**POLICY DIALOGUE ON CORRUPTION, SOCIAL NORMS AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE IN NIGERIA**

**(Tuesday August 15, 2023)**

**Welcome Address**

**By**

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**Chairman, ICPC**

Protocol

It is my great pleasure and privilege to welcome you all to this Policy Dialogue on *Corruption, Social Norms and Behaviour Change in Nigeria*. This is the sixth in the history of Policy Dialogue Series of ACAN-ICPC. It would be recalled that the first Policy Dialogue held on April 16, 2019, focused on ‘Eradicating Electoral Corruption (Focus on Vote Buying’). This was closely followed by the second Policy Dialogue which was held on September 11, 2019, on the theme ‘Accountability for Security Votes: Preventing Corruption in Security Budgeting without Jeopardizing National Security’.

Again on May 4, 2021, the third in the Policy Dialogue Series had robust discussions on ‘Corruption and Cost of Governance in Nigeria’. This was followed by the fourth Policy Dialogue on *Entrenching Transparency in Public Service Recruitment Process in Nigeria*, which was held on May 5, 2022. Lastly, on September 9, 2022, the fifth Policy Dialogue on *Corruption and Insecurity in Nigeria*, took place.

In all of these, attendance was very inspiring as the themes squarely addressed issues of major concerns to our country then and even presently. As I observed in one of such gatherings in the past, our Policy Dialogues generally are meant to deliberate on issues that focus on more systemic and institutional improvements, which also should be sustainable regardless of changes in political administration. And the concomitant Policy Brief is meant to offer solutions that are practicable and directly relevant to the improvement of the subject matter of the policy.

The timing of this Policy Dialogue on *Corruption, Social Norms and Behaviour Change in Nigeria,* could not have come at a better time than now when the foundation of our social values and norms has become seriously threatened. In actual fact, a lot of changes are taking place across the wider Nigerian society. But more worrisome to me, is the emergence and pervasive spread of corruption-inducing social norms across all ethnicities and religious divides.

Despite widespread cultural and religious perception of corruption as a negation of societal values, a survey carried out by ACAN-ICPC in 2020 revealed that corruption among public servants is enabled by community ambivalence towards the proceeds of corruption. For example, as high as 69% of the public servants surveyed indicated that their community would accept monetary gifts above their annual salary without questioning the source of the money. Corruption is therefore fueled by **community expectation** of people in office. There is for example a general belief that groups, networks and communities expect the holder of an office to confer benefits from (or of) the office on members of the community regardless of whether (a) the benefits are corrupt practices in themselves (e.g., nepotism), or (b) if the benefits come from proceeds of corruption (e.g., embezzlement). Also, there is the common expectation that people in high office should donate huge sums of money at public functions. Lastly, it is equally expected that government officials should enrich (and/or confer other benefits on) themselves from their office. Relations and community members of public officials see nothing wrong with all these, even when they condemn such practices happening in other communities – a case of “it is good for us and not for other communities”.

Over the years, the *law and order approach* to combating corruption has dominated the activities of the anti-corruption agencies. Although the *law and order approach* is necessary to curb corruption, however, it is not sufficient as it has to be complemented with some form of a self or group-regulatory mechanism to achieve the desired behaviour change in both government and society. This is where a discussion of corruption, social norms and behaviour change becomes relevant.

Achieving the goal of behavioural change in a society with endemic corruption involves a complex and sometimes a long process that requires a multi-sectoral brainstorming session to develop appropriate policy framework. This is where a policy dialogue platform offers a unique and veritable opportunity.

The task therefore before this *Policy Dialogue on Corruption, Social Norms and Behaviour Change* *in Nigeria*, are to:

* Disentangle the web of issues involving political, social, economic, religious and ethnic factors that fuel corrupt practices;
* Identify how societal expectations from peers, networks, groups and communities, enable corruption to fester in both government and society;
* Identify corruption-enabling social norms that are peculiar to the private sector; and finally,
* Develop appropriate policy framework and measures to counter social norms that fuel corruption.

In carrying out this task, I call on you to reflect on the following preliminary recommendations as a take home assignment:

* All stakeholders invited to this Policy Dialogue should ***implement advocacy programmes*** in their constituencies.
* All the stakeholders should ***lead by example*** to inspire their members and constituents.
* All stakeholders should list out corruption - inducing social norms that need to be discouraged and anti - corruption social norms that should be encouraged.
* Key stakeholders should ***institute a reward system*** for those who demonstrate good behavior or who stand against corruption in their constituencies. Such a reward system should be elevated to a policy for all administrations to implement, and the *ad hoc* recognition of good practices which is presently being done should also be elevated to the level of policy that is not regime-bound.
* Federal and State Ministries of Education should ***develop and implement behavior change programmes*** in primary and secondary schools for the youths.
* Federal and State Ministries of Education should ***introduce inter - school debates*** to promote anti - corruption social norms and behavior change.
* The seven pillars of the National Ethics and Integrity Policy (NEIP) should be incorporated into the advocacy for behaviour change.

Finally, I am highly delighted to welcome all of you once again to this very important gathering. I urge you all to stay to the end of this discussion session as we value your great presence.

Thank you for listening.