

**Launch of the IPaidABribe Corruption Reporting Platform by the GII Consortium
Coconut Groove Regency Hotel, 15 October, 2015**

Press Statement

Vitus A. Azeem,

Executive Director of GII and Chief of Party of the ADISS Project

Distinguished members of the Press, partners and friends in the struggle against corruption, on behalf of the Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII) Consortium, I welcome you all to the Coconut Groove Regency Hotel for the formal launch of the 'IPaidABribe' Corruption Reporting Platform and a re-launch of the Advocacy and Legal Advice Centre (ALAC) of GII.

Invited guests, ladies and gentlemen, you would recall that on the 15th of May, 2009, GII launched its Advocacy and Legal Advice Centre (ALAC) at the British Council Hall. The Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII), the local chapter of Transparency International (TI), established the Advocacy and Legal Advice Centre (ALAC) in response to several calls by the public through its workshops and surveys for a more strategic action to address corruption, which is perceived to be rife in the country. It was also becoming clear that many Ghanaians were unconcerned about reporting corruption or did not know how and where to report corrupt acts.

The ALACs were first pioneered by Transparency International (TI) in Eastern Europe in 2003 and by the end of 2008, 27 ALACs had already been established across the world, including in Zambia. The ALAC concept is based on the strong belief that people are usually apathetic and even helpless in the face of corruption because they are not provided with a simple, credible and viable mechanism to effectively combat the menace or seek redress.

GII, therefore, created the ALAC in Ghana to provide Ghanaians who either become victims or witnesses of corrupt practices the opportunity to seek redress, by providing them with the legal assistance and guidance to seek such redress.

Since its inception, the ALAC has, therefore:

- Been providing legal advice and assistance to victims and witnesses of corruption who report such cases to it
- Has worked to empower citizens, residents and corporate bodies to make and pursue corruption and related complaints.
- Has undertaken advocacy for broader structural and institutional reforms with the view to minimizing corruption in Ghana.
- Partnered with public institutions such as CHRAJ, EOCO, Legal Aid Scheme, and the Attorney-General's Department to facilitate the handling of corruption cases.
- Built synergies with civil society organizations with similar objectives to broaden the frontiers of a just, fair and caring society in Ghana that is free of corruption.

Distinguished invited guests, the opportunities in Ghana for citizens to take advantage of the ALAC include:

- The existence of the Whistleblower Act, 2006 (Act 720), which already provides the opportunity for Ghanaians to take up corruption issues with the appropriate authorities. ALAC will provide them the necessary technical support. Intensive public education continues to be carried out in order to educate Ghanaians about the law and how it operates.
- Ghana's Constitution guarantees the independence of anti-corruption institutions. Thus, the ALAC has not faced any legal constraints and with proper collaboration between ALAC and other anti-corruption institutions, the object of the project would be realized.
- The work of investigative journalists like Anas Aremeyaw Anas will complement the work of the ALAC and there is already some collaboration between the GII Consortium and such journalists and some media houses

However, due to funding constraints, the ALAC became inactive since 2013 but has now been reactivated.

In 2012, GII set up a web-based platform, the “ipaidabribe” platform for Ghanaians to report demands for and payment of bribes. Where a demand has been made but you have refused to oblige, there is also provision to report this. However, the platform never took off successfully due to some technical constraints.

Friends of the media and partners, I am happy to announce that these constraints have now been overcome and that is why we are here today to launch this platform but also to re-launch the ALAC as it has become dormant for some time now. The platform has been absorbed by the USAID sponsored ADISS project and so it is being launched by the GII Consortium.

The GII Consortium is made up of the Ghana Integrity Initiative, Social Enterprises Foundation (SEND GHANA) and the Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition (GACC) which have come together to jointly implement a four-year USAID funded Accountable Democratic Institutions and Systems Strengthening Project (ADISS) in 50 districts across the ten regions of Ghana. This project has been so designed to renew and build upon on-going efforts and also increase the capacities of anti-corruption CSOs to motivate citizens to apply pressure to policy makers and institutions through a number of targeted and focused actions with the aim of increasing government accountability and hence reducing corruption in Ghana.

One of two very key components of the project is the implementation of initiatives aimed at increasing documentation and exposure of corruption through civil society reporting mechanisms. One key strategy here is to empower citizens and CSOs to report and document corruption and related cases through accessible and innovative ICT and social media platforms. One of these is the creation of a web-based corruption reporting platform created as part of GII's Advocacy and Legal Advice Centre (ALAC) aimed at facilitating the reportage of corrupt acts by victims and witnesses of corrupt acts in a more strategic way.

With the widespread nature of corruption and not losing sight of its occurrence in very high profile and sensitive sections of our society, it has become even more crucial that the nation

gathers information on the nature of corruption across the country. This is what informed the establishment of the “Ipaidabribe” corruption reporting platform which is a simple and easy-to-use ICT tool, which can be accessible on phones and computers to report corruption at the click of a button. The “Ipaidabribe” platform works as an anonymous reporting tool hosted on the GII website, and available on the websites of SEND Ghana and GACC through a link. The tool captures the nature of bribes being paid as well as the institutions and/or persons receiving the bribes. Through the platform, the Consortium also seeks to ascertain if people have been empowered to resist paying bribes and whether they have encountered some mechanism that have made it easier to avoid paying bribes.

Distinguished invited guest, in line with this, I wish to state that the GII Consortium and, in fact, the entire anti-corruption movement in Ghana, is happy about the recent works of the Ace investigative journalist, Anas Aremeyaw Anas and his team for their patriotic efforts at exposing corruption in various sectors of our society with the hope that it will help to curb the canker. We commend him highly and urge you to give him the necessary support. The work of Anas and his team should encourage other journalists and ordinary citizens to begin to use their phones and other devices to capture corrupt acts and report same to the appropriate authorities.

The attention of the GII Consortium has been drawn to the fact that some state institutions have **allegedly** started searching visitors to their offices before allowing them in for fear of some “Anases” visiting these offices. We wish to state that we are not aware of any law in this country that provides for any such searches and so it must stop immediately. We hope that these searches are not sanctioned by the government. We call on all Ghanaians to resist such unlawful searches and report same to the authorities. Clearly, the aim of these searches, which are probably sanctioned by the heads of these institutions, are aimed at hiding any corrupt acts that must be taking place inside the offices. This must be condemned and stopped. We further entreat public officers within these offices to emulate Anas and capture corrupt acts being perpetrated by their colleagues and senior officers.

On this note, I hereby declare the “ipaidabribe” platform duly launched. I also wish to declare the ALAC duly re-launched.

I thank you all for honouring our invitation and entreat you and your media audiences to visit the “Ipaidabribe” platform at www.ipaidabribe.org.gh to report all demands for and payment of bribes. We look forward to working with you towards a bribe-free society in Ghana.
Thank you for your attention.