

Solomon Islands
Statement to the UNCAC Resumed 7th Session of the IRG
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Introduction

Thank you Chair

Our delegation joins others in thanking you for your perseverance in continuing to preside over this Resumed 7th IRG meeting. Our gratitude also goes to the Secretariat for their ever-efficient preparation of IRG meetings including this meeting.

We generally agree with those who spoke before me that the UNCAC review mechanism and its findings do generally triggers an unprecedented number of anti-corruption initiatives. This is certainly the case with us in the Solomon Islands. The review outcomes plus the increasing interest by the people in the causes and consequences of corruption has generated an unprecedented level of political commitment to step up our national efforts to effectively fight against corruption.

As of today, I wish to briefly report on key aspects of our anticorruption initiatives emanating from our UNCAC review in the first cycle.

Investigating and Prosecution

On investigations and prosecution, I wish to confirm that our Anti-Corruption Bill, Whistleblower Protection Bill and Leadership Code Bill are all ready to go for enactment by Parliament in March 2017. The Anti-Corruption Bill will also set up the Solomon Islands Independent Commission Against Corruption (SIICAC). The Leadership Code Bill will also establish the new independent Office of the Ethics Adviser. This is a new institution that will proactively provide advice and clearance to leaders who seek advice when faced with situation of potential conflict of interest.

From our Office, i.e. the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, all drafting instructions to finalize these Bills will be forwarded to the Attorney General's Chamber by 15 December this year. This timeframe will ensure that all the Bills are ready for Cabinet approval and sent to Parliament by February 2017.

National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS)

Chair, while we are confident of our Anti-Corruption Bill as being sufficient to capture the different types of corruption offences, our work to develop our National Anti-Corruption Strategy has proven to be most exciting and inspiring. For us, the NACS process has proven that an Anti-Corruption law in itself is NOT sufficient on its own in the fight against corruption. We need a National Anti-Corruption Strategy to be at the forefront of preventative measures that we should deliver to increase the probability of detecting corruption and their successful investigation and prosecution.

We have taken an inclusive approach by embracing the private sector and civil society organisations as coalition partners in the development and implementation of the NACS.

We have consulted widely in the country on the contents of our Strategy and last week the NACS Action Plan, for the next 3-5 years, was adopted by all community leaders. Our Prime Minister is now ready to launch the NACS and its Action Plan on Friday, 9 December, which will also be the highlight of the International Anti-Corruption day.

Chair, the mining and logging sectors are the top productive sectors in our economy currently contributing about 20% to Gross Domestic Products. They have the potential to contribute 40% to GDP, but we have been worried because of the proliferation of corrupt practices in these sectors. We are now, however, positively optimistic with the timely releases of the ISO 37001 last month on anti-bribery management systems. These standards of compliance, which we can impose on firms, will effectively shift the burden to the private sector to commit to put in place and implement internationally recognized best practice of anti-bribery control. We are now pursuing this policy goal.

I raise this specific angle of our Strategy Action Plan because this is an area of considerable interest to many of us in our June UNCAC 7th review session. The distinguished delegate from Israel rightly pointed out in our June session that we need more effective ways to combat corruption in the private sector. I can confirm that we have inserted a provision in our Anti-Corruption Bill to make it an offence by any person to offer or solicit a bribe from a private company. But even with this proviso, we are still not exerting some responsibilities for a private company to take steps to prevent corruption.

The introduction of a compliance program for all private companies, with penalties for non-compliance, is undoubtedly the way to go to intensify the fight against corruption in the private sector. But we know it is only a handful of countries, like South Africa, Brazil and few others, who have introduced

similar programs. Because of the limited number of countries who have implemented similar programs, it would be appreciated if the Secretariat takes an interest in this area and facilitate exchange of lessons learned to ensure our fight against corruption in the private sector is effective.

Before I stop talking, I would like to mention two things:

First, as a country with a huge corruption problem, the number of initiatives we will pursue through the implementation of the NACS Action Plan will be substantial because of high public expectation. We would like to appeal to development partners to assist us, whether directly or through the Secretariat or other UN agencies, by matching our limited annual budgetary allocation for the implementation of our NACS Action Plan.

Second, Solomon Islands will be reviewed in the first year of the second cycle. We will be reviewed by Vietnam and South Korea. In that regard, we would like to thank the UNODC who coordinated a training of Focal points and governmental experts in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from 10-14 October. This has helped us to fill in our checklist for Chapters 2 and 5. We are committed to complete and submit the duly filled checklist by the second week of next month. We are working with the UN Pacific Regional Anticorruption Project on our response to the checklist relating to Chapter 5.

Thank you Chair