

Good morning, bonjour, bonzour.

Welcome/Byenveni to our 13th annual conference of Commonwealth Africa Anti-Corruption Heads Conference which is being hosted here in our beautiful Seychelles islands. A group of small islands, off the east coast of Africa whose umbilical cord was cut from its African motherland millions of years ago. Some of our beaches on the west coast are similar to those in Mombassa, Zanzibar or Barazuto island in Mozambique. Thank you for travelling from the mainland to the host country of this year's commonwealth anticorruption conference.

Our theme this year is Uniting Commonwealth Africa against Corruption. Firstly, let us unite in recognising one of our Commonwealth colleagues who I am sad to say experienced corruption fighting back. Last year, on the 9th December, on the occasion of the UN International Anti-Corruption Day, I announced to participants at our forum, that I stood with my sister Martha Chizuma who was arrested for doing her job. Her job as Head of the Anti-Corruption Agency in Malawi. I am happy that Martha has joined us today. I invite you to give her a round of applause

In September 2020, for the virtual Commonwealth Anti-Corruption Conference, I stated that there is a set of unwritten criteria for Heads of Anti-Corruption Agencies. I would like to repeat those criteria for those who did not have an opportunity to hear it.

First you have to have a thick skin

That skin should be like a duck's back~

You have to have eyes behind your head

And to quote Professor Franceschi of the Commonwealth Secretariat "be prepared to be the sacrificial lamb".

This is why the theme Uniting Commonwealth Africa against corruption is so important. It is important for us to fight corruption, but it is equally important for us to unite when corruption fights back. Let us unite in sharing our experience, skills and resources. This can be achieved through partnership amongst Anti-Corruption agencies, our international partners who will assist in anyway they can. This week we have the honour to hear from our partners in policy making and law enforcement from the UN, UK and the USA. The Commonwealth Secretariat, UNODC, IACCC, NCA UK, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Serious Fraud Office and many others. There are plenty of opportunities in the next five days to strengthen your networks in order to unite in the fight against corruption. Work hard but please do enjoy your time in this beautiful part of Africa.

I THANK YOU. MERSI BOKOU.