United we stand; divided we fall

Remarks by Mr. Mumo Matemu, MBS, Chairperson of the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) and Head of the Kenya Delegation attending the 2nd Conference of the Africa Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities (AAACA) held at La Palm Beach Hotel in Accra, Ghana from 15th – 19th September 2013

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Your Excellency, the President of the Republic of Ghana; Fellow Heads and Representatives of Anti-Corruption Authorities in Africa; Distinguished Guests; Ladies and Gentlemen.

It gives me great pleasure to be with you today in this 2nd Conference of the Africa Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities. I am especially glad that the forum marks what could be termed as my inaugural regional event on anti-corruption, having assumed office as the Chairman of the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission of the Republic of Kenya, on 5th August 2013. As some of you may be aware, I took over from my able predecessor Prof. PLO Lumumba, who many of you would remember for the instrumental role he played in the conceptualization and subsequent formation of this Association.

You will note from page 5 of the Report of the 1st Conference that while concluding the presentation of his paper entitled Fighting Corruption in Africa: A Case for an Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities, Prof. Lumumba remarked as follows:

"I firmly believe that it is the right time for the African community to devote its efforts in exploration of new strategies to strengthen mutual cooperation in the fight against corruption and other cross-border organized crimes. It is the time to come together under an umbrella of Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities of Africa. As we do so, the words of Kwame Nkrumah that: "we face neither in the East, nor West; We face forward” should be our guiding principle"."
I adopted those words when I assumed his mantle as not only the Head of our Anti-Corruption Agency but also a member of the Interim Steering Committee of this Association representing the East African Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities (EAAACA).

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I join you today well aware of the great significance of this forum. Kenya is fully committed to the spirit and objects of this Association especially at this time when we are at crucial stages of implementing our new Constitution which ushered in a major paradigm shift in the governance of our nation. Our membership to this Association is therefore an important milestone in the ongoing public service reforms. It is also our hope that our membership to this Association will in a great way contribute to the realization of our Vision 2030. The Kenya Vision 2030 is the national long term development blue print covering the period 2008 to 2030 with the objective of transforming Kenya into a "newly industrialized, middle-income country providing a high quality of life to all its citizens by 2030 in a clean and secure environment."

There is no doubt that this forum will bolster our respective national anti-corruption strategies. By increasing interaction among countries with low levels of corruption and those where corruption is endemic, the Association will enable the countries most afflicted by corruption know and migrate best practices in dealing with the vice in their own polities. By intensifying our mutual cooperation in the fight against corruption, African States will address the challenges brought about by the trans-national nature of some corruption scandals. Those are just among the many gains that the continent stands to gain hence the need for Anti-Corruption Agencies to encourage those who are yet to join the Association do so without further delay.

As we continue to collectively strategize on how to strengthen our states’ collaboration through this Association, allow me to point out key factors that could be critical in addressing corruption and impunity in our respective nations;

1. **There is need for African Governments to safeguard press freedom which is an important pillar in fighting corruption and other ills afflicting our people such as terrorism and drug trafficking.** A robust media makes it much easier to illuminate corrupt transactions and corrupt public officials. Exposes about corruption scandals especially in high places is viewed as extremely newsworthy. Scandalous and corrupt conduct attracts wide national and international attention because of the general fascination by the public in seeing personalities especially perpetrators of political corruption in embarrassing situations. The media thus plays an important role in highlighting corruption through press coverage and investigative journalism. We must therefore continue to encourage and uphold the principles of a
free and robust media for its role in promoting good governance and assisting in the fight against corruption.

2. **Another critical area deserving special mention is the central role of members of the public in fighting corruption especially through law enforcement.** When people who witness corruption taking place are not willing to come forward, report it and later testify in court, law enforcement agencies would not be able to deal with it. The upshot of that failure in civic responsibility is the crumbling of cases through which corrupt persons would otherwise have been held to account. We must therefore innovate and implement strategies which address public ignorance and apathy in order to empower citizens to proactively participate in anti-corruption processes.

Further firming up of the policy and guidelines on the role of the public in the fight against corruption is very necessary. The public needs to be made aware that they are the ultimate victims of corruption and there is need to internalize and discharge the mandatory responsibility placed on their shoulders in the efforts to fight corruption.

3. **African governments to foster and promote ethical leadership in all sectors and more so in the public sector.** It is instructive that unethical leadership remains one of the biggest governance challenges in African countries which continue to ravage their economic and social landscape. The morality and ethics of the modern public service are a product of the minds of the leaders of the organization through the policies they establish and the behavior they model. Leaders at all levels set the ethical tone for subordinates in their organizations and have a significant impact on how their subordinates act and perform. Indeed, leaders are often the most important source of information that subordinates look to for guidance in their behavior.

The need for high standards of ethics and integrity for holders of leadership positions is not because the leaders have an inherent inclination to perpetuate corruption, or will necessarily do so. Rather, the nature of leadership positions requires the office holders to continually face difficult ethical dilemmas and constantly decide among competing interests hence the temptation to engage in corruption. There is thus need for African States to establish effective and efficient mechanisms to promote the integrity and ethical conduct of those entrusted with leadership positions.

For us in Kenya, we have entrenched in our new Constitution a Chapter on Leadership and Integrity. This was upon the realization that while integrity is the most important quality of leadership, it is
also one of the great challenges of leadership. Leaders who assume public office with genuine intentions to help their people may soon find themselves faced with ethical dilemmas when their personal interests are brought to competition with their official authority and discretion. It is therefore necessary that we subject leaders to prescribed standards of conduct to help them resolve such ethical issues.

Through the implementation of the Chapter on Leadership and Integrity, Kenya has among other gains:

i.) vetted all Judges and Magistrates who served in the judiciary before the new Constitutional dispensation and those who failed the integrity test sacked;

ii.) Ensured that persons seeking to serve in the public sector obtain integrity clearance from the anti-corruption Commission. The Commission vets the applicants to determine if their past conduct is a matter of concern for the future reliability of the applicant.

As I conclude,
Allow me to quote the words of one Godsway Yao Sappor of Ghana which appear to ring a bell to all of us in Africa. He said as follows:

“It is true that colonialism did not bestow much to Africa but the African Leadership could not retain the little that it inherited. In fact, corrupt leaders destroyed it.”

It is my hope that this conference will enhance our continental, regional and national efforts in fighting corruption and those who fight the fight. I strongly suggest that we take it upon ourselves to encourage the African States which are yet to ratify the AU Convention on Combating and Preventing corruption to do so without delay. This will enable us to move together as the African block developing solutions for African problems.

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Thank you all; and
May God Bless You All

Mumo Matemu, MBS
15th September 2013