

MPs and asset declaration

Anti-whistleblowing contexts are unlimited in terms of its uniqueness in preventing the reporting of corruption. Various contexts hamper whistleblowing, and therefore it is important to create a culture that enhances whistleblowing.

The third asset register of Members of Parliament (MPs) compiled during Namibia's 25 years of independence is an achievement. This achievement however comes amidst huge challenges to some committed and dedicated members of the Office of the National Assembly, including the Secretary, the previous and the current Speaker, to persuade MPs to declare and disclose their assets and business interests.

PUBLIC ACCESS

The public are not allowed access to information about MPs' assets and their spouses. It is not a public right to know in which companies MPs do have shares and how they obtain it.

MPs have to sign a Code of Conduct. But who is overseeing that MPs adhere to the Code of Conduct?

MPs and/or a committee of MPs overseeing the implementation and adherence to the Code cannot be accountable to themselves. No one can be the judge, the jury and the complainant without jeopardising accountability.

It is possible to perceive the Code of Conduct as well as the asset register of MPs as constructive attempts to comply with global standards on good



JOHAN COETZEE

governance. However, the outcome of the mentioned compliance cannot possibly reflect ethical performance. To detect corrupt activities of MPs, to encourage them to comply with the Code of Conduct, to declare their interests and to penalise them for not complying, are not possible when the mechanisms created are mainly for global compliance but ineffective for whistleblowing.

In addition, the accountability of members of cabinet who are also MPs is already being compromised, because they are accountable primarily to the President that appoints them and not to the voters that elect them (Diescho, 2015).

The context of compromised parliamentary accountability stimulates fear of parliamentary and political influence peddling and makes it too risky for whistleblowers to act against corruption.

• References

Diescho, J. 2015. Are some people more Namibian than others? *Namibian Politics and Administration in Perspective*, June/July.

jcoetzee@polytechnic.edu.na

4 Dec 2015
to publish in