

16 March 2011

CASAC PROPOSES A NEW INDEPENDENT AGENCY TO INVESTIGATE ACTS OF CORRUPTION

South Africa will become a ‘dysfunctional state’ unless corruption is halted, says CASAC Chairperson, Siphon M Pityana

South Africa is on the verge of joining the ranks of dysfunctional states as the effects of corruption debilitate all spheres of life, says Siphon Pityana, the Chairperson of the Council for the Advancement of the South African Constitution (CASAC).

Speaking exactly six months after CASAC’s launch at Liliesleaf Farm, Johannesburg on 16 September 2010, Pityana says:

“In the changing circumstances of our times, a conservative assault on the Constitution from some of the most powerful in our society threatens to fatally undermine our capacity to overcome poverty and inequality. It is now beyond doubt that corruption and patronage are so pervasive, rampant and crippling in our society that we are on the verge of being deemed a dysfunctional state...”

Pityana says a study by CASAC, an initiative led by progressive people who aim to advance the South African Constitution as a platform for democratic politics and the transformation of our society, has identified weaknesses in the current legal and institutional framework.

The CASAC study identifies three potentially crippling weaknesses:

- South Africa lacks effective monitoring and enforcement agencies
- There is no institution with a clear mandate to drive educational campaigns on corruption, and
- Those organizations tasked with combating corruption lack true independence, a requisite attribute in order to bring about effective execution of such a mandate.

CASAC proposes a dedicated, independent agency that will be responsible and accountable for the investigation of corrupt activities alongside pro-active preventive measures such as education of the public.

Announcing that CASAC will also lead a ‘Red Card Corruption’ Campaign, Pityana says the agency will need to enjoy significant political support in order to ensure that it is well funded among other things:

“If there is truly no political will to address corruption, no mechanism existing or proposed can succeed,” says Pityana.

CASAC’s study asserts that the South African Constitution, generally accepted as one of the most progressive in the world, provides for the ethical conduct by those who exercise public power in the

different spheres of government including the executive (Cabinet), Parliament, which is tasked with performing an oversight role over the executive, and also the Judiciary. It also notes that South Africa is equally afflicted by acts of corruption in the private sector which should not go unpunished.

He says South Africa is party to six international agreements which place certain obligations on the country that, if met, will go a long-way in addressing the scourge of corruption in our society.

They include:

- Establishment of an independent anti-corruption agency or agencies;
- Ensuring that steps are taken to investigate and where appropriate prosecute corrupt acts; to prevent corruption by removing obvious opportunities for corruption; and to educate the public on the harms of corruption;
- Ensuring transparency and access to information in the fight against corruption;
- Establishment of mechanisms that encourage participation in the fight against corruption by the media, civil society and non-governmental organisations; and
- The adoption of measures that address corruption not only in the public sector but also in the private sector.

Pityana says CASAC advocates the establishment of a partnership between political parties, government, business, and other civil society organs in order to secure buy-in from all sectors of society and build a foundation for the establishment of a culture opposed to corruption through public education campaigns. In particular CASAC seeks to facilitate greater involvement by organs of civil society in implementing public education campaigns and rooting out corruption.

Full details of the Red Card Corruption Campaign will be announced shortly.

CASAC SAYS: “RED CARD CORRUPTION”

ENDS.

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