



Regional Colloquium for Ombudsman Institutions in Africa

Welcoming Remarks by
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UNDP Resident Representative

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Nairobi

Honourable Dr. Justice Emmanuel Ugirashebuja, President of the East African Court of Justice

Honourable Professor Githu Muigai, Attorney General of the Republic of Kenya

Excellency Sofie From-Emmesberger, Ambassador of Finland

Honourable John Walters, President of the International Ombudsman Institute

Honourable Dr Fozia Amin, the President of the African Ombudsman and Mediators Association

Commissioner Otiende Amollo, Chair of the Commission on Administrative Justice and Secretary General of the African Ombudsman and Mediators Association

Distinguished Ombudsmen and representatives present from various countries;

Distinguished Government Officials and Representatives of Development Partners; Ladies and Gentlemen; Good morning.

On behalf of the United Nations in Kenya, it is an honor and privilege to participate in this unique event, only the second of its kind in Kenya, bringing together African Ombudsmen, oversight institutions and practitioners across the world, to share and discuss our common objective in addressing administrative justice. In so doing we will further appreciate the opportunities and challenges faced by the Ombudsman offices in the region and around the world.

I acknowledge the important contribution of the Ombudsman institutions in advancing human rights, strengthening rule of law, and widening access to justice and to quality public services with particular emphasis on the most marginalized and vulnerable groups. Responsiveness and public accountability to the concerns and interests of citizens is a key aspect of democracy and should continuously be nurtured. Equity and inclusion in provision of public services remains an important entitlement to the people across geography, demography and other social strata. Today, as the world advances the agenda of sustainable development, matters of effectiveness, accountability and inclusion of public institutions receive additional highlight in discussions on the wellbeing of the people.

In this respect therefore, the Ombudsman offices have an important mandate to engage with citizens and to listen to their issues by receiving complaints from them on issues relating to human rights as well as public service delivery or lack of thereof, depending on each Ombudsman's specific mandate. The complaints that the institutions receive shed light onto problems that people face each day. Every complaint matters because every individual behind a complaint matters. These complaints should not only be an opportunity to address individual challenges but to carefully assess structural or institutional matters that need targeted and multidisciplinary intervention.

It is a privilege but also a big responsibility for the ombudsman offices to seek justice for those that feel let down and without other avenues to seek

redress. Interventions by the Ombudsman offices do in practice contribute to real improvements in people's lives as well as the strengthening of rights, freedoms and accountability in a given country.

I am pleased to acknowledge the role of the Kenyan Ombudsman Office, the Commission on Administrative Justice, in strengthening equitable and transparent public service provision in Kenya by addressing issues of maladministration. Their strategy of 'pointing out the bad and celebrating the good' helps to create a constructive environment where inappropriate actions by public servant are addressed and corrected and positive actions are acknowledged and rewarded. An example of positive actions being rewarded is the Huduma Awards scheme initiated last year. It was a notable achievement for the Commission on Administrative Justice to be acknowledged for their important work by the President of Kenya who attended the Huduma Awards ceremony.

Despite positive progress achieved globally many challenges remain in relation to enforcement of decisions, carrying out work with limited budget provisions, and challenges of reaching out to citizens in every corner of a country. I urge you to use this forum to find innovative ways to address those challenges and to share best practice as a way to inspire others.

Globally UNDP works with Ombudsman institutions and with National Human Rights Institutions in several countries to promote and strengthen democratic governance processes. People-centered development,

democracy and good governance are integral part of our development mandate. We also advocate for South-South cooperation and exchange of knowledge which is exemplified by this colloquium. It is also important to acknowledge the commitment and contribution of the Nordic countries, especially Finland and Sweden that continue to be stout supporters of Ombudsman institutions and National Human Rights Institutions in their own region, globally and here in Kenya.

To conclude, this conference is a continuation of good cooperation in the region between the ombudsmen institution and provides an opportunity to lifts this cooperation to an even higher level. I wish you all every success in your deliberation and also in carrying out the difficult work ahead of you in your various countries.

Asanteni Sana