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Commonwealth Caribbean Conference Opens

- Governor Martyn Roper formally opens Commonwealth Caribbean integrity commissions and anti-corruption bodies' conference.
- Commonwealth Secretary-General Rt. Hon. Patricia Scotland, QC, gave the main address.
- Delegates will share their experiences combatting corruption in their respective jurisdictions during the three-day conference.

Grand Cayman (GIS) – The Cayman Islands welcomed delegates from the Commonwealth Caribbean nations to an ongoing conference from 3-7 June, this morning (Monday, 3 June 2019) at the Grand Cayman Marriott Resort.

The conference has 27 delegates who as members of the Commonwealth Caribbean Association of Integrity Commissions and anti-corruption bodies (CCAICACB) are meeting for their fifth annual conference which is being held in the Cayman Islands for the first time.

Keynote speaker, Commonwealth Secretary-General Rt. Hon. Patricia Scotland, QC, underscored the urgency and appropriateness of this year's conference theme "Transforming Words into Action: Revitalising the Fight Against Corruption" and noted that globally, the people face a "tidal wave of corruption".

She highlighted that the International Monetary Fund estimates that bribery costs roughly \$1.5 to \$2 trillion, annually. "With such dire social and economic consequences at stake, the fight against corruption has to be a priority for all our member countries," she emphasised.

Through a consultative process with member countries which expressed the need, the Commonwealth Secretariat, has developed Commonwealth Anti-Corruption Benchmarks, numbering 22 benchmarks, which continue to undergo development and refinement, Baroness Scotland said.

The benchmarks cover “topics from sanctions for corruption offences to investigating and prosecuting authorities, and from political lobbying to disclosure of asset ownership,” she elaborated. “Indeed, this Commonwealth package is the first document of which we are aware that connects all the areas of public and private conduct covered by our 22 benchmarks,” she added.

His Excellency the Governor, Mr. Martyn Roper, OBE, declaring the conference open, commented: “I attach the greatest importance to the Law on Standards in Public Life being implemented as soon as possible. The Premier has assured me that he is committed to doing so. A consultation is currently underway to understand some concerns by Chairs and Members of some of our Statutory Boards, people who often serve voluntarily with little remuneration and whose contribution is essential in a small jurisdiction like ours. I am clear this law needs to be implemented as quickly as possible.”

The Governor highlighted the “great strides” the Cayman Islands has taken towards developing and implementing policies within the civil service and strengthening oversight bodies over the past few years.

These include the active role played by the Commission for Standards in Public Life which includes dissemination of a UN Office on Drugs and Crime educational programme. The programme “seeks to promote a culture of lawfulness, with modules specifically addressing corruption and integrity, amongst our primary, secondary and tertiary students at local private and public educational institutions,” Governor Roper explained.

Other oversight activities include the continuing good work of the Anti-Corruption Commission, a sister unit to the CSPL, which has dealt with 166 reports since its inception with arrests, convictions and ongoing investigations.

Additionally, a Whistleblower Policy for the civil service was implemented in 2017 which led to the Whistleblower Protection Law coming into effect in 2018. This has empowered civil servants to confidentially and safely report suspected fraudulent activity, Governor Roper noted.

In fact, the civil service policies are an integral part of the Deputy Governor, Hon. Franz Manderson’s comprehensive Anti-Fraud Policy which incorporates codes of ethics

and conduct, offering and receiving gifts. “This conference, therefore, comes at an opportune time for the Cayman Islands to intensify its enhancement of the ethical integrity of its public bodies,” the Governor added.

In her opening remarks, Ms Whittaker-Myles noted that although member nations have made some strides but needed to do more in implementing the common goal of eradicating corruption in their communities.

In this regard, she reveals that she was pleased that discussions were underway between the CI Government with Dr. Koranteng to take forward civil service training on initiatives and policies for corruption prevention.

In his remarks, Dr. Koranteng emphasized the association’s annual meetings had provided practical platforms for members pooling together means, experience and resolve to address anti-corruption challenges.

“There is also an urgent call on Governments to strengthen and resource Integrity Commissions and anti-Corruption Bodies to make them fit for purpose to combat complex and sophisticated corrupt practices of the 21st Century,” he added.

Association Chairman, Mr. Dirk Harrison, underscored that the Caribbean nations should create integrity and anti-corruption institutions not merely in name but in functionality and purpose, providing them with the adequate funding and resources, without watering down powers and disabling functionality.

Member nations should be guided by partnerships as well as learn and grow from the technical expertise and support from international bodies such as the Commonwealth Secretariat and the UN, Mr. Harrison added.

Following a colourful procession of flags at the memorable start by members of the Cayman Islands Cadet Corps and the singing of the National Anthem and National Song by Miss Jaime Ebanks, Rev. Mary Graham of St. George’s Anglican (Epsiscopal) Church, set the right tone for the delegates with prayer.

The conference continues until Friday. All opening ceremony remarks can be viewed in full at the CSPL website <http://www.standardsinpubliclifecommission.ky/ccaicacb>.

Photo captions *Photos by Bina Mani and Martin Wilkinson, GIS*

Group photo: Delegates at the ongoing Commonwealth Caribbean integrity commissions and anti-corruption bodies conference with *seated, from left to right*. Attorney General Hon. Samuel Bulgin, QC; Association Chairman Mr. Dirk Harrison; CIG Deputy Governor, Hon.

Franz Manderson, MBE; Commonwealth Secretary-General Rt. Hon. Patricia Scotland, QC; His Excellency the Governor, Mr. Martyn Roper, OBE; Chairman for Commissions for Standards in Public Life, Ms Rosie Whittaker-Myles and Commonwealth Secretariat's Interim Adviser and Head of Public Sector Governance, Dr. Roger Koranteng.

Smartly attired Cadet Corps members ushered in the delegates' national flags at the start of the ceremony.

Miss Jaime Ebanks led the gathering in National Anthem and National Song.

At the opening, Commonwealth Secretary-General Rt. Hon. Patricia Scotland sat down for a quick chat with His Excellency the Governor, Mr. Martyn Roper.

For the official Cayman Islands Government web portal, www.gov.ky:

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