

THE NATIONAL DIALOGUE ON ANTI-CORRUPTION

2024 REPORT

Date | 9 - 10 December 2024

Location | Birchwood Conference Centre, Boksburg, Gauteng

Presented by:
The Presidency, NACAC
& The PSC



NACS
National
Anti-Corruption
Strategy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Presidency, together with the National Anti-Corruption Advisory Council (NACAC) and the Public Service Commission, held its second National Stakeholder Dialogue on Anti-Corruption on 9-10 December 2024. This event aimed to unite key stakeholders and members of society in the ongoing fight against corruption. The vibrant engagement was a follow-up from the previous year, intended to mobilise broader society to actively pursue the developmental goals outlined in the Constitution and the National Development Plan as articulated in the National Anti-corruption Strategy (NACS). This initiative represents a collective societal effort, wherein government, business, and civil society collaborate to create a society that upholds the rule of law and empowers citizens to hold those in power accountable.

The NACAC is a multi-sectoral advisory body appointed by the President in August 2022 to oversee the implementation of the NACS and to advise on the future of the country's anti-corruption institutional architecture. It is anticipated that the successful implementation of the NACS will result in significantly reduced levels of corruption and improved investor and public confidence in South Africa. The National Dialogue is a process that allows the whole of society (in its broadest definition) to:

- Maintain the momentum started with the hosting of the event in November 2023;
- Contribute towards the fight against corruption with innovative ideas and new commitments;
- Hold the government, civil society and business sectors to account for their individual and collective actions against corruption;
- Share successes achieved to date in fighting corruption in South Africa and
- Create awareness of the NACAC recommendations to the president to establish the Office of Public Integrity (OPI).

Consequently, the National Dialogue represented not just an event but a significant milestone in the endeavour to realign society towards the promotion and celebration of ethical behaviour. Throughout this process, individuals and sectors must be empowered to express their concerns regarding corruption and provide constructive contributions to the vision of the NACS. Therefore, the National Dialogue unified the ideas and perspectives that surfaced during the process to present them to a broader audience, including those in charge of governance in South Africa.

The sessions explored the theme "Implementing a multisector approach to strengthen our capacity to combat corruption by reflecting on the six strategic pillars of the NACS." South Africa is the third-largest economy in Africa. However, it is also regarded as the most unequal country in the world. This context is crucial for understanding the effects of corruption and anti-corruption efforts in South Africa. Hosted at the Birchwood Conference Centre in Boksburg, Gauteng, the national dialogue offered a platform to critically evaluate South Africa's anti-corruption landscape and devise actionable strategies aligned with the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS, 2020–2030). Over two days of vigorous discussions, key themes emerged in alignment with the six strategic pillars of the **National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS, 2020–2030)**.

SETTING THE TONE: OPENING PLENARY

The event commenced with a powerful call for collaboration and action from Nkosikazi N. Mhlauli, Deputy Chairperson of the National Anti-Corruption Advisory Council (NACAC). Her remarks underscored the urgent need for a generational mission to eradicate corruption, positioning youth as crucial change agents. Ms P. Baleni, Secretary of the Cabinet, expanded on this by emphasising the significance of integrity, transparency, and accountability as foundational pillars for fostering public trust. These themes resonated in the keynote address by Hon. Inkosi Mzamo Buthelezi, MP, who characterised corruption as a societal cancer, advocating for an all-of-society approach to confront it directly.

KEY OUTCOMES AND RESOLUTIONS

1. Establishing the Office of Public Integrity (OPI): Participants strongly endorsed the expedited establishment of the OPI as a Chapter 9 institution with constitutional protections. Alongside the SIU, the OPI will address systemic corruption, conduct civil investigations, issue binding recommendations, and lead preventative measures through public education and institutional capacity-building. Leveraging the existing resources of the Special Investigating Unit (SIU), the OPI aims to operate within a year, with legislation drafted to ensure its independence and effectiveness.

2. Strengthening Whistleblower Protections: The dialogue highlighted the critical role of whistleblowers in exposing corruption and called for urgent legislative reforms to strengthen protections. Proposed measures include expanding the scope of the Protected Disclosures Act, criminalising retaliation, and establishing independent bodies to manage disclosures and provide support. Public education campaigns were recommended to destigmatise whistleblowing and foster a culture of integrity.

3. Transforming Public Procurement Systems: Public procurement was identified as a key vulnerability in governance. The National Treasury's commitment to implementing an e-procurement system was commended, with stakeholders emphasising transparency, community oversight, and blacklisting corrupt suppliers. These measures aim to address irregular contracts, bid rigging, and inadequate contract management, fostering accountability and efficiency.

4. Enhancing the Capacity and Independence of Anti-Corruption Agencies: Agencies such as the Hawks, the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), and the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) encounter significant resource and capacity challenges. Recommendations include increasing funding, enhancing forensic capabilities, and establishing a dedicated unit within the NPA to prosecute complex corruption cases. Inter-agency collaboration, guided by a streamlined case management system, is essential for effective law enforcement.

5. Professionalisation of the Public Sector: To establish a capable and ethical developmental state, participants emphasised the necessity of mandatory ethics training, competency-based recruitment, and reforms in performance management. The ongoing initiatives of the National School of Government have received praise; however, challenges such as resistance to change and resource limitations persist. Prioritised were targeted programmes to foster a culture of continuous learning and accountability.

6. Inclusive Anti-Corruption Strategies: Integrating gender and youth perspectives is vital for tackling systemic inequalities and fostering ethical governance. Strategies encompass crafting gender-sensitive anti-corruption policies, involving youth through innovative means such as social media, and empowering marginalised communities to engage in governance.

7. Safeguarding Vulnerable Sectors and Communities: The impact of corruption on at-risk sectors—including healthcare, education, and local government—highlights the necessity for targeted oversight and reform. Increased public engagement, enhanced mechanisms for service delivery, and greater accountability are acknowledged as essential priorities.

CALL TO ACTION

The event concluded with a shared commitment to advancing the pillars of the NACS through decisive action, including but not limited to:

- **Implementation:** Accelerate the operationalisation of the OPI and enhance existing agencies to tackle systemic and individual corruption.
- **Education and Engagement:** Launch comprehensive public education campaigns to foster a culture of integrity and active citizenry.
- **Legislative Reform:** Prioritize legal frameworks that protect whistleblowers, enhance procurement systems, and support independent anti-corruption bodies.
- **Collaboration:** Foster multi-sectoral partnerships to build an inclusive, transparent, and accountable governance system.

The event concluded on a hopeful note, with **Prof. F. Cachalia**, Chairperson of NACAC, describing the dialogue as a potential "Codesa moment" in the fight against corruption. The dialogue laid the groundwork for a cohesive, action-oriented anti-corruption agenda by uniting stakeholders across sectors, underscoring the urgency of safeguarding South Africa's democratic and developmental future.