

Health Sector Anti-Corruption Forum launched

As a forerunner to the the National Health Insurance (NHI) Bill, the Health Sector Anti-Corruption Forum has been set up prevent, detect and prosecute fraud and corruption in the sector. The body is a collaboration between government, the private sector regulatory fraternity and civil society.



Image source: Getty/Gallo

“This is one of the critical steps that government is taking to transform the healthcare system and to rid it of not only the inefficiencies of the past but also of corruption.

“This is about reducing wastage and excess. We cannot achieve these objectives for as long as corruption persists,” said President Cyril Ramaphosa.

The forum comprises the Special Investigating Unit, Health Department, the Council for Medical Schemes, the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation, the Financial Intelligence Centre, the Health Funders Association, the Health Professions Council of South Africa, Corruption Watch, the National Prosecuting Authority, Section 27 and the board of Healthcare Funders of Southern Africa.

At the launch, stakeholders signed a pact that outlines terms of reference, mutual support and cooperation they will lend towards the fight against fraud and corrupt practices in the healthcare sector.

“The health sector - public and private - is vulnerable to fraud and corruption because of large and varied numbers of transactions on goods and services in terms of fraudulent orders, tender irregularities, fiscal dumping by government departments through non-governmental organisations, bribery, over-pricing, poor governance, transfer of liabilities to the State, and bogus and fraudulent qualifications,” Ramaphosa said.

Flowing from the directive of the Presidential Health 2018 Compact, which mandated government and social partners to work together to reform the healthcare system, the forum will serve as a whistle-blowing mechanism that will ease reporting to relevant authorities.

“We need to capacitate the entities that are going to be carrying out this work. If corruption in the health sector is not addressed it will undermine the efforts to ensure quality healthcare access for all,” said the president.

Welcoming the establishment of the forum, the National Prosecuting Authority’s National Director of Public Prosecutions, Shamila Batohi, said while the NPA has made headway in securing funds to hire more prosecutors, there is still a long way to go.

“Hawks still have a very big capacity problem and this is where the majorities of this forums cases will go. I urge that the capacity of the hawks be looked at,” said Batohi.

Health Minister Dr Zweli Mkhize welcomed the establishment of the forum and highlighted that it will protect the NHI from corruption.

Mkhize noted that this was particularly important in light of the scepticism about the NHI due to current perceptions of corruption in the public sector.

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