

**SPEECH BY THE DEPUTY CHIEF SECRETARY MR THOUSE ODALA AT THE
UNVEILING CEREMONY OF SOME PROJECTS AT THE OFFICE OF THE
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROCUREMENT**

THURSDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2006

- The UNDP Resident Representative, Mr Michael Keating
- The Director of the Office of the Director of Public Procurement, Mr Bright Mangulama
- Representatives from the Donor Community
- Senior Government Officials
- ODPP Staff
- Members of the Press
- Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the State President and Minister responsible for Public Procurement and the Chief Secretary in the Office of the President and Cabinet I wish to register my singular honour to be part of this wonderful occasion where the Office of the Director of Public Procurement (ODPP) is unveiling some of its successful accomplishments.

As has been pointed out, ODPP is a new Office that has only been operational since 2004. But within the two years of its existence, the Office has demonstrated great enthusiasm to implement the provisions of the Public Procurement Act which became effective in August 2003 and other related procurement documents.

Ladies and gentlemen, within its mandate of playing an oversight, monitoring and regulatory role in public procurement, ODPP has indeed been vibrant in carrying out quite a number of activities. Some of these are what have brought us here this evening.

I now wish to mention some of these activities ladies and gentlemen. As you are aware, ODPP, as the custodian of the Public Procurement Law, has made the Public Procurement Act and other procurement documents accessible to all Procuring Entities.

Ladies and Gentlemen, you may also wish to note that ODPP has managed to produce the Standard Bidding Documents (SBDs) which have been distributed to all Procuring Entities to guide them in the conduct of public procurement activities. Prior to the distribution of the SBDs, ODPP carried out regional sensitisation meetings and other training programmes on the use of these documents. This exercise will continue to include bidders.

In order to further ensure that the conduct of procurement by all Procuring Entities conforms to the letter and spirit of the Public Procurement Act, ODPP, ladies and gentlemen, has taken the issue of training very seriously. The Office is always up and down to different entities to conduct training for Internal Procurement Committees (IPCs) and other related establishments. This is indeed one of the ways of ensuring that procurement activities are professionally and competently done. It is the wish of the Office that members of the IPC understand their roles in procurement and are able to analyse the recommendations submitted to them by procurement staff.

Again, for probably the first time in public sector activities, ODPP is running a weekly column on *Understanding Public Procurement* in one of the local dailies to ensure that the activities, services and mandate of this Office are disseminated to all stakeholders. I am told Radio and TV activities, as part of this sensitisation drive, are presently in the offing. This is quite a commendable achievement.

Besides this catalogue of accomplishments, there is yet another package of success which has brought us here this evening, courtesy of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). UNDP has made it possible for ODPP to get

connected and have its own website. This website has indeed allowed the Office to move with the regional as well as the global demands of best public procurement practice by providing information that can be easily accessed just at the click of a button.

Having carefully listened to the short presentation about the website and the remarks by the ODPP Director and the UNDP Resident Representative, I am particularly pleased to note that this website is a tool that will compliment the fight against corruption. It provides an opportunity to all who are concerned with public procurement activities to contact ODPP and 'whistle blow' any unethical conduct in public procurement. This is a very important area because it shows that if public procurement is to be conducted in a prudent manner, it requires not only the effort of ODPP as a regulator and an oversight institution but also the involvement of us all.

Apart from this, ladies and gentlemen, I have also noted that this website provides most of the information Procuring Entities need in order to properly carry out their procurement transactions. Of particular interest to me are some of the circulars that the Director of Public Procurement has been issuing to Procuring Entities to clarify certain issues and to respond to specific enquiries brought to the attention of his Office.

The inclusion of such circulars, ladies and gentlemen, gives an opportunity to Controlling Officers as Chairmen of Internal Procurement Committees (IPCs) and their members to remind themselves of what is expected of them as they plan and execute, and make public procurement decisions.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me therefore take this opportunity to sincerely thank UNDP through the Resident Representative here present for the assistance being rendered to ODPP. As a Government, we do not take this generous support for granted. I am aware that besides what is being unveiled here, there is quite a lot

the UNDP is doing at ODPP particularly through the Public Relations Office; the Regulatory, Advisory and Review Department; and the Professional Department. Your support demonstrates the spirit of partnership with Government in its efforts to develop good governance in the country.

Ladies and Gentlemen, you will appreciate that public procurement is the commonly known avenue where corruption stakes are awfully high. It is because of this fact that the Government takes the functions of ODPP and other governance institutions very seriously. The Government will, therefore, endeavour to ensure that such institutions continue to enjoy the autonomy they deserve in order to properly discharge their duties. Let me assure ODPP that with the present administration's stance of zero tolerance on corruption, ODPP will be given the favourable environment to ensure its sustained autonomy.

I am glad to note that, besides the unveiling of the technological projects taking place at the Office, we are again launching the Strategic Plan that will propel the ODPP to greater heights within the next three years.

Ladies and gentlemen, having gone through the document, I must admit that I am greatly impressed with the nature of activities the Office has set itself to undertake. I am sure that with the prevailing team spirit and the support of all the stakeholders, the Office will surely achieve its goals. As a Government, we will render whatever form of support is required because we know that with every successful output, Government saves substantial revenue that would be directed to other priority areas. This is what is at the heart of the Minister responsible for Public Procurement.

Now that the resources ODPP would require to perform are being made available, let me take this opportunity to urge ODPP staff to take very good care of the resources. As officers handling public procurement functions, it is expected of you to be exemplary and desist from abuse of such provided resources. You are

not expected to be part of the bandwagon with the careless *Zaboma izi* mentality. You should 'walk the talk'. Proper care and usage of such infrastructure is the only way we can show our gratitude to our cooperating partners like the UNDP, the World Bank, the USAID, the DFID and others that are likely to come on board.

In conclusion ladies and gentlemen, let me once again thank UNDP for recognising the importance of the Office of Public Procurement and giving it the support it deserves. To ODPP, let me slightly go biblical and say, 'To whom more is given, more is also expected'. To Procuring Entities let me advise that ODPP is there to ensure that you are professionally, efficiently and accountably discharging your procurement roles. Please make proper use of the Office as you proceed implementing the provisions of the Public Procurement Law.

With these few remarks, it is my singular honour, ladies and gentlemen on behalf of the Minister Responsible for Public Procurement and indeed the Chief Secretary, to officially unveil the *ODPP website* and launch the *2006 to 2008 Strategic Plan*.

I thank you for your attention and may God bless you.