

GOPAC SPEECH AT UNCAC PARLIAMENTARY DIALOGUE MEETING DOHA March 2023

I am very glad to virtually attend our 2023 Parliamentary Dialogue on the United Nations Convention against Corruption (aka UNCAC the only legally binding universal anti-corruption instrument) coinciding with our Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC) Annual General Meeting in Doha, Qatar.

And to have been invited as the Chairman of the Gopac Secretariat Global Task Force (GTF) on UNCAC to speak on the Panel for:

"UNCAC at 20 Years On:
Roles of Parliament"

Where I hope to be able to elucidate on Tonga's journey from 2007 and the enactment of the Anticorruption Commissioner Act, and our journey over the past 16 years including Parliamentary advocacy through 5 different governments to achieve UNCAC accession and establishment of our Anticorruption Commission.

Working unwavering by successive governments unwilling to implement the Act or accede to UNCAC:-

1) In 2015 I took it upon myself and another colleague to put a motion to Parliament which was adopted unanimously for Tonga to have a parliamentary Standing Committee on Anti-Corruption, the first of its kind in the Pacific. With the assistance of UNDP Pacific and UNODC SE Asia/Pacific, and what would eventually become UN-PRAC capacity building was done that enabled the Committee to train MPs and to achieve milestones such as:

(i) Implement a gap analysis with the Ombudsman's Office updating our laws to comply with UNCAC;
(ii) redraft the Parliamentary House Rules to provide for explicit inclusion of GOPAC and its Terms of Reference in the Rules, ensuring both UNCAC and other international best practices would always be required of the Committee and by extension the Legislature;
(iii) most significantly, due to no government being willing to establish the Commission we amended the House Rules to give the Chairman and the Committee all the powers of the Commissioner and the Commission in order that not be left in limbo without an anticorruption structure and arbiter.

2) Then what I felt was our first victory came in 2019, when in response to an audience and briefing provided - His Majesty handed down a Royal Command that the Anticorruption Commission be established as provided for by the 2007 Act and that the government make the budget allocations for it. The government of that day ignored the Royal Command and never implemented His Majesty's command but our second victory came when:-

3) In 2020 I was extremely grateful that finally via Justice Minister in the Tu'i'onetoa government my colleague, our current Deputy Prime Minister Sam Vaipulu signed onto the Teieniwa Vision which is the GOPAC Oceania Pacific road map for UNCAC and announced at the meeting in Kiribati on 5 February 2020 that Tonga would accede to UNCAC and on the very next day the 6 of February our Ambassador in New York handed up the documents to the UN Secretariat acceding to UNCAC coming into law in Tonga on 7 March 2020.

4) Then finally in early 2023 the current PM has announced that this government will be establishing our Anticorruption Commission and Commissioner with a full budget to be allocated to it in this year's budget.

And so we've come full circle advocating through 5 Governments to achieve UNCAC ratification and the establishment of the Commission it has all been completely worthwhile and I look forward to Tonga improving our position on the World Corruption/Anticorruption Indices.

Finally:-

More than \$1.2 trillion is paid in bribes every year according to the World bank figures
More then \$2.1 trillion are syphoned away by Illicit financial flows according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC)
And more than \$3.1 trillion is lost per annum to tax evasion according to the Tax Justice Network.

These 3 metrics alone amount to \$6.2 trillion dollars

By contrast the Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs adopted by the United Nations posits the amount required to satisfy all of the Sustainable Development goals \$580 billion.

That means that what the world loses to corruption each year is enough to fulfill the SDGs, to end poverty, end hunger, achieve gender equality, protect our environment more than a dozen times over.

To end the worst forms of human misery and poverty more than a dozen times over.

There is therefore no excuse for us to ensure UNCAC is not only globally adopted by advocating for membership to spread throughout legislatures the world over. But also to ensure our member nations step up to their responsibilities under UNCAC and fulfill them.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Lord Fusitu'a'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lord Fusitu'a

Chairman

GOPAC Oceania