

Republic of Uganda

THE FIRST UGANDA NATIONAL JOURNALISM AWARDS EVENT

REMARKS BY
THE INSPECTOR GENERAL OF GOVERNMENT
JUSTICE IRENE MULYAGONJA

AT
GOLF COURSE HOTEL

KAMPALA

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The Media and Public Sector Accountability in Uganda.

I thank you for inviting me to officiate at the first Uganda National Journalise Awards ceremony organised by the African Centre for Media Excellence in recognition of journalists who have excelled in reporting on public affairs issues including the fight against corruption. I am happy to note that this initiative is meant to encourage journalists to apply skills, techniques and best practices in order to promote professionalism and journalistic excellence.

Accountability is a tenet of good governance that requires public officers to answer how public resources have been utilised for service delivery.
The media plays an important role in ensuring public accountability by monitoring and investigating the actions of those who are granted public trust. Media coverage of corruption greatly contributes to shaping public hostility towards corrupt behaviour that might result in the electoral defeat of individual politicians or of an entire government. This may also result in public pressure to reform policies and laws that may otherwise create favourable conditions for corrupt behaviours. It is against this backdrop, that professionalism in journalism is vital in improving the quality of our society.

Current state of the media in the Fight against Corruption

It is important for the media to appreciate its role in the anti-corruption struggle. The media has a unique opportunity to unearth stories where corruption is an underlying threat and report such cases to the Inspectorate for further investigation. The media also can provide appropriate coverage of anti-corruption issues to awaken public outrage against corruption.

In the recent past the media has taken keen interest in the coverage of corruption related issues. Coverage of issues like GAVI, CHOGM, OPM Scandal, Ministry of Health scandal, Ministry of Public Service scandal, investigation reports like UNEB, Karuma, NSSF among others, was widely done, though not very positively at the time.

However, the media tends to report anti-corruption stories with "Eye Catching" headlines but without the relevant details such as the nature of the offence committed by the accused, the anti-corruption agency that is handling the matter and the findings of court where applicable. And most important, the media do not educate the public about the greater impact of that corrupt act. *(Interesting still is that, the media makes a headline like "IGG fails to account for Ushs 938 million" when they are making reference to the Inspectorate of Government. This of course increases the sales but by the time anyone realises that it is not Irene Mulyagonja they are referring to, the paper has made a lot of money.)*

The media also tends to report corruption matters in a shallow manner and at times with incorrect information which tends to distort the anti-corruption struggle. This may lead to subsequent reports not being taken seriously, creating apathy within the populace. This may be attributed to poor research by the journalists or at times the lack of interest to report on governance issues.

It is also possible that journalists are susceptible to graft as well. Due to the sensitivity of some investigative leads, some sources may choose to bribe a journalist so that the report is compromised. If that journalist does not mind about the ethics of the profession, the journalist may choose to take the bait to the detriment of the public whose funds have been misappropriated.

The Inspectorate of Government has over the years, endeavoured to provide relevant information to the media and has improved the relations between the two institutions. We have ensured that we make timely response to your queries and provided interviews when called upon. I encourage you to take advantage of this relation to actively support the fight against corruption in this country. Be at the forefront of advocating for tougher measures to be taken against those found culpable and avoid taking sides with criminals.

In the same vein, it is important for the media to understand the roles of prosecution, in this case the Inspectorate of Government, the role of defence and the role of the judiciary when it comes to matters of corruption cases in the courts of law. Many times the action of the judiciary is attributed to the prosecution and this has created a lot of problems. For instance, when the Judge makes a ruling to deny bail, the headlines will

read, “the IGG denies bail”*(or in this case Asubo of the Inspectorate of Government denied the bail application)*. The Inspectorate can only provide grounds for objection of the bail application but the outcome is solely the responsibility of the Judiciary.

The Inspectorate under the umbrella of the Court Users forum interact with the different institutions on how better to promote accountability in the country. Strategies are discussed on how the Inspectorate, DPP, Police and the judiciary should manage investigations and court processes for successful convictions.

As I conclude, let me remind you that the Inspectorate of Government has a broad mandate as provided for the in the Constitution. These are the Anti-Corruption mandate through investigations, arrests and prosecution, the Ombudsman mandate which it achieves through promotion of the rule of law, the Leadership code enforcement mandate and the prevention of corruption mandate.

The realisation of this broad mandate is an effort that requires a number of stakeholders. These include the government agencies, the civil society, the media and ultimately the citizens of the Republic of Uganda.

This evening as we recognise journalists who have excelled in their fields, let me remind you again to do your work with objectivity and professionalism. Let us provide the citizens with balanced stories that will encourage them to demand for transparency and accountability from those in positions of power whether political or technical. This will help us to have a country where citizens receive better services and thus a better country.

Allow me to congratulate all those who are/have been awarded. Go and be ambassadors of professionalism.

Together let us uphold the principle of Zero Tolerance to Corruption.
For God and My country