

# **STANDING COMMITTEE ON** **JUSTICE, LAW & H/RIGHTS**

- SODELPA  
Submission

*[Verbatim Report of Meeting]*

**HELD IN THE**

**COMMITTEE ROOM (EAST WING)**

**ON**

**WEDNESDAY, 27TH JULY, 2016**



**VERBATIM NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE,  
LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS HELD AT THE COMMITTEE ROOM (EAST WING) ON  
WEDNESDAY, 27TH JULY, 2016 AT 3.12 P.M.**

**Interviewee : Social Democratic Liberal Party (SODELPA)**

**In Attendance:**

- |    |                        |   |                   |
|----|------------------------|---|-------------------|
| 1. | Mr. Sitiveni Rabuka    | - | Leader            |
| 2. | Adi Litia Qionibaravi  | - | General Secretary |
| 3. | Mr. Patilai Waqabaca   | - | Secretariat       |
| 4. | Mr. Isikeli Komaisavai | - | SODELPA           |

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MR. CHAIRMAN.- Honourable Members, ladies and gentlemen, I welcome the new leader of SODELPA, Mr. Sitiveni Rabuka, former Prime Minister of this country. If the team from SODELPA is ready to proceed your time was for 3.30 p.m. but if your team is here, we can allocate an early time because the previous submittee on the list is not available. If the team is ready we can allow the submission to go ahead.

MR. S. RABUKA.- The Honourable Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights, Honourable Members of the Standing Committee, I present team from the Social Democratic Liberal Party (SODELPA). Thank you very much for your welcome and thank you for acknowledging me as the newly appointed leader of this Party.

I also thank you very much for allowing us to make an oral submission this afternoon. On behalf of the Party, we wish you well in your deliberations and in your receiving all the submissions that will come from the people of Fiji to your Standing Committee.

\* We understand that it is a very very important standing committee because out of your report and your findings, will only come better things and better arrangements for the people of Fiji to express their will for the governance of their nation.

Fiji has had 11 General Elections in the 46 years since Independence. Out of these 11 General Elections only five of the Governments elected have had full parliamentary terms. Those 11 Elections were held under four totally different Constitutions.

The four different Constitutions all had their fair shares of champions and critics but each of them brought the majority of Fiji's citizens eligible to vote for their choice of persons or political parties they believed would lead them towards a better future.

\* The 2014 General Elections for the first one held in Fiji under scrutiny by a Multinational Observer Group (MOG). How much of the machinery of the elections and its pre-polling and post-polling administration were scrutinised cannot be ascertained, however the recommendations by the MOG should be objectively considered and not taken only as allegations.

\* Because the international community in the interest of transparent accountability had increasingly demanded and expected nations to adhere to universal high values and standards, it is important that Fiji take seriously the findings and recommendations of the MOG, as well as the Commission and the Supervisor of Elections.

As Fiji moves forward, it is the prayer of the Fiji Social Democratic Liberal Party (SODELPA) that the country and its citizens will find a workable electoral process that will ensure that the genuine will of the people will give them a group of citizens to rule the affairs of their nation with sincerity, honesty and compassion.

\* The MOG Findings and SODELPA Comments: SODELPA while agreeing that the outcome of the 2014 Elections broadly represents the will of the people, it has reservations that the will was freely expressed without fear and possibly for favour. The high profile presence of military and police in the polling stations and its vicinity brought fear to the minds of some voters, whose memory of security forces personnel brutality against some members of the public, some resulting in death were still vivid. In Fiji where locality news is national news which impact most because of the close knit and strong communal ties we have, the fear felt by a locality community is also felt by all members of that community nationwide.

\* The fear it now confines to the fear of physical harm, also embraces the fear of the loss of freedom, arrest, imprisonment, employment, capital, et cetera. It will take some time for the nation to return to normality before it can truly claim to be having free and fair elections as the pillar of its democracy.

While MOG considered that the number of candidates demonstrated a strong interest in contesting the Elections (those were their words), it also showed a poor understanding of the elections provision in particular, and politics in general.

\* For as many as seven political parties to form, register and campaign six virtually against the party of the incumbent Government, it can be attributed to limited time to objectively consider the options available to those who oppose the governing group for whatever reasons because of the limited media freedom and the extended period of perceived instability necessitating the ever-extending of a State of Emergency restrictions on public meetings and the use of the media, particularly the harsh control measures on those media and persons speaking out against Government leaders and establishments.

\* While the MOG found that, and I quote; "In general the political parties were able to mobilise and candidates were free to campaign and the campaign period was peaceful," SODELPA workers and candidates found the atmosphere repressive and foreboding. MOG found that, and I quote; "Civil society participation in the electoral process was unduly restricted because of Section 115 of the Electoral Decree of 2014." SODELPA agrees that this was a case of selective favour applied on and a usually people-friendly group of organisations that governments give credit to when it suits them. In times of natural disasters and post-disaster mitigations, these same civil societies selflessly assist governments get to the people with remedies for their needs.

\* In the case of 2014 General Elections and in restrictions placed on participants, preventing them from being able to project a proper image of their abilities to be an alternative to the incumbent group that had employed high media profile and are financially well supported by the machinery, the civil society would have been a perfect solution to the proper dissemination of public information to the many voters who have restricted access to such information. The same freedom given to Universities under Section 115(4) would be a good guide for the future participation of civil societies in future elections.

While the MOG found the media co-operating to inform the public about this very important event, they qualify their findings with the observation that the aforesaid or the media operated under very restrictive framework, including very harsh maximum penalties which limited the media's ability to critically examine concerns expressed by candidates and political parties. At best in accounting terms, this finding forms some very damning qualification to the general elections by an independent body.

*Civil societies issue* ★ The limiting effect of Section 115(1) of the Electoral Decree 2014, and in the case of voter education and awareness highlighted in paragraph 8 of this submission, particularly of this subsection had grave adverse effects on the parties contesting against the FijiFirst Party. The civil societies could have been allowed the same liberty given to Universities in Section 115(4) with the same conditions and would have afforded more of the voters a better understanding of the system and their rights and also their restrictions on certain conducts and activities. All parties must have welcomed the presence of policemen and women but most also did not see a need as no one anticipated any criminal interference in the Election process.

*Issues with pre-poll of challenges voters* ★ The Observers found that in spite of the work done by the Fiji Elections Office and the Electoral Commission, many in the rural areas did not get enough essential voter information. The MOG finding on voter registration, pre-polling and postal voting problems were also obvious and visible to many party workers and the Observers. The changes made on pre-announced dates for which many had made allowances to accommodate such events as the Methodist Church Conference, necessitating travel from the islands and rural areas to Suva, cost irreparable damage as some could not cast their votes having missed their pre-polling dates and venues and not being able to cast their votes where they had travelled to.

The Observers noted that the Election was conducted in an atmosphere of calm with an absence of electoral misconduct or evident intimidation. They did not say that there was no intimidation. There might have been a feeling of *fait accompli* prevailing upon the voters of Fiji and none expected anything to change when the incumbent Party's *General* Secretary was also the Minister for Elections and the principal legal officer in the country. Thus, the absence of any legal challenges to the Court of Disputed Returns..

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, whilst SODELPA accepts the General Elections 2014 was not perfect and could have been regulated and run much better than it was, it had the same settings as the ones run in 1972, 1992 and now 2014, 20 and 22 years apart respectively on new Constitutions, new electoral provisions and new political landscapes, but they all allow the voters of Fiji to elect their representatives into Parliament where they were and are expected to make things better by enacting laws that would make elections better and life better for the people of Fiji and the future.

Thank you very much, Sir. Mr. Chairman, we have an Appendix which is part of the main report.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Would you like to take us through that?

MR. S. RABUKA.- Do we have time?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Yes.

MR. S. RABUKA.- With your permission, Mr. Chairman, can I ask the General Secretary of the Party to go through Appendix 1 with us.

ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Mr. Chairman and Honourable Members of the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights, it is my pleasure to continue on from the Party Leader in regards to the submission from SODELPA on the General Elections for 2014.

First, I would like to say a few words on Government's undertaking for a single day polling. The Government *previously* suppressed release by the Honourable Minister for Elections and the Attorney-General for a single day poll on 23rd January, 2014 General Elections had received mixed reactions from the wider public.

It had promised a lot of things in terms of transparency in the process. It promised to encourage voter turnout and keep elections cost to a minimum. You base those statements on the basis of wealth of international precedent and widely accepted best practice.

Indeed Elections Office to some extent, some political parties and in particular, SODELPA have come to agree that a single day poll is not only possible but could also be the best option for Fiji. The facts he raised and let me share, were as follows:

1. The single day poll would greatly decrease the chances for fraudulent behaviour, in particular tampering with the ballot boxes. In the past, he added that keeping ballot boxes secure and maintaining proper chain of custody records during their transport were big problems but in many cases, weakened voters' confidence in the veracity of the elections results.
2. That a single day poll improves voter turnout, like creating a greater sense of national occasion. It promotes a high level of excitement surrounding a day of special importance, the feeling of being part of a significant national undertaking.
3. That contrary to the claims of number of politicians, a single day poll is actually less expensive and logistically challenging than a multiple day poll. A single day poll will require around 2,000 polling stations, up to 1,148 in 2006. Yes, this means that more staff will have to be hired than in the past, but they will work fewer days. All other overhead costs such as fuel, housing, transportation and electricity will be less as well. This goes for the cost of political parties as well.

✧ Mr. Chairman, it was heartening to note as announced by the Minister on that day, that no ballot box will be transported long distances or stored for extended periods. Even after voting closes, all votes will be counted and results announced at the polling centre in full view of the public observers and party scrutineers.

✧ He also added that a multiple poll can actually dilute the sense of significance and importance for our civic duty. From the Party's prospective this would greatly enhance transparency of the process and boost the voter confidence in the results.

✧ It was also worth noting in his statements that the Elections Office, through a huge Election estimates would be catering to more voters in terms of its closeness to where they work or live. He made it clear that Government was not going to compromise standards or jeopardise the integrity of the process in order to save a few dollars.

✧ We noted, Mr. Chairman, as time went on, that some of those promises or ideals did not materialise. I would like to share SODELPA's views on the path of 17th September, 2014 General Elections. We briefly wish to raise the findings of the Party during the preparation stage, to the elections and counting to enlighten the Committee.

✧ Mr. Chairman and Honourable Members, on the pre-poll, although it is within the powers of the Electoral Commission to give notice the pre-polling dates after the closure of nominations, we submit that our voters in the selected pre polling areas were ill-informed of the changes from the single day polling on 17th September, 2014 to the new day of polling that was published in the print media. This placed the voters in villages and settlements in the most disadvantageous position.

The identified venues for pre-polling that we incorporated in the Decree and gazetted on 25th August, 2014 were areas with the low number of voters or in remote areas. Provincial Administrators and the *Roko Tui* conducted these awareness programmes.

Mr. Chairman and Honourable Members, most of our members in the maritime areas had by then left their villages for the mainland to attend to the annual Methodist Conference. Some voters left the islands to be with their children for the annual primary school Milo Kaji Tournament and the annual Scout Jamboree.

Even some villages in mainland Viti Levu had left their families and villages to harvest canes and had made their own arrangements to return to their village on 17th September, 2014 which was the original day for the single poll day. Our voters in mainland Viti Levu were also affected.

We have two weeks to conduct the awareness for the pre-polling and at a time when major events were taking place which was totally unjust and irresponsible. To make matters worse even as registered voters, they were entitled to vote only at the polling station to which they were assigned to. Additional confusion and frustration were faced by those whose names were not located in the voter registration and instead, were advised that they were to travel some long distance and go to the polling station where their registration were located.

*pre-polling was a disaster*  
\* Mr. Chairman and Honourable Members, the two weeks of awareness for pre-polling had caused undue pressure to the voters. I was in one of those pre-polling stations and when we came to advise them that they were going to hold the pre-polling in the next few days, to their surprise and I was told as well that they thought that it was just a practice, just a rehearsal with the actual polling that they were expecting to have been held on 17th September, 2014.

The voting results, Mr. Chairman, for the pre-polling stations is included in the tabulated 2014 National Day Polling Election Results that was published by the Supervisor of Elections and they are at the top of Paragraph 3.2.5. Out of a total of 66,389 total registered voters in the 549 polling stations, the numbers that had voted was 51,039, the percentage who did not vote was 24 percent.

The final polls or number of votes cast given by the Supervisor of Election's Report had 496,363 and even this figure has continued to change, showed that the total voted figure in the pre-poll was 10.3 percent of the total number of votes cast on polling day which was 496,363. Had the registered voters who were expected to vote under the pre-polling arrangement had all voted, this would have been 13.3 percent of the total registered voters for the 2014 General Elections.

In other words, Mr. Chairman and Honourable Members, on the assumption that if all those who did not vote had voted for SODELPA, the Party would have gained, at least, another three seats to Parliament.

We also submit that Government under the provision of the Electoral Decree and through the administration of the Fijian Elections Office, did not carry out sufficient awareness to enable the registered voters adequate time to plan their movements and ensure that they exercise their civic responsibility and vote in a political party to return Fiji to parliamentary rule. Simply put, Mr. Chairman and Honourable Members, there was a clear lack of good governance, transparency and accountability over the manner in which the whole exercise of pre-polling was administered.

Mr Chairman and the Honourable Members, please allow us to make a few recommendations to assist Government in the Fijian Elections Office prepare for the next General Elections in 2018, which are as follows:

\* For those ballot boxes which were recommended not to be counted, it was not to be, someone else would come in and authorise the opening of those ballot boxes which our agents had found issues like cables had been tampered with, and the absence of some protocol results, or the register of the records of the polls that were taken at these polling stations. They had to withdraw because at that point, they knew it was simply a waste of time to continue to try and get their voices, the reasons why they were asking for these ballot boxes to be placed under quarantine.

We highlight, Sir, that on the night of 17th September after the updates of the count from 90 polling stations, the whole of Fiji, as I said earlier, started to receive bulk counts of several polling stations from the RMIS in their family televisions, and we at SODELPA could not track where all these counts came from, only RMIS knew where it came from.

\* Mr. Chairperson and Honourable Members, the process of counting as I have outlined today was not fully provided to the political parties.

Our own SODELPA candidate, Vani Seruvakula, No. 277 was the victim of RMIS. She had amassed 5,669 votes behind Mr. Bainimarama in the top five candidates before anyone received bulk counted results. Vani Seruvakula later totalled 1,701 votes in the final results presented in the Supervisor of Elections Report.

We have a few recommendations, Mr. Chairperson and Honourable Members:

- Recommendations:*  
*for the IT software.*
1. That the whole process of counting of votes, movement of counting results, the transport of ballot papers and the provision of security over these vehicles need to be thoroughly reviewed and changes put in to address the situation that we have highlighted today;
  2. That it is of utmost importance that an independent audit comprising of experts nominated from every political party are to carry out the RMIS audit that was used by the Fijian Elections Office.

We understand that this software and equipment captured the data contained in the protocol of results and consolidated these results into the National Tally Results for progressive display of the polling results. We also understand that the RMIS also provided the consolidated results of the Supervisor of Elections and the Electoral Commission to prepare the final National Results Tally.

3. That a well-defined process be put in place to ensure the integrity of the software, the counting equipment including any equipment associated with the counting of voting results before such a software is utilised at any election whether it be at municipality level or the National Elections in Fiji.

We also wish to make some comments on the need to have clear demarcation of responsibilities between the Electoral Commission and the Supervisor of Elections.

The Party further makes recommendations on the restoration of the working relationship between the Electoral Commission and the Office of the Supervisor of Elections.

The purported impasse between the Electoral Commission and its Chief Executive Officer and the Supervisor of Elections should be addressed and if it means amending the Electoral Decree, it should be considered for the benefit of the people of Fiji for a free and fair elections.

✱ The Party further recommends that the power to make regulations on Election matters should be given under the authority of the Electoral Commission and not the Attorney-General who is also the General Secretary of the FijiFirst Party.

Mr. Chairman and Honourable Members, the Party looks forward to its continuing working relationship with the Supervisor of Elections and trust that Government and the Electoral Commission will address all matters raised in the various reports as well as in this submission to ensure the continuing work towards free and fair elections for the benefit of this nation and its people.

I thank you, Sir, for providing us the time to give you our considered views on the 2014 General Elections. *Vinaka vakalevu.*

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Thank you very much, Madam Litia Qionibaravi. Before I open the floor for questioning, I would like to once again thank the new SODELPA Leader, Major-General (Retired) Sitiveni Rabuka, Adi Litia Qionibaravi, Mr. Waqabaca and Mr. Isikeli Komaisavai for your appearance before this Committee this afternoon.

It is indeed a privilege to have a team from SODELPA to present before this Committee and for sharing their knowledge and highlighting certain issues to us.

Just on a personal note, I was a cadet in 1997 in Xavier College in Ba when Major-General Rabuka then the Prime Minister came for the passing out parade and he asked me a few questions. That is the second most closest proximity I had been with him, since that day 20 years ago. Thank you, Sir, for this presentation and for leading the nation for a number of years. As we all know, he is a former Prime Minister of this country and has seen some good times for the nation.

There are some questions that I have for team SODELPA in respect of the recommendations of the MOG, as well as the Supervisor of Elections and the Electoral Commission. One of them, you have already addressed in your submission but if there is any clarification or queries in that regard that you may wish to advise us on, is on provisional results.

The system of provisional results has been mentioned quite prominently in the three Reports, two of these Reports had been referred to the Committee and one is the MOG Report. The system has been, that from every counting centre the results were phoned in and they were noted at the counting centre and then once the ballot boxes arrive from those stations, they were counted and cross-checked. Apart from the one of Vani Seruvakula that was noted, did your Party find any other results that was of a stark difference from the provisional results to the one that was finalised?

ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Our team at headquarters were recording the results that were phoned in from our polling stations around the country, and they were able to track the polling results that they had received from the first 90 results that were announced from the Tally Centre. However, beyond the 90 polling stations, the results were given on a bulk basis and it was impossible for the team to match the figures that were phoned in from the polling stations to the bulk announcements that were being made but to answer your question, it appeared that the glaring difference was on this candidate, Vani Seruvakula.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Will it be helpful if results are phoned in from each and every individual centre, instead of block counting or block results to assist your party to keep track?

ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- It could be easier if results are phoned in but surely there are other ways in which these results can be informed at the Counting Centre and instead of ringing or phoning in the results, you know human error, you are bound to make errors in your hearing or in your writing. So,

may be there are better ways of informing the results from the polling stations to the party headquarters or down to the counting centre.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Do you have any suggestions or any particular examples.

MR. P. WAQABACA.- Good afternoon, Sir. If I may, a good option would be knowing that the carting of all those ballot boxes very much take a lot of time, especially coming from the islands. It will be easier to ensure that protocol of results are first delivered to the counting centre, and you could have that same arrangement as we had in the 2014, having that large screen or have internet for everyone accessing it at the same time so that we can all keep track of all the polling stations rather than having it phoned in, manually putting it there, then trying to manually input it as a provisional but as it is, once you send it in, it becomes provisional and everyone has to see or keeps track of the count at same time.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- So the idea of counting the votes at the polling station itself is good, it is just the communicating it to the National Centre needs to be worked upon.

MR. P. WAQABACA.- Yes. The idea of the Government taking it out to the people, like the reasons stated by the Honourable Minister, I thought that was good. We could still manage that in a day, it is just ....

MR. CHAIRMAN.- The logistic issue of communicating the results to the main Counting Centre needs to be worked upon.

MR. P. WAQABACA.- If you have internet, you do not have to call, or is there another medium where all political parties or any stakeholders keep track from where they are on what is happening from every polling station rather than everyone guessing and we coming back here trying to guess or tell your august Committee that we were not informed about all those processes.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- When the Supervisor of Elections appeared here last week, he mentioned that the Fiji Elections Office is working on a mobile phone app, it has been worked upon that might give you the provisional results or the results as they go along on respective mobile phones. Is that a good option?

MR. P. WAQABACA.- It is a good option but what about if you have other networks also, so you keep track of each other. We had come up with that idea in 2014 with one of these mobile providers but that did not eventuate but still we have to use that freedom.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- One of the better ways.

MR. P. WAQABACA.- Yes

MR. CHAIRMAN.- There is also suggestion in various reports that some people were actually confused or some people who are probably not that well educated had a confusion between numbers. So, there are suggestions by respective submittees that if you have party symbols and perhaps photographs of the candidates on the ballot paper, it might help the voters or any views of SODELPA on those issues?

MR. P. WAQABACA.- That is what we wanted in the last Elections and we ended up with the numbers. There was limited time and for the past eight years the Government was the only one visible. For the last six months towards Elections (inaudible).

MR. S. RABUKA.- It would be more voter friendly to have a face that they can identify with. Most of us are not good with figures and numbers. I am not good with figures and numbers, I had to

To have easily  
to change in  
communicating  
counting  
results to  
the main  
centre

revise so many times the number I had to remember before I walked in. Perhaps that would be a consideration for your Committee, Honourable Chairman to take up with the authorities.

\* MR. CHAIRMAN.- We had asked the Supervisor of Elections the same question and he demonstrated with a draft paper. If we have say five parties with 50 candidates each, that is 250 candidates. If you put photograph the smallest possible photograph and name and number, we are looking at a ballot paper that is the size of half of this table. It was demonstrated here. If we have a ballot paper that large and we were actually taken through a mock trial here as well to locate your number and your candidate, it took us about 10 minutes to find the candidate. That is one of the disadvantages of having photographs and names together with the numbers on the paper, but there could be some other options that we looked at, the current system of having a booklet which has clear photographs and numbers, which is handed to the voter at the time of the polling, he can take that in, circle the number and then take the book as a souvenir. That is the current practice, do you think that is easy for the voters.

MR. I. KOMAISAVAI.- What I faced on the ground. Sir, would it be possible for the Committee to have all those numbers and faces - 50 FijiFirst, 50 Fiji Labour Party, put them as a booklet, and you just vote within your party or if you want to get to know it easily rather than following it through the numbers.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- So, in the booklet itself you go party by party, one booklet but pages by party. That is much easier.

MR. I. KOMAISAVAI.- Yes, pages by party is much easier.

\* MR. CHAIRMAN.- Much easier. We will note that.

MR. S. RABUKA.- You mentioned the possible size of our ballot papers, have you ever seen the Indonesians ones?

MR. CHAIRMAN.- No, I have not.

MR. S. RABUKA.- They are probably as big as your table.

(Laughter)

MR. CHAIRMAN.- The third issue that I had was campaigning times. Currently the campaign times are from the close of the list to start of polling is 30 days. As a recommendation by the Multinational Observer Group (MOG) that it could be made 40 days to give 10 extra days for the candidates to campaign. Any comments on that? Is 10 extra days good enough?

\* MR. S. RABUKA.- We would certainly welcome that, but the time constraint was brought up particularly for the 2014 one because it was the first time the candidates were going out. Come 2018, we will probably be fielding the same list of candidates with a few changes and they would have been working with their voter target areas or the previous four years to the Elections. So, the 10 days would help, but if it did not come, the Party should be able to handle the 30 days.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- In regards to pre-polling, SODELPA has come up with some good insights on the pre-polling and we understand that the pre-polling time before 17th September fell during school holidays and a lot of people were out of their respective zones. They were either with their school children for Kaji Rugby or they were away cutting cane in some other centres. So they did not return to their respective areas in the highlands or in the maritime areas for the pre-polling and missed out on voting. What is the suggestion on that? How can pre-polling be handled better?

ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. It could help greatly if those that will be voting prior to the dedicated date of the election under pre-polling, as much time as possible is given, at least a month so that they know. Expecting Government teams to take awareness out to them does not always happen and not everyone listens to the radio or reads the newspaper, so there has to be sufficient time where the parties can also help in communicating this information as well as the Government awareness teams but as much time as possible.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Because some people actually thought that it was a mock election or a rehearsal going on and they did not bother voting. The possible scenario is more awareness and more time for pre-polling. Any other Honourable Members have any questions for team SODELPA?

HON. M.R. LEAWARE.- Just an issue on pre-polling as mentioned. There is something about the counting of votes in those pre-poll areas, what are your views about that? Do you suggest that they come over to the main counting centres or the votes be counted at the pre-poll centres?

MR. S. RABUKA.- I believe that the current system will be good enough if the security of those were guaranteed and the count were to take place in the normal counting period, the integrity of the security process, transportation and transfers, et cetera.

*advice for pre-polling* ✓ HON. A.D. O'CONNOR.- Thank you, Sir, for the presentation this afternoon. I just wish to make a comment where you have highlighted and I quote, "All parties must have welcomed the presence of policewomen but most also did not see a need as no one anticipated any criminal interference in the Elections process." It is the norm that we have police presence even at festivals. So I am really not in agreement with that statement. That is all I wish to say.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- In fact there was a mention in the MOG Report as well that pre-elections, there were concerns of violence or pre-election violence and that was countered by the presence of police which MOG Report also highlighted could have been an intimidating factor.

If I may take you back to the table, Madam, the floor chart that you had drawn, we would like to have one clarification on that. When the election results were phoned in, they went to the National Result Centre at Vodafone Arena and where does the National Media Centre (FMF Gym) come in?

ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- The results after it is received by an operator from the Vodafone Arena, it is taken across to the National Media Centre. We are not aware how the result is taken across from the Vodafone Arena to the National Media Centre, whether someone physically takes the results across or it is again through telephone from the Vodafone Arena to the National Media Centre.

✱ MR. CHAIRMAN.- Will it help if the National Results Centre and the National Media Centre be at the same place?

ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- I cannot answer your question but what we would really like to see is that there is this great need for this process to be audited before we can decide whether they can be placed at the same place but the whole process; the software, the equipment, counting machines, and the computers that are being used, we need to be audited by people nominated from our parties that have expertise in this area.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- That is of course to ensure that the phoned in results and the ones that are at the National Results Centre tallied and what is announced at the National Media Centre is all the same.

✦ ADI L. QIONIBARAVI.- Yes and of course if the results can also be announced via polling station rather than bulk announcements.

✦ MR. CHAIRMAN.- Results by polling stations would be much more clearer. Is there any other further comments?

HON. A.D. O'CONNOR.- Just another comment, Mr. Chairman, you mentioned about a medium and phoning is not the best medium and we should look at other means. What crossed my mind was social media and Skype be the way forward. However, you must appreciate the fact that our country always suffers from power outages. So anything other than telephone that is where we are going to have a problem.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- Any final comments from team SODELPA?

MR. S. RABUKA.- No, Mr. Chair, all that is remaining now is for me to thank you and your Honourable Members of the Standing Committee and the staff backing you up. Thank you for the time. I know it is going to be a very onerous job on your part and we may have taken a lot of time but no winner complains about the referee.

MR. CHAIRMAN.- With that I would like to thank the Social Democratic Liberal Party (SODELPA) for their presence this afternoon, in particular I would like to thank you Mr. Sitiveni Rabuka, the Leader of SODELPA, Ms. Litia Qionobaravi, Mr. Waqabaca and Mr. Isikeli Komaisavai for your appearance together with other team members. I see Honourable Bulitavu there with a nice blue shirt at the back and members of the media for your presence this afternoon. Your submission indeed is appreciated by this Committee.

✦ We are tasked by the Parliament to look at the three reports and come up with recommendations for the Supervisor of Elections and the Electoral Commission so that future elections particularly the upcoming Elections of 2018 can be conducted in a better way. Of course there are some concerns highlighted in the three reports and which we are in the process of reviewing and to make it a better election for everyone. With that I thank everyone present in this room for your appearance and your submission. Thank you very much.

The Committee adjourned at 4.10 p.m.

