

**Speech by USAID Namibia Director Diana Swain at the
Launch of the Multi-Media Products of the
National Integrity Promotion Programme (NIPP)
on December 3, 2003**

Honorable Justice and Acting Ombudsman, Mr. Mtambanengwe
Program Coordinator, Mr. Geiseb
NID Executive Director, Mr. Keulder
Members of the Press
Ladies and Gentlemen

I appreciate the opportunity to help launch the information tool kit of Namibia's National Integrity Promotion Program. Let me begin by congratulating everyone who has been a part of bringing the program to life. I'd particularly like to applaud Sam Geiseb and Elize Cline for their work in getting the program off the ground, Theunis Keulder for his selfless and tireless commitment to supporting the Office of the Ombudsman in its efforts, and Justice Mtambanengwe for the strong leadership he has so willingly offered, to not just continuing, but to deepening the National Integrity Promotion Program.

Namibia is fortunate to have an institution with the credibility of the Office of the Ombudsman, and courageous and dedicated people like Sam, Elize, Theunis and the Honorable Justice, willing to take the lead in promoting ethics and integrity throughout Namibia.

Let me take the risk, though, of saying, that despite the truly praiseworthy efforts of Office of the Ombudsman in promoting these core values, it cannot be the Office of the Ombudsman alone that is undertaking the effort.

For Namibia to prolong its admirable reputation as one of Africa's most corruption free nations, society as a whole must be concerned with the issue and willing to play a role in valuing and maintaining sturdy, effective integrity systems.

A government's legitimacy is derived from a country's citizens and the trust the citizens place in their elected representatives. In a democracy, this linkage is forged through the holding of regular, free and fair elections. But, in a participatory, vibrant and inclusive democracy, citizens' responsibilities do not stop at the ballot box. Apart from the right to choose leaders, there are on-going responsibilities that each of us has, if local, regional, national and international governance structures are going to work, and work to the advantage of all citizens and not just to the advantage of a privileged few.

What then are the roles of citizens in governance issues? I would argue that citizens and, in the aggregate, civil society, have numerous and varied roles. Working through the legitimate channels that the government has put in place, citizens must be vigilant watchdogs of government actions, thoughtful advocates feeding government policies, and constructive partners in government programs. With regard to integrity programs, each

of us has the responsibility to help governments act in a way that recognize that corruption has to be fought, at all levels, both inside and outside of the public sector. Corruption must be fought in the interest of those who can least defend themselves against the costs of corruption: the poor, the weak, the vulnerable and the children, who, ultimately, will have to bear the burden of mismanagement, waste and fraud.

Too often we want to sit back and complain, and not find, within ourselves, what it takes, to do our part, to make things better. Whether it's the strength and courage it takes to challenge wrongdoings, or simply the time and energy it takes to become involved in activities that will help prevent wrongdoings, most of us have all sorts of excuses for civic inaction. At least I know this to be true of myself. Silence and inaction may seem safe but they're only safe in the short-term. Our long-term interests, and even our medium term interests, are in active engagement. Today I'd challenge each of us to overcome the very human tendency of sitting back and hoping that others will do the work of democracy.

Instead, I'd encourage everyone here to be inspired by the materials in the tool kit that is being launched this morning. Ask how you can join the Office of the Ombudsman in its campaign to promote national integrity. Be proud of the nation that you and your leaders have built thus far, and do your part to make sure that Namibia doesn't just maintain its reputation as one of the cleanest and most open countries among the emerging democracies but improves that reputation.