

Your Excellency, The Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Namibia, Dr Theo-Ben Gurirab,
Hon. Nora Schimming-Chase, Vice-Chairperson of the SADC Parliamentary Forum,
Hon. Augustine Rudzindana, Chairperson of APNAC,
Dr Kasuka Mutukwa, Secretary General of the SADC Parliamentary Forum,
Honourable Members of Parliament and Distinguished Delegates from the SADC-Region,
High Commissioners & Ambassadors,
Members of the Media,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

as representative of one of the sponsors of this event I am grateful for the privilege to also welcome you all here this morning to this important gathering.

This gathering is important because for the first time – at least to my knowledge – elected representatives of the people of all Southern African countries come together to discuss and share experiences on how to best tackle one of the biggest, if not the biggest impediment to good governance – and by extension to progress and development - namely corruption.

This assessment concerning corruption is not just a personal view. In its “2005 African Governance Report”, the Economic Commission for Africa actually identifies corruption - together with poor service delivery - as the two major problem areas with regard to the creation of capable states, states with effective, fair and efficient governments. While recognizing that governance in Africa is getting better and that the situation across the continent is markedly different from that a decade ago, the report is clear in that corruption control remains a huge challenge.

What then is corruption? The shortest definitions talk of “*abuse of public office for private gain*” or more appropriately of “*misuse of entrusted power for private gain*” – a definition which also includes private sector corruption. In practise, as we all know, corruption has many faces. It can be carried out alone - as in the case of fraud or the embezzlement of public funds or assets, or it needs two parties involved and a “give-and-

take"-situation as in the cases of bribery, extortion, nepotism or favouritism.

Whatever its manifestation may be: Corruption is not only morally wrong, unjust and sending the wrong signals to society, but perhaps more importantly it is also anti-developmental by misallocating scarce resources (financial and human), distorting developmental priorities, increasing economic uncertainty and the cost of doing business or lowering the return on public and private investment, as such acting as a forceful deterrent to economic growth and development.

The fight to curb and eventually eradicate corruption is a challenge that cannot be fought by the executive, law enforcement agencies and specialist agencies such as anti-corruption commissions alone.

It requires co-operation and partnership between all arms of government, civil society, the private sector as well as free and independent media. The latter are particularly important by playing a crucial watchdog role.

It requires also a comprehensive and coherent strategy that attack corruption on several fronts simultaneously; on the one hand by reducing opportunities and incentives for and tolerance towards corruption, for instance through administrative reform and public awareness, on the other hand by increasing the risks for perpetrators through better laws and better law enforcement, which means higher risk of detection, higher risk of prosecution, higher likelihood of appropriate punishment.

You can call this: a "carrot-and-stick-approach". Such a carrot-and-stick-approach is also one that puts its primary emphasis on preventing future corruption and on changing systems rather than indulging in witch-hunts – although that doesn't mean that justice mustn't be done.

However, for any approach to corruption control to be effective, the key requirement is political will from the political leadership and a clear commitment to combat corruption wherever it occurs.

Now, what could or should be the role of parliaments in fighting corruption?

This is exactly what is going to be discussed in this forum during the next three days. Therefore it would be presumptuous for me to pre-empt the results of this discussion. Suffice to say that as watchdogs of the executive, legislators and regulators, and above all, representatives of the people, Parliaments must be at the centre of the struggle to attain

and sustain good governance, to promote transparency and democratic accountability and to fight the scourge of corruption. To be fully effective in that regard, parliamentarians must lead by example and Parliaments must be comprised of individuals of integrity committed to serve the public.

Combating corruption through parliamentary action, as a matter of course, is first and foremost a national task on national and local levels. However the supra-national, among others the regional or SADC-level, has a specific and increasingly important role to play which cannot be overestimated.

The role of regional bodies like the SADC Parliamentary Forum and their activities in my view and the view of my organisation, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, on this and many other issues is primarily one of knowledge-sharing, peer-learning, exchange of experience and the highlighting of lessons learned and good practise among neighbours who have many things in common. The role of the regional level is also one of benchmarking good performances for the development of common norms and standards. In both areas, regional activities, like the one that starts today, can add significant value and inspire the work parliamentarians have to do in their home countries.

Back home, at national level, SADC-parliamentarians must then become drivers for the domestication of international legal instruments such as the SADC Anti-Corruption Protocol of 2001 and watchdogs over the forceful application of recommendations and common standards in legal and administrative practise. It is back home where the real struggle for good governance is taking place.

With this few remarks, Director of Ceremonies, I want to conclude by thanking our partners, the SADC Parliamentary Forum and its Secretary General, Dr. Mutukwa in particular, for having organised this important regional conference. We look forward to the next three days of intense debate as well as to a continued co-operation with the Parliamentary Forum on this event's as well as on many other topics.

I THANK YOU!