Remarks by UNDP Country Director at Opening Ceremony

Anti-Corruption Training for Media Practitioners

Tuesday, March 30th, 2010

Honorable Minister of Justice and Police, Mr. Santokhie, staff of the Ministry of J & P, Head of the Human Rights Bureau, Ms. Vinkwolk, Director of the Projekta Foundation, Ms. Ganga, Project Manager, Ms. Chandrikasingh, Participants in the course, Media Practitioners, Ladies and Gentlemen.

The Ministry of Justice and Police and UNDP are jointly implementing the Human Rights, Legal Access and Anti-Corruption project and this is the first activity being implemented under the Anti-Corruption component. It is therefore a great pleasure for me to say a few words here to mark the start of this activity. I would first like to commend the Ministry of Justice and Police, and more specifically, the Minister for giving life to the Anti-Corruption component under our joint project. Corruption is often seen as a very sensitive issue and training media practitioners to recognize, report on and to bring more awareness in society on the effects of corruption is often seen as a first step in addressing corruption and its damaging effects.

The negative impacts of corruption and corrupt practices are no longer questioned. Numerous studies have demonstrated that corruption erodes the rule of law, weakens the performance of governments and public institutions, destroys public trust in governance institutions, diminishes the practice of democracy, and is the enemy of good governance. Corruption impacts the poor disproportionately, since this group does not have the means to pay for services which they should be receiving at no cost. The United Nations has designated the 9th December each year as International Anti-Corruption Day. The theme chosen for 2009 was: “Don’t let corruption kill development”. A corrupt society and corrupt institutions can hinder access of the poor to education, health and other public services, access to justice and the protection of the law; and can lead to social instability and reduce citizen security.

Corrupt practices can rob the state of much needed revenues to pursue development and social welfare policies for example when corrupt public officials and business persons collude to avoid paying duties and taxes. Corrupt practices can rob the state of much needed talent and skilled human resources when ill-qualified but well-connected persons are recruited for public sector positions through nepotism, cronyism, patron client relationships and family ties. Corrupt practices can lead to poor or sub-standard development outcomes when persons are awarded contracts for which they have limited or no expertise, not on the basis of open competition and quality of work, but rather through bribes to public officials or ‘old boys’ networks. Corrupt practices can lead to poor social outcomes when public officials do not perform the tasks for which they are being paid: when teachers do not teach children in schools; when nurses do not provide care for the sick and needy; when doctors do not provide medical care to those in need of attention; when law enforcement officials do not provide service and protection to those they swore to serve; when the judicial establishment does not dispense justice with an even hand
and according to the law; and what is worse when all of the above extract illegal and additional payments for doing what they are already being paid to do.

Honorable Minister, Participants in this course, the above are all examples of acts of corruption through commission or omission, large and small. Individually and collectively they make the difference between a stable, progressive, caring and well ordered society; or one that is mired in controversy, immorality, selfishness and decadence.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been involved in accountability, transparency and integrity programmes since the early 90s through the activities of our Country Offices as a necessary complement and instrument of the Organization’s mandate on poverty reduction, realization of the MDGs and promoting sustainable development.

Under the joint project with the Ministry of Justice and Police, UNDP is committed to assist the Government and people of Suriname to address corruption through the provision of technical support for the training of key anti-corruption officials; the development of awareness strategies for Parliamentarians, Government Officials and the general public; and support for ratifying and operationalizing the UN Convention Against Corruption.

I would like to underscore the critical importance that UNDP attaches to the training programme for the media which we are launching this afternoon. The various arms of the media are critical in fostering cultural and attitudinal change that is indispensable for addressing and reducing corruption. It is for this reason that you were chosen to be the first group to receive training in anti-corruption instruments and principles. You interact with, entertain and educate the public on a daily basis and you are therefore in a very good position to create and increase awareness surrounding this very sensitive and important issue. In closing Honorable Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to wish the media practitioners participating in this course, a very fruitful and enduring learning experience.

I thank you for your attention.