

# **A VALUE-BASED ANTI-CORRUPTION INITIATIVE**

**ARCHBISHOP DR ELIUD WABUKALA**

## **Combatting corruption**

The former Archbishop of Kenya and head of the Kenyan Anti-corruption Commission gave the Oxford Centre for Religion and Public Life monthly public lecture for August on *A Value based anti-corruption initiative to combat corruption* to an international audience via zoom.

Dr Eliud Wabukala reported that at their recent meeting, the All Africa Council of Churches (AACC) noted that while Africa had abundant resources of minerals, water, land, forestry and people, it was poor and in debt. Much of this was due to lack of transparency and plundering of resources. The AACC therefore affirmed the seriousness of the fight against corruption. All those attending the recent Commonwealth Conference in Rwanda, he said, have investigative directories, educate people in the dangers of corruption and take a preventative approach in public bodies.

But Dr Wabukala, a former chairman of GAFCON, argued that it is not countries or systems that change, but people: corruption does not emanate from systems as such but from persons and their dilapidated moral fabric. A sustainable anti-corruption strategy needs to go beyond codes of leadership, declarations of assets and income, laws, and regulations. Much time and money is expended on investigations, court cases and the recovery of assets without much fruit. A change of culture needs to be instilled in society with the cultural values of integrity, honesty and patriotism since social values influence people's behaviour and character. The right people need to be in institutions to make the right decisions.

As chair of the National Council of Churches of Kenya he was involved in the reforms that led to the Kenyan Constitution of 2010. Chapter 6 of this constitution, on Leadership and Integrity, defines leadership as a public trust which vests an officer of state "with responsibility to serve the people rather than the power to rule them."

## **Judaeo-Christian and African values**

Since corruption will advance unless influenced by social values and ethics, the faith-based sector, which influences citizens through its networks and community organisations have an important role to play. But the Judaeo-Christian tradition of values based on the Bible had not proved sufficient for African societies. African values also need to be drawn on: the values of hospitality, that ownership of property is not for personal gain but for everyone else and the need for engagement with the community instead of selfishness. The customs of traditional societies are also valuable, such as immediately admonishing and punishing a child caught stealing,

encouraging children to say thank you when receiving food and to show respect to others. These values and customs had been eroded by modernity. They need to be included in the core curriculum of schools and universities.

He noted that 'Integrity Clubs' had been established in over 500 Kenyan schools and colleges which highlighted servant leadership, honesty and truthfulness to young people for them to be an example to others.

Together with thirty-five lay people from all religious groups in the country, the former Archbishop had developed such a curriculum to bring awareness of the dangers of corruption. The Inter-religious Council of Kenya had produced a series of teaching manuals with sermons that could be adapted to explain its dangers.

The public must also be enlisted to participate since where citizens have been able to exercise more power, corruption has been fought effectively. This requires transparency and access.

Leaders with the right values and strong character who provide an example for others provide the bedrock for addressing corruption. Mentorship programmes are needed so that upcoming leaders grow with proper standards and integrate values into leadership styles.

In the discussion following the lecture, Martin Allaby, the chair of the Faith and Public Integrity Network (<https://fpinetwork.org/>) endorsed the importance of values as the software which was essential for the hardware of institutions. He suggested that part of integrity was courage. Once corruption was brought under control, everyone benefits. But the prime movers in refusing or exposing corruption are likely to lose out themselves: he gave as an example when someone refuses to accept funds from a donor known to be corrupt. He noted that assassination attempts had been made on the lives of those who had taken a strong stand against corruption.

Dr Wabukala challenged his listeners to take a stand against the temptations of corruption in every day administration. The example was given of 'speed money' which officials often asked of a Christian organisation to secure its registration. He also recalled how he had once visited a church and been presented with a cow as a gift for his visit. But then the pastor asked him to secure a job for his son. A further reason to refuse such 'temptations' is that the large scale corruption at the top of society is only the visible tip of the iceberg: such everyday petty corruption is the large base of the iceberg of corruption.

The Archbishop concluded by encouraging his hearers to prick the consciences of leaders when they do wrong, to exercise a prophetic ministry and elevate the issue of corruption into a national discussion by raising it to be discussed in ecumenical fora. For all this they would need to be courageous.