



For Immediate Release

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News Release

Tonga MPs Join Worldwide Network to Tackle Corruption

Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption

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GOPAC is a worldwide alliance of parliamentarians working together to combat corruption, strengthen good government, and uphold the rule of law.

Nuku'alofa, Tonga – Parliamentarians in Tonga join the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC) and commit to working together to combat corruption, strengthen good government and uphold the rule of law at a two-day workshop on corruption hosted by GOPAC, the UNDP and the UNODC in the capital Nuka'alofa. Parliamentarians from the Legislative Assembly of Tonga, including Nobles and People's Representatives, the Prime Minister and Ministers attended.

Prime Minister 'Akilisi Pohiva told parliamentarians, civil society and media in attendance that Tongans had to be open to discussing and teaching in schools about corrupt events which led to the reform movement bringing change to Tonga.

Parliamentarian Lord Fusitu'a was elected Chair of GOPAC Tonga, with People's Representative MP Mateni Tapueluelu elected Vice-Chair. Two Ministers, Poasi Tei, Minister for Public Enterprises, and Dr Pohiva Tu'i'onetoa, Minister for Police, were also elected to the executive committee. The other two executive members are Lord Havea Tu'iha'ateiho and Penisimani Fifita.

"Tonga's parliamentarians now have the opportunity to fully embrace the benefits of belonging to a global network of parliamentarians against corruption and strengthen political will to advance ratifying the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC)," said Lord Fusitu'a.

GOPAC Oceania Chair John Hyde praised Tonga's parliamentarians for openly examining their challenges including implementing legislation to establish the position of Anti-Corruption Commissioner. He commended the leadership of the Speaker (and former Prime Minister) Lord Tu'ivakano for fully supporting the workshop, establishing a GOPAC chapter and looking to create the Pacific's first parliamentary Standing Committee on Anti-Corruption.

"GOPAC Tonga now joins GOPAC national chapters in Cook Islands, Kiribati, Australia and New Zealand as regional MPs assert their key role as advocates against corruption, which robs communities of sustainable development," said Mr Hyde.

Australian High Commissioner to Tonga, Brett Aldam, also attended the workshop, and the Australian Government funded the project through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's UN Pacific Regional Anti-Corruption Project, a four-year USD\$4.3 million project in 15 Pacific nations, including Tonga.

GOPAC is a worldwide alliance of parliamentarians working together to combat corruption, strengthen good government, and uphold the rule of law. Based in Ottawa, Canada, GOPAC has 51 national chapters on 5 continents. GOPAC supports its members' efforts through original research, global anti-corruption capacity building, and international peer support. Visit GOPAC on the web at gopacnetwork.org, on Twitter at twitter.com/GOPAC_Eng, and on Facebook at facebook.com/gopacnetwork

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