

Press Releases

Solomon Islands Government Committed to Freedom of Information

PRESS RELEASES:

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[Suva - 24 February] "The right to information is not just for developed countries," said the Solomon Islands Deputy Prime Minister, HE. Fred Fono at the official opening of the Solomon Islands Freedom of Information (FOI) Workshop yesterday.

"As a democratic and free country, one of the central tenets of our democracy in Solomon Islands is the guarantee of human rights, one of which is the right to freedom of information," he added.

The three day workshop has been organised at the request of the Solomon Islands Government, with support from the UNDP Pacific Centre, in collaboration with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI).

The workshop is a follow up to the 2008 Regional Freedom of Information workshop held in the Solomon Islands and seeks to bring together national stakeholders, from across government, civil society and the media to discuss the value of the right to information for Solomon Islands and possible strategies for implementing the right.

"The CNURA Government is committed to promoting more participatory development and transparent and accountable governance," said HE. Fono, "We support information disclosure as way of improving governance and development outcomes."

Ms Christina Carlson, Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP Solomon Islands said it was encouraging to see such high level commitment from the Solomon Islands Government to discussions about an issue like freedom of information.

"This Government has strongly committed to tackling corruption, and considerable work is already underway to strengthen national integrity frameworks and institutions," she added, "We are hopeful that this workshop will provide a forum for all to discuss how freedom of information could contribute to the national development goals which have been set for Solomon Islands."

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariats Regional Governance Advisor, Dr. Henry Ivarature, echoed Ms Carlson's views, saying it is through commitment at the highest levels of government on the ideals for good governance that will make the difference.

“Working on FOI in forum island countries needs strong political commitments at the national level. We are encouraged by the good will of the Solomon Islands Government,” he added.

Sixty years ago, the United Nations General Assembly specifically recognised that freedom of information underpins all other rights to which the UN is committed. The Solomon Islands Government is fully cognizant of the direct link between freedom of information, human rights and good governance.

“The right to information can play a vital role in bringing governments closer to their people,” said HE. Fono, “With the right to access information from government bodies, people can start to more effectively engage with their own democracy and with the development activities which are going on around them.”

Dr. Ivarature emphasized FOI’s role in contributing to the overall quality of governance.

“We strongly believe that FOI will promote transparency, strengthen accountability and help to tackle corruption,” he said.

The Solomon Islands workshop ends on 25 February 2009.

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