



Parliamentary Centre
Le Centre parlementaire

APNAC West Africa Regional Conference
Abuja, Nigeria, March 11-12, 2004

1. Background and Objectives:

The APNAC conference recently held in Abuja, Nigeria, was the first of a series of regional workshops aimed at strengthening existing APNAC chapters as well as establishing them in those countries where they are absent. APNAC (African Parliamentarian's Network Against Corruption) is supported under the Anti-Corruption Network, one of three policy networks that the Parliamentary Center supports under its CIDA-funded Africa-Canada Parliamentary Strengthening Program.

The importance of holding such a conference on anti-corruption is best expressed in the words of a monthly Nigerian magazine, The Anti-Corruption Crusader, in its description of the evils of the vice: *“Corruption...erodes the moral fabric of every society; it also violates the social and economic rights of the poor and the vulnerable. It undermines democracy, subverts the rule of law, which is the basis of every civilized society; retards development and above all other things, denies societies and particularly the poor, the benefits of free and open competition”*.

The conference brought together Members of Parliament from eight African countries, seven of which are found in the West African region. This conference was held following the All-Africa revitalization workshop held in November of 2003 in Nairobi, Kenya, and whose goal had been to revive the network across parliaments on the continent. The success of the Abuja conference will be analyzed to the extent it fulfilled the objectives set at the beginning by the participants, as well as the extent to which it will have served to strengthen APNAC national chapters in the West Africa region.

The main objectives of the Abuja conference were:

- i) To develop a shared understanding about how to establish and build the capacity of national anti-corruption chapters;
- ii) To review experiences of selected chapters in their fight against corruption with the goal of sharing lessons learned; and
- iii) To discuss ways of creating linkages and strengthen networking, not only among regional chapters themselves, but also with external players such as regional parliaments and civil society organizations.

2) The context of Nigeria

Abuja, a sprawling city of massive buildings and monuments, is the youngest capital city in Africa, having just gained this status since December 12, 1991. The federal capital city of Nigeria was moved from Lagos to Abuja because of the challenges involved in the role of Lagos as both a federal and state capital, poor planning, overpopulation, traffic and accommodation congestion. Abuja, also dubbed the “Center of Unity” is situated right at the geographical center of the national territory on an area of 8,000km². The factors favoring Abuja as the new Federal Capital Territory (FCT) include its centrality, good climate, land availability, easy accessibility, water supply, security, convenience and ethnic accord.

Predominantly an administrative city, all federal ministries are located in Abuja as are the three branches of power: the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary. Scenic and beautiful, the new Nigerian capital city has the potential, according to some, of emerging as the administrative and political hub of the African continent. Also seat to the ECOWAS parliament, Abuja seemed the most appropriate venue for a meeting of West African parliamentarians to discuss the subject of anti-corruption.

3) The Conference

The turnout at the conference was quite impressive with 34 parliamentarians from Ghana, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Mali, Niger, Benin, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Chad and Kenya in attendance, a total of 37 invitations having been issued. This is without counting the local Nigerian participants who sporadically attended some of the sessions at the conference. Of these 34 MPs, 9 women participated, constituting 26% of the entire delegation. When the final count is done, only 4 new women from the W.A region attended: Burkina Faso (2), Senegal (1), and Mali (1). The other 5 include 3 members of the APNAC Executive (Hon.Thiam, Hon.Gama and Hon. Khupe) and 2 others who came into the picture later (Hon. Misihairabwi and Hon. Mango). So the representation is slightly worse than in Nairobi where 10 women delegates attended. The delegations from Benin, Niger, and Ghana contained no women.

The overall number also included eight of the ten members of the APNAC Executive – APNAC Vice-chair Haoua Thiam from Senegal, Ouchar Tourgoudi and Bouzabo Patchili from Chad, Jimmy Ang’wenyi from Kenya, Zainab Gama from Tanzania, Thokozani Khupe from Zimbabwe, Samou Sangare from Mali and Nduese Essien from Nigeria.

APNAC Chair Augustine Ruzindana from Uganda was unfortunately unable to attend due to last minute political troubles at home. The Executive member from Malawi, Louis Chimango, was also kept away by preparations for the upcoming general elections in his country and it proved impossible to get him a representative from Lesotho in time for the conference.

In attendance as well was Joy Mwaniki, member of staff from Transparency International Kenya, and a team from the Canadian Parliamentary Centre, namely, Rasheed Draman, Praimie Yip and Charity Wakaba.

The proceedings of the conference evolved around a number of thematic sessions:

⇒ An overview of the United Nations and the African Union Conventions Against Corruption was provided by a representative from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Mr. Paul Salay, and by the Chairman of the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), Justice Mustapha Akanbi, respectively. They both underlined the important role that parliamentarians could play in pushing for the ratification of both of these international instruments to fight corruption in their respective countries. The United Nations Anti-corruption Convention was adopted in December 2003 in Merida, Mexico. As of March 2004, 104 States have signed the UNACC and only one country, Kenya, has ratified it. 30 ratifications are necessary to bring the Convention into force.

The Africa Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption, on the other hand, was adopted by African heads of governments on July 11, 2003 in Maputo. The Convention makes it compulsory for all signatories to establish an anti-corruption agency. No ratifications have yet been made. Both Conventions are particularly important in helping countries fight corruption crimes that, more often than not, transcend their national boundaries. They also guarantee international cooperation and mutual legal assistance in dealing with corruption.

⇒ A presentation was made, from a civil society group perspective, on how to establish and sustain national anti-corruption chapters. Mr. Daniel Batidam, from the Ghana Integrity Initiative, a local chapter of Transparency International, underlined the importance for APNAC chapters to consider Civil Society and the media as partners and proactively involve them in the fight against corruption. That relationship between Parliament and civil society must be genuine - built on credibility, transparency, and a sense of strong mutual accountability. Parliament needs to make use of statistical resources collected by civil society, such as the TI's Corruption Perception Index (CPI). These data tools and indicators do empower reformists in government and civil society in effecting change to improve governance. Finally, APNAC chapters need to enlist the help of civil society to push for the ratification of the UN and AU anti-corruption conventions. Transparency International has especially been instrumental in the consultative process leading to the signing of both conventions and is still committed to supporting States in the process leading to the ratification and eventual enforcement of these tools in the fight against corruption.

⇒ Experiences of three APNAC chapters - Kenya, Nigeria and Senegal - were shared:

i) **Kenya** – Jimmy Ang'wenyi, APNAC-Kenya chair, made a presentation on how the Kenyan chapter, in existence for only three years, has managed to get anti-corruption issues firmly on the national agenda through public debates and lobbying. The objectives of APNAC-K have been information-sharing of best practices in fighting corruption; enlisting the

support and involvement of civil society, private sector and religious organizations in the fight against corruption; campaigning in the National Assembly and in the Executive to bring and keep anti-corruption issues on national focus; and finally to ensure that important parliamentary committees such as the Public Accounts and Public Investments committees are fully involved in anti-corruption. The chapter, of which 6 ministers are active members, has managed to build a very strong collaborative relationship with the Executive and has consequently managed to influence a number of government policies on anti-corruption. APNAC-K has also participated in various international forums on the subject of anti-corruption and is now trying to create networks with fellow parliamentarians in Africa through APNAC. It also intends to push for Kenya to become one of the first countries to ratify the AU Convention against corruption next month. The future goals of APNAC-K include:

- a. Increasing the membership from the current 36 MPs (both government and opposition members), and in particular to raise the number of women members from the current four;
- b. Establishing outreach programs in schools, churches, communities, rural women organizations, etc to ensure the stigmatization of corruption as a vice;
- c. Establishing APNAC branches in lower levels of government e.g. municipalities;
- d. Pushing the enactment of legislation for the free flow of information which will, for instance, give the media access to information about assets and liabilities of public officials and leaders;
- e. Establishing a legal framework to ensure proper funding of political parties, free and fair elections in a bid to have 'clean' MPs in the House; and
- f. Staging a collaborative campaign with various stakeholders such as civil society and the media, in the fight against corruption.

ii) **Nigeria** – Nduese Essien, Chair of APNAC-Nigeria gave an overview of Parliament's role in ensuring freedom of information for civil society and the media in investigating corruption offences in the country. Nigeria, which returned to democratic rule only in May 1999 after almost 20 years of military dictatorship, has not had a history of freedom of information. A new Constitution, however, has made express provision for the protection of the media and the free flow of information. This liberal provision has seen a proliferation of over fifty privately owned newspapers and magazines and over twenty privately owned radio and television stations nationwide.

- a. The National Assembly has passed an amendment to the National Broadcasting Commission Bill, which radically alters some of the stringent requirements for ownership of information dissemination organs and provides a level playing field for all stakeholders, both private and public.

- b. Another bill that is currently pending before the House, seeks to liberalize access to government information by limiting state control over information. For instance, it would expose all documents relating to expenditure of public funds to any interested party, and consequently, in APNAC-Nigeria's view, radically altering the balance in the fight against corruption. If made into law, this bill would furnish civil society and the media with the instruments they would need to investigate corruption in the country effectively.

- iii) **Senegal** – Doudou Wade, Chair of APNAC-Senegal, emphasized the important role that democracy and political will have played in the fight against corruption in Senegal, especially within the National Assembly. Since the 2003 Nairobi conference where APNAC Senegal was represented, the chapter has been instrumental in pushing the Assembly to pass several bills into law with regard to fighting corruption:
 - a. The Anti-Money laundering bill;
 - b. The National Commission on Anti-Corruption bill;
 - c. The bill relating to Public Procurement of contracts for public works and infrastructure;
 - d. The bill requiring representation of the National Assembly on the board of the Public Works Commission; and
 - e. The bill requiring representation of the National Assembly on the Boards of all public corporations.

⇒ Discussion sessions based on a series of questions that related to each of the thematic presentations were held during the two conference days. Participation at these sessions was quite animated, with contributions emanating from delegates of the countries represented. The initial proposition had been to divide all the participants into smaller manageable discussion groups. However, the absence of the expected large numbers of Nigerian delegates, coupled with logistical problems associated with the translation services, confined the now relatively-smaller group of African delegates in one meeting room. This had the unexpected positive result of intensifying the level of discussion as the different country experiences were discussed. Some delegates later expressed their satisfaction at this plenary arrangement, decrying the missed opportunity they would have had of being left out of some of these interesting discussions had they been put in separate rooms.

4. Future Strategies for Strengthening West African Chapters: A number of resolutions emerged following discussions on the future strategies for APNAC chapters in the region. These related to the future organization of national and regional APNAC activities; the relationship between national chapters and their regional Executive; and to the question pertaining to the effective sharing of information between the chapters.

- a. *Deadlines* should be fixed for the formation of country chapters in those countries of the region where they do not exist;

- b. *Mobilization of resources* - it is imperative for chapters to start exploring other funding sources so as to diversify the financial sources other than that afforded by the Parliamentary Center. This is more so important if the anti-corruption fight is to be taken to other countries of the region that do not have national chapters;
- c. *Relation with regional APNAC executives* – each chapter should prepare and submit a work plan to the regional executive that contains a list of activities to be undertaken in a particular period. The regional executive can then not only assist the chapter in implementing some of the activities but also keep abreast of what is going on in each chapter;
- d. *Linkages with Civil society organizations* – all chapters should seek to create links with Transparency International branches in their own countries. In addition, civil society should be given an observatory role in all APNAC meetings within the individual countries and at international meetings, not only as resource persons but also to help lobby the anti-corruption cause;
- e. *Linkages with African parliamentary institutions* such as ECOWAS, the AU, etc – each country chapter should have someone solely responsible for mobilizing support and sensitizing these institutions to APNAC and the fight against corruption;
- f. *Dissemination of information* – APNAC texts and statutes should be made available in both French and English to all the country chapters. In return, all the chapters should circulate a complete list of the national legislation governing the fight against corruption in their country, with the goal of alerting everyone of any progress or regression. Likewise, a rundown of the challenges facing them should be circulated with the goal of seeking ways of assisting each other more effectively;
- g. *Intensified interaction* - to further strengthen country chapters in the region, there needs to be further efforts made at bringing them together in various forums outside those organized at the regional level such as the Abuja conference; and
- h. *A firm commitment to fight corruption* – a declaration should be prepared by each regional APNAC Executive asking all countries to make the fight against corruption a national policy and priority, akin to the appeal made, for instance, in the fight against HIV/Aids.

5. APNAC and gender: A working lunch was organized by Priscilla Misihairabwi-Mushonga from Zimbabwe to address the question of women participation in APNAC. The meeting, which was attended by nine women parliamentarians from Mali, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Nigeria, as well as three women from Civil Society, was quite successful later in bringing to the attention of the conference participants the poor engagement of women in APNAC activities. The three women from civil society were Lilian Ekeanyanwu from the Zero Corruption Coalition, an anti-corruption group in Nigeria; Linda Ofori-Kwafo from the Ghana Integrity Initiative; and Joy Mwaniki from Transparency International Kenya.

Priscilla introduced the Gender Equality Network to the eleven women present at the meeting and secured the enrollment of all into the network. She stressed the need to lobby more women parliamentarians in the respective countries into involving themselves in APNAC activities and taking an active role so as to achieve gender

balance. She, in particular, decried the total absence of women presenters at the Abuja conference. However, the women Members did play a leadership role at this conference, by Hon. Thiam and Hon. Misihairabwi acting as Chairs of a number of the sessions. The women came up with three recommendations with regard to APNAC and gender representation, which they presented, and had voted in, back at the plenary session amid strong protests from some participants. These were:

- a. In future, any country delegation that did not have women members would be denied participation at APNAC meetings except as observers only. Henceforth, all invitation letters to APNAC meetings would bear this condition relating to gender representation;
- b. An all-woman APNAC conference should be organized to sensitize African women parliamentarians to APNAC and to the fight against corruption; and
- c. All APNAC chapters must begin to make extra efforts to lobby women parliamentarians into joining APNAC structures.

6. APNAC Executive meeting: The eight Executive members present at the Conference met together to review the work plan for Year Two starting April 2004 – March 2005; to discuss the time and venue of the next regional conference; and to select the members of the APNAC Award Committee.

- i) The work plan, which included activities aimed at strengthening national chapters such as regional meetings, revival of the website and newsletter, creating linkages with anti-corruption policy groups and regional parliaments, etc, was approved and adopted with some additional suggestions for Year Three. These include the establishment of a pilot project by the Executive members to monitor elections in those countries that will be holding them next year; the organization of an all-women's APNAC conference to sensitize women parliamentarians to the fight against corruption and to ensure they play a more active role; and finally, visits by Executive members to countries within their region to support local chapter initiatives.
- ii) With regard to the next APNAC regional conference, the second in a series of workshops intended to help establish and strengthen national chapters in Southern Africa, Botswana (N.B: Namibia is currently under discussion as well) was named as the venue of choice and the date was set for July 2004. The country was chosen for its strong lead in the fight against corruption amongst the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa. In view of the need to hold effective workshops as well as cater to budgetary limitations imposed on the Canadian Parliamentary Center, which is the main funding partner for activities of the Anti-Corruption Network, a series of parameters for country participation would be set down.
- iii) Selection of the Award Committee – In keeping with the spirit set at the Nairobi Conference where an APNAC award was given to Kenya's president for his outstanding fight against corruption, the Executive sought to institutionalize this annual award by selecting

an Awards Committee that would be charged with making recommendations of the award recipients. The final selection of the seven persons who would constitute the Committee was made with the objective of achieving, as much as possible, a geographical, linguistic and gender representation. They included: Priscilla Misihairabwi-Mushonga of Zimbabwe, Steve Akorli of Ghana, Musikari Kombo of Kenya, Marlene Zebango of Burkina Faso, Gado Boureima of Niger, Doudou Wade of Senegal and lastly Sani Shaban of Nigeria. The APNAC Executive would develop a set of terms of reference for the Committee bearing criteria for the selection of Award recipients.

7. Overall Assessment of the West Africa APNAC regional conference:

A number of disappointments were recorded at the conference. The first of these was the quasi-total absence of Nigerian MPs during the sessions following the official opening ceremony. Reasons advanced to explain their non-attendance included the upcoming regional elections that had taken some of them back to their constituencies; the funeral of a former Speaker of the House which had taken some others out of the national capital region; and thirdly, one of the conference days fell on a Friday, a day when the House was not sitting and thus difficult to secure the availability of members, some on religious grounds. A second disappointment was the continuing under-representation of Women parliamentarians in APNAC meetings. This problem had been raised in Nairobi and was followed by the promise from member countries to include more women in their delegations in the future. However, with only nine women out of the 34 regional delegates who came to Abuja, this commitment was clearly not respected. A third problem, pertaining to logistics, was the insufficient number of interpretation equipment available, namely earphones. Even though the problem was resolved eventually, this had initially been cause for much frustration as some delegates were excluded from the conference proceedings due to the language barrier.

However, the positive results emerging from the conference overshadowed these problems.

- i) Delegates lauded the usefulness of bringing national chapters together to share views and strategies on how to combat corruption using the legislative process; a number of important resolutions were discussed which, if adopted, will ensure the increase and sustenance of anti-corruption chapters within those parliaments.
- ii) Delegates resolved to circulate information about the laws each country has passed with regard to anti-corruption. Hopefully, this conference will, in addition, mark the beginning of concerted efforts to streamline laws on anti-corruption within the various parliaments of the region.
- iii) The active participation of civil society organizations at the conference was extremely timely as it helped to further demonstrate the positive outcomes of aligning parliamentary work with that of policy groups in the fight against corruption.

- iv) The introduction of the Gender Equality network to the women participants, and the subsequent lobbying for gender balance in APNAC, could influence decisively women's participation in such future gatherings.
- v) The APNAC Executive demonstrated their leadership by not only establishing the Awards Committee but also by committing themselves to working more closely with the Parliamentary Center in the future organization of activities for the Anti-Corruption Network.

Lastly, APNAC-Nigeria, and the National Assembly of Nigeria as a whole, must be heartily commended for the extremely generous support, both financial and logistical, that they lent to the Parliamentary Center and which ensured the smooth planning and execution of the conference.

African Participants

Country

1. Soule Abou Adam	Benin
2. Sylvain A. Akindes	Benin
3. Robert M. Ntcha	Benin
4. Vivian Compaore	Burkina Faso
5. Marlene Zebango	Burkina Faso
6. Mahama Sawadogo	Burkina Faso
7. Boniface Zaongo	Burkina Faso
8. Ouchar Tourgoudi	Chad
9. Patchili Bouzabo	Chad
10. P.C. Appiah Ofori	Ghana
11. John Tia	Ghana
12. Jimmy Ang'wenyi	Kenya
13. Mirugi Kariuki	Kenya
14. Kahindi Kingi	Kenya
15. Christine Mango	Kenya
16. Soita Shitanda	Kenya
17. Justin Muturi	Kenya
18. Samou Sangare	Mali
19. Siaka B. Batouta	Mali
20. Moussa Sadio Traore	Mali
21. Arbongana B. Maiga	Mali
22. Diakite Nana Sy	Mali
23. Ibrahim Nomao	Niger
24. Gado Boureima	Niger
25. Abdoullrahim Balarabe	Niger
26. Nduesse Essien	Nigeria
27. Haoua Dia Thiam	Senegal
28. Rokhaye Seye Samake	Senegal

29. Doudou Wade	Senegal
30. Khalifa Ababacar Sall	Senegal
31. Bakari Djiley Coly	Senegal
32. Zainab Gama	Tanzania
33. Thokozani Khupe	Zimbabwe
34. Priscilla Misihairabwi-Mushonga	Zimbabwe

Civil Society Participants:

1. Justice Mustapha Akanbi	- Independent Corrupt Practices Commission
2. Paul M. Salay	- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
3. Daniel Batidam	- Ghana Integrity Initiative
4. Linda Ofori-Kwafo	- Ghana Integrity Initiative
5. Lilian Ekeanyunwu	- Zero Coalition Group
6. Joy Mwaniki	- Transparency International Kenya
7. Niklas Enander	- Parliamentarians For Global Action
8. Rasheed Draman	- Canadian Parliamentary Center
9. Praimie Yip	- Canadian Parliamentary Center
10. Charity Wakaba	- Canadian Parliamentary Center