

PRESS STATEMENT ON INTERNATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION DAY

Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) joins the rest of the world in observing the 20th anniversary of the International Anti-Corruption Day (9 December 2022) established by the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC). This year's commemorations are being held under the theme "UNCAC at 20: Uniting the World Against Corruption."

Of key concern to our movement, corruption remains a cancer that exerts pressure on economic indicators thereby increasing inequality, poverty and derailing development outcomes. In Zimbabwe, graft and impunity have worsened the plight of citizens to a level where hospitals have no supplies, education is a preserve of the rich, Illicit Financial Flows are high, the debt stock is rising and we are falling back on Sustainable Development Goals. While commitments have been made over the last few decades to meaningfully reduce graft especially by the 2nd Republic, the crisis continues due to a lack of integrity especially in public office, impunity and corporate greed amongst other factors.

Today, we are in solidarity with comrades at the ongoing the 20th International Anti-Corruption Conference (IACC) which is running under the theme "Uprooting Corruption, Defending Democratic Values." This theme is even more relevant to the Zimbabwean context noting that most of the socioeconomic challenges we face are due to economies of affection at a time when at the global level we are recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict. In the Zimbabwean context, state capture is characterized by a web of patron-client relationships that involves the military elite and business kingpins all debilitating the ability of the economy to grow.¹

As shown in the Key Indicative Figures below, Zimbabwe still has a long way to go in addressing corruption.

- Zimbabwe is losing at least \$1 billion annually to corruption²
- 82 percent of government spending has financial irregularities³

1. <https://www.thezimbabwean.co/2021/08/state-capture-and-cartels-the-major-impediment-to-economic-growth-in-zimbabwe/>

2. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-zimbabwe-corruption-idUSKCN1241R9>

3. <https://www.zammagazine.com/politics-opinion/1364-zimbabwe-widespread-corruption-poisons-business-at-multiple-levels>

- Zimbabwe loses gold worth \$1.5 billion per year due to smuggling⁴
- 54% Zimbabweans in a study by Transparency International Zimbabwe noted that they had been asked to pay a bribe within the last 12 months while accessing a public service.⁵

Recommendations

As a pro-poor movement, ZIMCodd and our membership pose that beyond the publicly declared yet ignored statutes and instruments against corruption, there is responsibility both on the state and civic players to ensure improved outcomes around corruption. We thereby pose the following specific recommendations for change:

Capacitation of key anti-graft institutions and Parliament: Government should capacitate key accountability institutions such as Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission, the National Prosecuting Authority and the Office of the Auditor-General. These have a bearing on the economy and Ease of Doing Business rating.

Breaking of cartels that have captured the state: The law should be applied without fear of favour. Here, civil society has a responsibility to demand transparency and accountability from public office while raising awareness to the cartels. Further, lifestyle audits on public officials will reveal those benefitting from bribes in civil service.

Anti-Corruption Campaigns: Civil Society, the media, government institutions and activists retain the responsibility to continually campaign against corruption. Knowledge Raising remains a key tool to fighting graft and this can be done through high impact campaigns such as the #HowFar campaign.

Observation of local, regional & Global instruments against Corruption: Zimbabwe is party to the United Nation Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), the African Union on Preventing and Combating Corruption (AUCPCC) and the Southern Africa Development Community Protocol on Corruption. Beyond the rhetoric, implementing punitive measures regardless of political affiliation.

Civil Penalties for bribery: As long as (for example) investors are asked to pay bribes, the cost of bringing their funds to Zimbabwe remains high. The government should strengthen Parliamentary oversight and increase civil penalties for the corrupt.

Develop a more coherent enforcement system that links investigation, arrest and prosecution: Currently, the catch and release phenomenon continues as a window-dressing mechanism. There remains no accountability for high profile cases of corruption which in turn have a more significant effect on citizen's lives.

ENDS//