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## **Tonga talks about partnership to curtail corruption in Pacific [1]**

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The fact that Tonga has not ratified the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), did not hamper the participation of Tonga's representative, Lord Fusitu'a, in panel discussions at the 6th Forum of Parliamentarians held in St Petersburg, Russia on November 5.

Tonga is one of four Pacific countries that have not ratified UNCAC, along with New Zealand, Samoa and Niue.

In a move to ratify UNCAC before 2019, Tonga's Parliament in August formed a Standing Committee on Anti-Corruption, chaired by Lord Fusitu'a.

He represented Tonga at the 6th Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption, when 1,500 participants from 164 countries met in St Petersburg, from November 2-6.

The Forum of Parliamentarians was a side event during the conference. The Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Yury Fedotok delivered the keynote speech to the Forum, and acknowledged the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC) as an important partner in the fight against corruption.

"UNODC, as guardian of the Un Convention Against Corruption, remains committed to working with all our partners in the fight against corruption," he said.

The UN Pacific Regional Anti-corruption Project is jointly implemented by UNODC and UNDP.

The Forum held two panel discussions on two topics: 'Partnerships to Curtail Corruption in the Pacific' and 'Prosecuting Grand Corruption: Let us bring them to justice'.

### **Tonga**

The 'Partnerships to Curtail Corruption in the Pacific', discussion focused on the engagement of Parliamentarians and the role that they can play to promote the ratification of UNCAC and contribute to its implementation in the Pacific region. Specific experiences in the Cook Islands and in Tonga were highlighted.

The recent conviction of 14 Vanuatu Members of Parliament on bribery and Leadership Code violations, and the need for Pacific Parliamentarians to address transparency in issues of gift-giving and codes of conduct was raised.

The second panel discussion 'Prosecuting Grand Corruption: Let us bring them to justice',

highlighted the aims of GOPAC and Transparency International to pursue international legal instruments and strategies to apprehend, prosecute, judge, and sentence perpetrators of grand corruption.

National and international measures to address grand corruption were discussed, as well as to ensure that remedies are provided to victims and the proceeds of crime returned, such as through the UNODC-World Bank Stolen Asset Recovery Initiative.

The United Nations Pacific Regional Anti-Corruption Project (UN-PRAC) is a four-year joint initiative of UNDP and UNODC, supported by the Australian Government.

The joint UNDP-UNODC project aims to help Pacific Island Countries and territories fight corruption by supporting:

1. Ratification of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC).
2. UNCAC implementation through the strengthening of policies, laws, measures and institutional frameworks.
3. Engagement in the UNCAC processes, including the Implementation Review Mechanism. The project draws on the strong global partnership and comparative advantages of both organizations in the fight against corruption.

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