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MEDIA RELEASE

Poll a key step to democracy

FIJI needs to make a new commitment to achieving a visible national culture of accountability, says Dr Donasiano Ruru, Chairperson of Transparency International Fiji, in order to build sustainable democracy.

“The successful national election is an important step in the nation’s return to democracy.”

He said that proper process could not be followed fully without a democratically legitimate government, and democracy promotes transparency and accountability.

“Despite perceptions about conditions not being ideal, the people have demonstrated their desire to participate in the election,” Dr Ruru said. “TI Fiji supports and is committed to the nation’s return to democratic rule.

“We welcome the choices cast by our citizens on whom they will entrust their welfare and development, as well as authority and resources.

“We need to make a new commitment to achieving a visible national culture of accountability, in order to build sustainable democracy in our country.”

Transparency International’s Plain Language Guide (2009) defines “accountability” as the concept that individuals, agencies and organisations (public, private and civil society) are held responsible for executing their powers properly.

In theory there are three forms of accountability: diagonal, horizontal and vertical, and apply to the public sector as follows:

- “Diagonal accountability” is when citizens use government institutions to elicit better oversight of the state’s actions, and in the process engage in policy-making, budgeting, expenditure tracking and other activities.
- “Horizontal accountability” subjects public officials to restraint and oversight, or “checks and balances”, by other government agencies (that is, the courts, ombudsman, auditing agencies, central banks etc.) that can call into question, and eventually punish, an official for improper conduct.
- “Vertical accountability” holds public officials accountable to the electorate or citizenry through elections, a free press, an active civil society and other similar channels.

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