



STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE, LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Review Report on the Office of the President Annual Report 2016-2017



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CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD



The Office of the President is headed by the Official Secretary who is responsible for coordinating all forms of direct support for the President. As part of this role, an annual report of the financial year is prepared by the Official Secretary which follows the provisions of the Financial Management Act 2004 and tabled in this August House.

The Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights of Parliament was referred the *Office of the President Annual Report 2016-2017*. The Committee was mandated by Parliament to review this report and report back to Parliament on its findings. The Committee's role in being mandated to review these mentioned report, gives a clear indication of the democratic progress that Fiji has come to enjoy. This progress should be equally credited to both sides of this August House as portrayed by the work of the Standing Committees.

This Report will highlight issues from the Office of the President report and the discussions held by the Committee with the Office of the President on these.

Consideration was also given to the requirements of the Standing Orders of Parliament pertaining to the impact on gender when deliberating on the Annual Reports, however appreciated the apparent gap in placing emphasis on such requirements when the Reports were drafted and tabled in Parliament.

The discussions held were beneficial as it gave the Committee an indication of the great work already being carried out by the Office of the President and the plans and efforts being put in place for the way forward for the Office in its commitment to providing the best possible support to the President of Fiji and in turn, also ensuring a prosperous nation.

At this juncture I would also like to thank the Honourable Members of the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights for their deliberations and input, the alternate members who made themselves available when the substantive members could not attend, the secretariat and the officials from the Office of the President who had assisted in the Committee work.

I, on behalf of the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights, commend the *Office of the President Annual Report 2016-2017* to the Parliament and request all the members of this August House to take into consideration of its content.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Alvick Avhikrit Maharaj', written in a cursive style.

.....
Hon. Alvick Avhikrit Maharaj
Chairperson

COMMITTEE COMPOSITION



Hon. Alvick Avhikrit Maharaj (Chairperson)

- *Assistant Minister for Employment, Productivity, Industry Relations, Youth and Sports*
- *Chairperson of Public Accounts Committee*
- *Government Whip*
- *Registered Pharmacist*



Hon. Rohit Sharma (Deputy Chairperson)

- *Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights*
- *Deputy Government Whip*



Hon. Ratu Suliano Matanitobua (Member)

- *Shadow Minister for Youth and Sports*
- *Former State Minister of Fijian Affairs*
- *Former Military Territorial Officer*



Hon. Dr. Salik Govind (Member)

- *Public Health Specialist – United Nations (World Health Organisation)*
- *Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee*



Hon. Moses Bulitavu (Member)

- *Shadow Minister for Defense, National Security, Immigration and Correction Services*
- *Former Opposition Whip*
- *Business Consultant/Farmer*
- *Territorial Military Officer – Republic of Fiji Military Forces*
- *Law Graduate and Researcher*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights (“Committee”) was referred the *Office of the President Annual Report 2016-2017* (“Report”) for review, on June 2019. The Committee is mandated by Parliament to review the Report and report back to Parliament on its findings.

The Report cover the roles, goals, outcomes and outputs and achievements of the Office of President (“Office”) for the year 2016-2017.

In reviewing the Report the Committee conducted its own deliberation and invited the Office of the President to clarify issues pertaining to the Report.

This report will discuss the review findings and recommendations by the Committee.

Office of the President

The Office of the President provides necessary and outstanding support to the President of the Republic of Fiji, in fulfilling his obligations as the Executive Authority of the State.

The *Office of the President Annual Report 2016-2017* covers various aspects of the Office including the work of the Office with respect to the achievements, the met outputs and outcomes and main highlights for the reported years.

The Report also covered the main highlights of the activities carried out by the Office of the President for the year 2016-2017, which include:

- Facilitation by the Office of the work and national and international engagements, of His Excellency the President of Fiji;
- Facilitation of His Excellency’s engagement as advocate and champion in eradicating non-communicable diseases;
- Development of human resources through ongoing training; and
- Improving financial management capabilities.

2.0 COMMITTEE DELIBERATION AND FINDINGS

As part of its review the Committee read and deliberated on the Reports and identified a few issues. These issues were then brought to the attention of the Office for clarification whereby thorough discussion on the issues was conducted with the Office representatives. From this discussion, the Committee identified key findings. A summary of the main findings is provided below and a copy of the documents pertaining to the findings and the response provided by the Office is provided in **Appendix A**.

In the course of the review, one of the key findings of the Committee was in regard to the Office’s efforts in aligning itself to the requirements of its guiding documents (Constitution,

Honours Awards Act 1995, the 5 –Year and 20-Year National Development Plans, Finance Management Act 2004, Financial Instructions 2010, Agency Financial Manual 2015, Fiji Procurement Act 2010, Occupational Health and Safety at Work Act 1996, Fiji National Provident Fund Act 2011, Employment Relations Promulgation 2007). The Committee noted that the Office has continued to perform its functions and engaged in activities that are in line with the guiding documents.

The Committee noted that certain Performance Targets were not met for the years 2016-2017 and that certain engagements for His Excellency the President regarding his constitutional role had decreased in the years 2014 to 2017 and the reasons for this was that these pertained to engagements of His Excellency that were beyond the control of the Office of the President.

The Committee noted that the Office has also successfully facilitated His Excellency's constitutional role pertaining to assent to Bills for the reported period.

The Committee noted that the Office had encountered hurdles in facilitating His Excellency's engagement for youth and young people awareness on NCDs due to rehabilitation efforts of Government in aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Winston.

Furthermore, the Committee also noted that Government reforms of rehabilitating schools had also hindered the community engagement of school visitation to promote the fight against NCDs. What other options has the Office of the President explored in addressing the above?

3.0 SDGs AND GENDER ANALYSIS

The Committee took into account the provisions of SO 110(2) which states when a committee conducts an activity listed in clause (1), the Committee shall ensure that full consideration will be given to the principle of gender equality so as to ensure all matters are considered with regard to the impact and benefit on both men and women equally.

The Committee noted that a major component of the Office's Annual Report Corporate Plan is to facilitate the President in promoting equal rights and empowerment. For the reported year, the Office has supported numerous engagements and has accomplished a 500 percent as compared to 250 percent achieved for the year 2015.

The Committee therefore is adamant that continuation of public engagements by the President will be beneficial and fulfilling in future given the increase in the comparable statistics for the reported year of 2015 and 2016-2017.

4.0 RECOMMENDATION

After reviewing the *Office of the President Annual Report 2016-2017*, it was noted and acknowledged that there were numerous undertakings done which has contributed to progress and improvements by the Office in response to the issues noted in the reported year. However the Committee recommends that;

- future reports of the Office adhere to current reporting practices, including highlighting the status of the Office with regards to the National Development (NDP) Plan targets.
- the Committee commends the work done by the Office of the President and recommends in future that the Office also specifically indicate in its Annual Report, the NDP targets that will be achieved via programmes.
- the Committee commends the Office for the tireless efforts in engaging with youths and creating awareness on NCD's. The Committee recommends that the Office continues with the awareness programme to combat against NCD's as a human right issue.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights has fulfilled its mandate approved by Parliament, which is to examine and review the *Office of the President Annual Report 2016-2017* with due diligence.

The Committee's review findings showed that there were certain issues with the accounting and other processes within the Office of the President, but this has been addressed through numerous undertakings by the Office as shown in the findings above. The Committee acknowledges the improvements done, but does recommend that future annual reports of the Office follow current reporting practices and that it be submitted in a timely manner to the relevant authority.

The Committee through this report commends the *Office of the President Annual Report 2016-2017* to Parliament.

APPENDIX

- **APPENDIX A: ISSUE BY THE COMMITTEE AND RESPONSE BY THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT**