

PRESS RELEASE

GII COMMENDS THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENT

The month of October has seen a landmark achievement of the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament, in particular, and Parliament in general. For the first time, the Public Accounts Committee opened its hearings on the Auditor-General's reports on the Public Accounts of Ghana to the general public. In fact, the first day of these public hearings were very impressive with the Ghana Television airing the proceedings live.

Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII) highly commends the Committee for this bold step in Ghana's determination to achieve transparency and accountability in the use of its limited public resources by public officials paid with public funds to guard and use these resources in the best interest of Ghanaians. The process has exposed public officials and institutions that have misused, mismanaged and/or fraudulently pocketed public resources and/or have ignored or failed to follow laid procedures for public expenditure management.

The outrage and condemnation from both the Ruling and Opposition parties was really impressive. GII particularly commends this collaboration by Parliamentarians, a collaboration that would make Ghana a better country. We need such collaboration in all of Parliament's deliberations and activities.

The proceedings showed cases of deliberate disregard of laid down procedures and corruption, leading to huge financial losses to the state as well as cases of naked robbery and plundering of state resources by greedy officials.

Corruption is definitely a tax on the poor as resources meant for education, health and drugs, roads and water systems are diverted for private gain. Inflated project costs and shoddy work not only deprive the state of much needed resources but also put beneficiaries of such projects at risk, whether bad roads leading to accidents or weak buildings that can collapse on people or people dying for lack (diversion) of drugs.

GII wishes to draw the attention of all and sundry to the fact that the audit reports confirm Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI), which GII has launched annually since 1999, on Ghana's low performance. The argument that the CPI only reflects people's perception no longer holds water. Ghanaians must now accept that CORRUPTION is a CANKER that must be extricated from society by all legal means.

While commending the PAC for this bold initiative GII cautions against making this a one-day wonder. We recommend the following:

1. The initiative must continue and the PAC should not yield to any pressures to suspend the practice.
2. The decisions must be endorsed by the entire House.

3. The establishment of smaller committees to investigate further must also follow because there are very important issues to be addressed by these smaller committees. For instance, the additional pick-ups (7) purchased by the Ministry of Local Government must be accounted for. Moreover, all stolen monies must be retrieved and those guilty penalized.
4. The Executive must provide the necessary support by instructing the Attorney-General to pursue prosecution where it is recommended by Parliament. Accused officials must be interdicted to make way for the investigations and those officials found culpable must be removed immediately and prosecuted. Prosecutors must do their home work well and not frame charges aimed at letting the accused persons off the hook. The Judiciary is the final stop and judges must not let Ghanaians down.
5. Every body has a role to play but the President must lead the way by ordering prompt investigations into credible allegations of corruption and bringing those found guilty to book. The President and his ministers must lead a clean life. Parliamentarians must do likewise and give a good example.
6. The ordinary citizen must check the rulers and vote for people with integrity . The citizenry must stop making demands from their leaders, especially their relatives who hold public office and entrusted power.
7. If the religious bodies aim to reduce poverty they must also fight corruption by preaching against it and shunning donations from corrupt officials.

Finally, the action of the Public Accounts Committee throws a challenge to the Appointments Committee of Parliament, particularly in the vetting of the President's nominees to positions of trust. They must also put aside party loyalties when it comes to vetting the President's nominees for positions of trust. This is important for the fight against corruption. We need people with the requisite knowledge and expertise, true nationalists and people of integrity to run this country and Parliament has a duty to ensure that Ghanaians get this.

AYEKOO, PAC! AYEKOO, Parliament!

Signed

Vitus A. Azeem – Executive Secretary (GII).

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