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PRESS RELEASE

Right to Information and Freedom of Speech are key tools for Good Governance

Honiara, Solomon Islands – The UN Pacific Regional Anti-Corruption (UN-PRAC) project, a [United Nations Development Programme](#) (UNDP) and [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime](#) (UNODC) joint project, together with experts from Australia, New Zealand and Vanuatu, and in close partnership with [the Solomon Islands Office of the Prime Minister](#), hosted a virtual informative session on right to information by sharing best practices to build resilient, transparent and accountable institutions in the Solomon Islands.

The virtual discussion took place today in Honiara and served as a platform to share experiences and best practices. The participants and speakers had a chance to exchange their experiences on establishing and implementing 'Right to Information' with integrity institutions and the Office of the Prime Minister.

"Equal and transparent access to information is the foundation of a democratic society, the key to its successful development and to the rule of law," said Derek Mane (PhD), the Deputy Secretary to the Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands, in his welcome remarks.

Mane thanked the development partners for their continuous support and said: "We are very grateful to our partners for supporting and contributing to the sustainable development of the Solomon Islands by helping improve key principles of the right to information and build resilient and transparent institutions."

The right to information is at the core of United Nations values. It is an integral part of the fundamental right of freedom of expression, as recognized by [Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), which encompasses the freedom to "to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."



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UNDP and UNODC are committed to supporting Governments in developing right to information frameworks that will empower individuals and communities by giving them a role in ensuring governments are accountable and transparent.

Right to information and freedom of speech support institutions to establish mechanisms that provide the necessary information to the public on Government decision-making and provide the basis for the public to access topics of particular concern, such as global health crises and climate change, and serve as significant steps in bridging about a dialogue between the government and the public.

"The right to information is not only about the commitments of governments, it is also about the empowerment of people to participate, advocate and monitor for meaningful progress against the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The right to information is a precondition to achieving progress on sustainable development and, therefore, an important target under SDG 16 on Good Governance," said Sonja Stefanovska-Trajanoska (PhD), Regional Anti-Corruption Adviser for the UN-PRAC Project, UNDP Pacific Office in Fiji.

One of the most significant highlights of the session was that both speakers and participants were encouraged to work with each other and discuss key principles to consider when drafting and implementing right to information legislation.

"UNDP actively supports and welcomes the Governments' efforts to transform the public sector by increasing efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, accountability, access to information and public services, and citizen participation," said Vardon Hoca, Transparency and Accountability for the People of Solomon Islands Project Manager, UNDP in Solomon Islands.

He also stressed the importance of further cooperation and added: "Teamwork makes the dream work. UNDP remains a reliable partner of the Solomon Islands Government as transparency and



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accountability are fundamental for UNDP in delivering development results for Solomon Islands people.”

The virtual session was hosted by the UN-PRAC project, implemented jointly by UNDP and UNODC with support from the Australian and New Zealand Governments; and the Transparency and Accountability for People of Solomon Islands Project (TAP) that is implemented by UNDP in Solomon Islands with support from the governments of Solomon Islands, the United Kingdom and Japan who have been actively working with Pacific Island countries to support their obligations as parties to the relevant international and regional instruments, including the United Nations Convention against Corruption and the 2030 Agenda.

With the 2030 Agenda as a guiding thread, UNDP and UNODC aim to reduce corruption and develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels to ensure effective and timely achievement of national development outcomes.

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