

The Fiji Times ONLINE

Fighting corruption

Mavuku Tokona
Monday, July 20, 2015

PACIFIC Parliamentarians will meet in Nadi this week to discuss ways to step up anti-corruption initiatives and engage more strongly with the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC).

Global Organization of Parliamentarians against Corruption Oceania chair John Hyde said: "Our region has been buoyed by the Tongan Parliament's unanimous vote to establish the Pacific's first Standing Committee on Anti-Corruption so the time is right for Pacific MPs to examine how they can fast-track more initiatives."

Tonga is one of the five remaining Pacific nations yet to sign on to the UNCAC, and the GOPAC along with the United Nations Pacific Regional Anti-Corruption (UN-PRAC) project are working with parliamentarians from across the Pacific in a two-day workshop on UNCAC and parliamentary oversight in Nadi.

"GOPAC strongly believes in the primacy of parliamentarians affecting change and we're delighted that MPs from the five Pacific countries yet to sign onto UNCAC are willingly attending our workshop which will be opened by the Fijian President Ratu Epeli Nailatikau with a keynote speech by Fiji's Speaker Dr Jiko Luveni," said Mr Hyde.

Mr Hyde praised the commitment of Australia for supporting the UN-PRAC project, a four-year \$US4.3 million (\$F9m) project in the 15 Pacific nations.

GOPAC Tonga chair Lord Fusitu'a, who is also participating in the workshop said MPs in the Pacific wanted to enhance anti-corruption policies, laws and institutions.

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Corruption undermines democracy, says Luveni

AVINESH GOPAL

Monday, July 20, 2015

Update: 5:04PM CORRUPTION is undeniably one of the most serious impediments to human development, says the Speaker of Parliament Dr Jiko Luveni.

"It undermines democracy and the rule of law, leads to violations of human rights, distorts markets, erodes quality of life, and allows organised crime, terrorism and other threats to human security to flourish," she said.

"Corruption hinders efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by obstructing unfettered public access to social services and diverting resources away from investments in public infrastructure, public institutions and social services."

Dr Luveni made the comments at the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and the Global Organisation of Parliamentarians against Corruption (GOPAC) Parliamentary Oversight Workshop at the Novotel Hotel in Nadi today.



Speaker to Parliament Dr Jiko Luveni (sitting front, fourth from left) and President Ratu Epeli Nailatikau (fifth from left) with participants at the workshop on the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and the Global Organisation of Parliamentarians against Corruption (GOPAC) at the Novotel Hotel. Photo: Parliamentary Media Unit

PACIFIC AFFAIRS

Our MPs join corruption fight

FIJI, TONGA, WEST AUSTRALIA, W, COOK ISLANDS, KIRIBATI REPRESENTATIVES TALK REGIONAL MOBILISATION PLAN

SHEETAL PRASAD
NADI

Several members of the Public Accounts Committee joined parliamentary colleagues from around the region in Nadi yesterday to discuss better ways of combating corruption in the region.

Committee chairperson Biman Prasad and members Balmindar Singh, Aseri Radrodoro and Sanjit Patel were attending a two-day workshop on the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and the Global Organisation of Parliamentarians against Corruption (GOPAC) at the Novotel Hotel.

The workshop also involves members of the standing Committees on anti-corruption in Tonga, the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission in West Australia and the GOPAC Parliamentary Committees in the Cook Islands and Kiribati.

“*The strong determination of the Fijian Government to eliminate corrupted practices in Fiji saw the establishment of the Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption*”

Ratu Epeli Nailatikau
President

bati.

Chief Guest, the President of Fiji Ratu Epeli Nailatikau warned that the effects of corruption needed to be addressed, sooner than later.

“In Fiji we have a number of descriptions for corruptions but despite the varying descriptions, we all know what they mean.

“Corruption can easily lead to the erosion of the moral principles and values of good citizenship in our societies.”

He said the cost of corruption globally is conservatively at a staggering USD2.6 trillion per year.

He said Fiji has stated its political commitment in the fight against corruption when it ratified the UNCAC in 2008.

“However prior to that happening, the strong determination of the Fijian Government to eliminate corrupted practices in Fiji saw the establishment of the Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption.

“Corruption had been an on-going

Fiji joins 176 nations fighting corruption

problem in Fiji; this was expedited by poor governance systems including the facilitation without question of directives from authorities under the context of respect, coupled with a culture of silence and a culture of gift-giving.”

Mr Nailatikau said that Fiji now belongs to the global club of 176 countries who are dedicated to working together to curb this global phenomenon.

Speaker to Parliament Dr Jiko Luveni also addressed the regional participants on the importance of parliamentarians promoting the fight against corruption.

“As Parliamentarians, we know corruption prevents our communities from reaching their true potential and destroys the trust that our people need in their gov-

ernments to deliver services fairly, equitably and in a timely fashion,” she said.

She reiterated that fighting corruption needed a multi-stakeholder approach, something the Fijian Parliament was working on.

“The Parliament of the Republic of Fiji is taking a robust approach to our engagement with other regional and international Parliamentary groupings. Fiji has enjoyed a strong relationship with the UNDP Governance Strengthening Programme, which has greatly helped build the capacity of our MPs and Committees since the election late in 2014. We were also fortunate to have recently hosted the Africa Caribbean Pacific - EU (ACP-EU) Joint Parliamentary Assembly, in which GOPAC and UN-PRAC provided a briefing for Parliamentarians as part of the Assembly.”

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Regional joint effort

By SHAYAL DEVI

PARLIAMENTS across the region need to promote greater understanding of the negative effects of corruption in order to effectively combat corrupt practices.

This was the message conveyed by Parliament Speaker Dr Jiko Luveni during an anti-corruption workshop for Pacific parliamentarians organised by

the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Nadi yesterday.

Dr Luveni also called on parliamentarians in the region to work together with governments that had ratified the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC).

"As parliamentarians, we know that corruption prevents our communities

from reaching their true potential and destroys the trust that our people need in their governments to deliver services fairly, equitably and in a timely fashion," she said.

"Parliaments need to promote work cooperatively with governments that have ratified the UNCAC in developing government or country anti-corruption strategies, plans or approaches aimed at effective implementation."

She said improved operational alliances with international organisations that es with international objectives were vital shared the UNCAC objectives were vital so that the work of parliamentarians could better complement others.

Dr Luveni urged Pacific parliamentarians to maintain its global task force on the UNCAC and support the global parliamentarians against corruption.

Leaders' role vital under UNCAC

By SHAYAL DEVI

PARLIAMENTARIANS should help domesticate the United Nations Convention against Corruption by helping adopt national standards, says Speaker of the House Dr Jiko Luveni.

Speaking at the anti-corruption workshop for Pacific parliamentarians in Nadi yesterday, Dr Luveni said parliamentarians played an active leadership role in the ratification, implementation, monitoring and review of the UNCAC.

She said this included the criminalisation of corruption through legislation and an independent judiciary system.

"Adaptation of the UNCAC may take place through transparency, balance between effective criminalisation of corrupt acts and the prevention of corruption through improved governance practices, innovation, participation of society, monitoring and review," Dr Luveni said.

"Parliaments and parliamentarians have a key role to play in combating corruption and in the different processes envisaged under UNCAC."

According to Dr Luveni, parliament's role could be categorised as anti-corruption planning and monitoring, financial oversight, establishing and monitoring standards of conduct.

"Also, they should ensure parliamentary accessibility and availability of information for interested members of the public — including constituents, civil society organisations..."



Dr Biman Prasad and Sanjit Patel during the workshop.

Picture: SHAYAL DEVI

Adviser: Ratification a positive step forward

By SHAYAL DEVI

THE ratification of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) by a large number of countries in the region, including Fiji, has been hailed as a positive step towards fighting corruption.

However, sustainable and effective anti-corruption reforms need to be implemented as well, says UN Peace and Development adviser Sonja Bachmann.

"The question is no longer why we should be fighting corruption, but rather how," Ms Bachmann said. "The general consensus is — and as also illustrated in the number of countries that have ratified — that the platform to be used is the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC). There are 176 countries on board, as this convention is the first and only legally binding, global anti-corruption instrument."

Ms Bachmann made the remarks during a two-day workshop on anti-corruption for Pacific

parliamentarians that began in Nadi yesterday.

Chairman Professor Biman Prasad was accompanied by parliamentarians Balmindar Singh, Sanjit Patel and Aseri Radrod.

Mr Prasad said it was a good opportunity for PAC members to look at the different institutions fighting corruption and how effective and independent they were.

"We are joining other Pacific colleagues to look at how things are done in their countries," he said.

Convention to reduce oil pollution not ratified yet

By TALEBULA KATE

FIJI has not yet ratified the International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation (OPRC), the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence was informed yesterday.

Lalte Ramoce of the Solicitor-

General's office highlighted this while making submissions to the committee on the protocol preparedness response and co-operation to pollution incidents by hazardous and noxious substances (OPRC-HNS Protocol).

She told the committee the protocol had a parent convention that Fiji had yet to ratify, which was the

OPRC convention.

"Like the OPRC Convention, the OPRC-HNS protocol aims to establish national systems for preparedness and response and to provide a global framework for international co-operation in combating major incidents or threats of marine pollution," Ms Ramoce said.

"Parties to the OPRC-HNS protocol are required to establish measures for dealing with pollution incidents, either nationally or in co-operation with other countries. Ships are required to carry a shipboard pollution emergency plan to deal specifically with incidents involving hazardous and noxious substances."

She said the OPRC-HNS protocol ensured that ships carrying hazardous and noxious substances were covered by preparedness and response regimes similar to those already in existence for oil incidents. Some of these plans are already recognised by our domestic modes by the Maritime Transport Decree of 2013.