore vital, that a whole national integrity system is in place, for which a country requires the necessary laws, institutions, enforcement mechanisms and – above all – the **political will**. In the empirical analysis of success and failure of anti-corruption efforts political will is regularly identified as the make-or-brake-factor. The creation of the Anti-Corruption Commission here in Namibia can be seen as a very positive signal. But only to the extent that the Commission is granted the necessary powers – and the necessary resources to fulfil its mission, its creation can be regarded as a testimony of the government’s seriousness about fighting the scourge of corruption, mismanagement and waste of public funds.

Last but not least, it is of fundamental importance that the public is educated about corruption, its consequences but also the way how to fight it. The public is “the eye and the ears of the ACC” as Mr Noa just has put it so eloquently. This workshop is one such event, where important role players, community leaders and multipliers of the society at large, like yourselves, are informed and sensitised about the issue, in order to become the eyes and the ears of the professional corruption fighters and part and parcel of the coalition of the willing I referred to earlier on.

We are therefore very grateful to the Forum of the Future, and its Co-ordinator Mr Samson Ndeikwila, to have taken the initiative to organise this particular workshop and we look forward to the next two days’ deliberations.

I THANK YOU