

**12<sup>th</sup> International Anti-Corruption Conference Closing Address**  
**by Mayor Zenaida Moya of Belize City**  
**Saturday, November 18, 2006, Guatemala City**

Good morning, Vice-President of the Republic of Guatemala, Honorable Eduardo Stein Barillas, distinguished panelists at the head table, Ambassador of Belize to Guatemala, His Excellency Alfredo Martinez, all members of parliament, the diplomatic corp., the media, fellow anti-corruption practitioners and researchers, special invited guests, Transparency International, and the City of Guatemala for hosting us. It is an honor for me to have been selected to address you at this, the 12<sup>th</sup> International Anti-Corruption Conference, held under the theme “Towards a fairer world – Why is corruption still blocking the way?”

It is an honor because I get the opportunity to share my perspective on corruption as it affects a small nation such as my Belize, situated immediately east of Guatemala, and which on September 21, 1981, was given the noble task of governing itself in a fair, honest, and transparent manner.

After twenty five years of political independence, however, Belize finds itself ranked by Transparency International 66<sup>th</sup> out of 163 countries with a corruption rating of 3.7. This is after a steady decline in the corruption index from 60<sup>th</sup> in 2004 to the now 66<sup>th</sup> in 2006.

What has contributed to this result and what can we do to address this? While keeping in line with the plenary to **identify successes, failures, and shortcomings of the anti-corruption actions**, let me state that as a former Public Service Senior Manager and Trade Union Leader, I had the vital role of advising, criticizing, implementing, and constructively protesting against institutionalized corruption. In one instance, however, I was victimized through an unfair demotion from the rank of Head of Department to Head of Unit due to my key involvement in uncovering, publicizing, and standing firm against corruption and mismanagement within one of the largest cooperative managed by a family member of the Prime Minister.

The Belize National Trade Union Congress, thereafter, of which I was also a part, also attempted to put an end to the rampant corruption and political abuses in our system through huge public protests, industrial strikes, shut down of utilities and other key services, public forums, dissemination of information, and intense negotiations between government and our Trade Union Congress. Our efforts, however, were hindered due to the lack of political will for constructive

reforms and an apparent corruption between key union leaders supporting the government, at the height of industrial action, in an effort to sabotage our success. Other key leaders, like myself, suffered tremendous amount of victimization, slander, propaganda, and threats by the government and its group of stalwarts, military, and law enforcement officers.

As a Head of Unit, I was subject to disciplinary action with a view to dismissal due to being one of the key trade union leaders leading the industrial and protest actions against the government. Through legal intervention, however, I was offered a proposal to request and accept retirement in the public interest, a proposal, I refused, and which consequently, led to concerted efforts by our attorney, trade union family, the media, and the public for a full withdrawal of all charges against me. We were successful.

After several months of discontent, however, with the lack of honoring of the joint Trade Union Congress and Government of Belize Negotiation Agreement, I later accepted the request by the opposition party to run as their Belize City mayoral candidate in the March 1, 2006 municipal elections under the platform of transparency, accountability, and good governance. I was once again successful with an overwhelming 2 to 1 victory at the polls.

Whilst it is clear that intimidation, victimization, control, and influence of large private owners; corrupt accumulation of public wealth by key political leaders, their families, friends, and allies; and their corrupt influence and violation of laws, are key **challenges to the reduction of corruption in Belize**, the apparent indifference of a huge proportion of the public in educating themselves on issues that affect them also pose a grave challenge. This is even when the media, working alongside the different organizations, disseminate information about key issues that affect the equitable distribution of wealth.

Clearly, then, we have urgent work to do if we are to put an arrest to corruption and address the gap between expectation and realities of good governance and development. Some key **solutions to overcoming these obstacles include:**

- 1) ongoing and effective education and dissemination of information on anti-corruption initiatives by government, civil society, the media, and relevant international organizations, so as to ensure a participatory approach to reducing corruption and to ensure a just sharing of power and responsibility by all;

- 2) ongoing sensitization of the public as to what they should be using to measure government's performance, whether it be Transparency International's corruption rating, the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals, specific economic and social indicators, implementation and compliance of different anti-corruption legislation, and other legal reforms;
- 3) a unified approach to helping countries adopt legislation to protect whistleblowers and a local recognition of whistleblowers, journalists, and anti-corruption activists and practitioners, so as to inspire integrity, trust, and respect, and to encourage them and others to continue to stand up against corruption and abuse; and
- 4) a commitment by all anti-corruption practitioners and parties that the declaration agreed upon at this Conference will be implemented and monitored to its fullest.

I will end by challenging all of you to keep corruption in the forefront of discussion and to unite our efforts to continue the fight against corruption; for this is the only way we will be able to ensure a fairer and corrupt-free world. I thank you for your attention and may God bless you all.

END