

Parliament must take Information Bill serious says former SFO boss

Accra Daily Mail
Thursday, June 15, 2006

Mr. Brian Sapati, former Executive Secretary of the Serious Fraud Office (SFO), has called on the SFO to send the Right to Information Bill to parliament for the development of a strong culture to fight corruption.

He said parliament should also be put under pressure to pass the Whistleblower Bill under a Certificate of Urgency as efforts are made to deepen the linkage between corruption and human rights.

Mr. Sapati made the suggestion in a presentation at a workshop organised by the Ghana Centre for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) in Accra. The workshop attracted participants from the legal sector, the law enforcement agencies, Members of Parliament, civil society, religious groups and the media. Mr. Sapati argued that if corruption thrived in the absence of human rights culture and impacted negatively on the enjoyment of rights, then it is essential for all human rights advocates to join in the deepening of the human rights culture.

He called on the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) to be more proactive in the fight against corruption and to collaborate with other institutions in its awareness and advocacy programmes. Mr. Sapati called on the CHRAJ to take a second look at its method of using witness in hearings involving allegations of corruption against top government officials, explaining that some witnesses might not have the resources to complete their testimonies to the end to establish the allegations. He said parliament must strengthen its oversight role and the Development Partners to give more support to initiatives in the protection of the citizenry against human rights abuses.

Mr. Charles Ayamdo, Deputy Director of the Anti-Corruption Unit of the CHRAJ, noted that current democratic practice seeks to make corruption a crime against humanity, and the right to a corruption free society is inherently a basic human right issue. "Corruption is always associated with a violation of moral standards and loss of honour. It is a threat to individuals, society, to rule of law and democratic system of government," Mr. Ayamdo said.

Mrs. Linda Ofori-Kwafo, Acting Executive Secretary of Ghana Integrity Initiative, identified the right to freedom of speech and expression, the right to information and the right to fair trial, with the complement of an independent judiciary as tools for fighting corruption. She said open government is an antidote to corruption and the knowledge that citizens can scrutinize their actions should make governments more inclined to serve their citizens without swindling them.

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