Speech of Hon. Attorney General at the Opening of Seminar on Corruption and Money Laundering

Wednesday 29 February 2012 at 09 30 hrs at La Pirogue Hotel

Hon. Nita Deerpalsing, Member of ICAC Parliamentary Committee
Hon. Aurore Perraud, Member of ICAC Parliamentary Committee
Hon. Reza Issack, Member of ICAC Parliamentary Committee
Her Excellency Sharon Taylor, Acting British High Commissioner
Mr. Anil Kumar Ujoodha, Director General ICAC
Mr. Satyajit Boolell, Director of Public Prosecutions
Mrs. Indira Manrakhan, Board Member ICAC
Visiting Speakers
Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to be present at the opening of this seminar jointly organized by the Independent Commission Against Corruption and the British High Commission. This association with the High Commission reflects the good health in the relationship between the two countries having as common denominator the fight against corruption at all levels. I have no doubt that this seminar will be more a sharing of knowledge and hence, be of a precious help in enhancing our capabilities in this fight. It will also provide an excellent opportunity to extend our networking and make the fight more effective.

The United Kingdom has been adopting a number of proactive measures to consolidate the fight against corruption. As has already been pointed out, The UK Bribery Act 2010 which came into force on 1 July 2011, has brought in significant changes to the UK anticorruption law. You will be hearing more on this law by the guest speakers who have travelled to Mauritius to enlighten you on this new approach.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our commitment to fully adhere to international instruments and conventions such as the United Nations Convention Against Corruption, the African Union Convention Against Corruption and the SADC Protocol Against Corruption is a clear demonstration that the fight against corruption is one of the major concerns of the Government of Mauritius. The government has already declared its commitment through the adoption of a strategic approach and developed a comprehensive programme for fighting corruption. The key elements that have been addressed in the anti-corruption strategy have been improved substantially on the state of Corporate Governance and a revision of the regulatory framework as well as strengthening of both the banking and non-banking financial services sector.

In this vein, a number of new legislations have been introduced and harmonized to align the fight against corruption and money laundering to international trends and to respond to obligations under the international instruments to which the country has subscribed to.

More recently, the Asset Recovery Act, a groundbreaking legislation, came into operation on 01 February 2012. The aim of the Act is to provide for the legal framework and procedure to enable the state to recover assets which we are proceeds or instrumentalities of crime, or terrorist property –

Where a person has been convicted of an offence (conviction-based confiscation); or

Where there has been no prosecution but it can be proved on a balance of probabilities that the property represents proceeds or instrumentalities of unlawful activity or terrorist property (non-conviction based or civil asset forfeiture).

The Act creates a comprehensive asset recovery framework which does not only apply to drug offences but also to all offences against the laws of Mauritius which are punishable by a maximum term of imprisonment of not less than 12 months, the enforcement authority being the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have no doubt that the topics on corruption and money laundering, to be presented and discussed during these two days will respond to the requirement of the country to enhance its fight against corruption. With the top brass of the civil service and of the
private sector present here, I hope that the outcome of this meeting will be very positive and instrumental in the establishment of anti-corruption frameworks in their respective departments and companies.

To further the fight against corruption in the public sector, the Public Service Anti-Corruption Framework launched in 2010 is already being implemented in some 22 government departments that have already set up their respective anti-corruption committees and designated their respective chairpersons and members. By the end of 2012, this number is expected to reach 32 public bodies. The Public Sector Anti-Corruption Framework provides a roadmap to public sector organizations for building their corruption resistance capacity. The ICAC will be closely monitoring and assisting the implementation at different levels until full-fledged implementation.

The ICAC has already completed 33 corruption reviews in different public bodies containing more than 1000 recommendations to prevent loopholes that create opportunities for corruption. The implementation of these recommendations is also monitored by the ICAC. Furthermore, guidelines for best practices have been also developed and are being used as instrument in fields such as procurement and recruitment.

These are strong signals to all stakeholders on the urgency to develop a culture of integrity at all levels of the government.

As past Chairperson of the ICAC Parliamentary Committee before assuming office as Attorney General, I would like to commend the institution for the work it is doing and I am also fully aware of its challenges.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have now the pleasure to declare open this seminar and wish you fruitful deliberations. Thank you.