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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE, LAW AND  
HUMAN RIGHTS**

**Review of the  
Office of the Prime Minister 2017-2018 Annual Report**



**PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI  
Parliamentary Paper No. 195 of 2020**

September 2020

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## CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD



The Office of the Prime Minister is primarily responsible for providing sound policy advice and support to the Honourable Prime Minister and his cabinet. It also engages with international and regional development partners, Civil Society Organisations and the private sector.

In reviewing the Office of the Prime Minister 2017-2018 Annual Report, the Committee noted that one of the key achievement was the facilitation provided by Office of the Prime Minister to the Hon. Prime Minister in his role as COP 23 Presidency that has made Fiji punch above its weight. It was also encouraging to note the Office's role in facilitating and conducting outreach programmes in local communities, which supports Fiji's efforts in mitigating the effects of climate change.

The review also highlighted a few pertinent issues, which the Committee discussed extensively with the Office of the Prime Minister and is covered in this Committee Report. These pertinent issues include:

- the Hon. Prime Minister's open door policy in dealing with complaints;
- the role of the Executive Support Office in drafting speeches for the Prime Minister;
- the OPM's role in assisting with the COP 23 Presidency and the programmes provided to local communities affected by climate change ;

The Committee was also mindful of the requirements of the Standing Orders of Parliament with respect to the principles of gender equality. Therefore as part of the discussion with the Office of the Prime Minister, it was encouraging to note how the principle of gender equality was reflected in the Ministry, beginning with one of the vital part of an institution; the human resource.

This Committee Report will also provide certain recommendations that the Committee has put forth for consideration by the Office of the Prime Minister. These recommendations include:

- continued support to be provided to the Honourable Prime Minister's outreach programmes and 'Talanoa' sessions; and
- continued support to be provided for the Honourable Prime Minister's role in taking the lead, in the efforts towards the mitigation of the impacts of climate change.

At this juncture I would like to thank the Honourable Members of the Justice, Law and Human Rights Committee, Hon. Rohit Sharma, Hon. Dr Salik Govind, Hon. Ratu Suliano Matanitobua and Hon. Mosese Bulitavu for their deliberations and input, and the representatives of the Office of the Prime Minister for their cooperation, which assisted the Committee in its work.

I, on behalf of the Committee, commend the Committee's Report on the *Office of the Prime Minister 2017 – 2018 Annual Report* to the Parliament and seek support of all the members of this August house to take note of the recommendations by the Committee.



**Hon. Alvick Avhikrit Maharaj**  
**Chairperson**

## COMMITTEE COMPOSITION

The Committee is made up of both the Government and Opposition Members, pursuant to Standing Order 115. Members of the Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights, 2018-2022 Parliamentary Term, are as follows:



**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. Mosese Bulitavu (Member)**

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

### **Committee Secretariat Team**

Supporting the Committee in its work is a group of dedicated Parliament Officers who make-up the Committee Secretariat, and are appointed and delegated by the Secretary-General to Parliament pursuant to Standing Order 15 (3)(i). The Secretariat team is made of the following Parliament officers:

- Mr. Ira Komaisavai – Senior Committee Clerk
- Mr. Jackson Cakacaka – Deputy Committee Clerk
- Ms. Darolin Vinisha – Committee Assistant

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights (“Committee”) mandated by Standing Orders 109 (2) and 110 of the Standing Orders of Parliament, was referred the *Office of the Prime Minister 2017 - 2018 Annual Report* and pursuant to Standing Order 38 (2). The Committee was tasked with reviewing the Annual Report and to table a report on its findings in a subsequent Parliament Sitting.

As part of its review the Committee conducted its own deliberation on the OPM Report and identified key points that was sent for clarification to the OPM. As part of its mandate, the Committee also invited the Office of the Prime Minister to clarify issues pertaining to the OPM Annual Report 2017 - 2018 in the form of oral submission.

### *Office of the Prime Minister*

The Office of the Prime Minister is responsible for providing high quality service and support to the Head of Government, the Honourable Prime Minister. The support provided is given with the aim of ensuring that all activities, engagements and policies that the Hon. Prime Minister contributes to or is involved in is in line with the Constitution and the laws of Fiji and for the betterment of all Fijians.

## **2.0 COMMITTEE DELIBERATION AND FINDINGS**

### *Committee’s initial deliberation*

This part of the Report covers the Committee’s deliberation process and the findings of the Committee which also include points extracted from the OPM 2017-2018 Annual Report and submission received by the representatives.

The Committee first read through the OPM 2017-2018 Annual Report and identified issues noted from its deliberation. Issues highlighted were based on;

- the Hon. Prime Minister’s open door policy in dealing with complaints;
- the role of the Executive Support Office in drafting speeches for the Prime Minister;
- the OPM’s role in assisting with the COP 23 Presidency and the programmes provided to local communities affected by climate change;

### *Evidence via submission received and discussion with the OPM*

The Office of the Prime Minister representatives appeared before the Committee on 28 February, 2020 to clarify matters related to the report. A summary of the main issues under discussion is as follows:

- the OPM facilitates the Hon. Prime Minister’s open door policy, which caters for receiving public queries and complaints. Members of the public are able to make appointments, make contact via telephone or even visit the Office in person.
- the OPM ensures that the Hon. Prime Minister’s engagements are facilitated with best support possible, including the provision of speeches, which are put through various vetting processes, inclusive of having an internationally recognised speech drafting agency – QORVIS.
- the OPM plays a vital role in facilitating and supporting the Hon. Prime Minister in his role as Fiji’s Climate champion and Chair/Presidency of the COP 23.
- the OPM facilitated Fiji’s first National Climate Change Week with the support of the divisional commissioner’s, government ministries, CSO/NGO’s and institutions. The Office also conducted numerous awareness programmes which were hosted around the country.

A copy of the written submission by the Office of the Prime Minister and the Verbatim Report on the face-to-face discussion by the Committee and the OPM can be accessed via the parliament website: [www.parliament.gov.fj](http://www.parliament.gov.fj).

### *Sustainable Development Goals Impact Analysis*

Additionally as part of its deliberation the Committee appreciates its role in keeping track of Fiji’s efforts towards the sustainable development goals and the national development plans. Thus, the Committee noted from the OPM Annual Report that there were certain activities supported by the OPM, which could be linked to the efforts towards the achieving the national development plans and ultimately the global agenda.

Similar to the Committee’s Report on the Office’s Report for the 2016-2017 financial year, it was noted that the OPM continued its efforts in being responsible for the small grant scheme, which is also provided to rural and outer islands communities. It is worth noting that this scheme is aimed at addressing the needs of these communities in terms of village/settlement improvements, education and climate resilient projects.

The OPM also facilitated the support and assistance provided to communities, especially rural communities, which includes education development, access to clean water, access to basic infrastructure, housing and health.

Furthermore, the Committee is bound by Fiji Parliamentary Standing Order 110(2) which provides as follows:

*“Where 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 of both men and women equally”.*

Therefore, the Committee sought clarification on how the principle of gender equality was implemented in the Office of the Prime Minister. The Committee noted that the OPM’s



efforts towards gender equality was focused on its human resource, which is one of the vital parts of an institution, whereby the Open Merit Recruitment System for hiring and recruiting staff, which is a system that ignores specific sex and gender as a criteria for recruitment. The OPM also invests a lot of effort and resources in educating the public through community awareness programmes for gender equality and related issues.

### Committee Findings

At the penultimate stage of the review, the Committee noted the following as its key findings on the *OPM 2017-2018 Annual Report*.

- The Office of the Prime Minister ensures that the Prime Minister’s open door policy meets the public expectation.
- In regard to the OPM’s role in assisting with the COP 23 Presidency, it was noted that there were numerous consultation conducted with the public regarding climate change and its impact.
- The Office of the Prime Minister has put in efforts in achieving the nations’ development plan and the global agenda, by supporting gender equality and the development of communities.

## **3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Given the commendable effort done by the Office of the Prime Minister, the Committee feels that more support be focused in strengthening the respective units in terms of delivery by the OPM. Therefore, the Committee puts forth the following for the consideration of the Office of the Minister:

### **Recommendation 1:**

The Committee commends the outreach programmes and ‘Talanoa’ sessions facilitated by the Office of the Prime Minister and thus recommends that there be more support provided to these programmes, since it is designed to have positive impact on the communities of Fiji.

### **Recommendation 2:**

The Committee commends the great work being carried out by the Office of the Prime Minister regarding climate change, thus recommends that the Office continues its work in facilitating and supporting the Hon. Prime Minister’s role in championing the efforts in mitigating the impacts of climate change.

## 4.0 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 Prime Minister 2017-2018 Annual Report* with due diligence.

The Committee's review highlighted certain issues that were brought to the attention of the Office of the Prime Minister's representatives, which were appropriately addressed and this was reflected in the findings and the recommendations put forth in this report.

The Committee through this Report commends the *Office of the Prime Minister Annual Report 2017 - 2018* to Parliament.

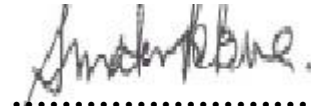
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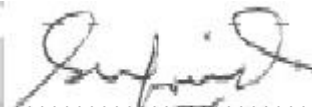
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**HON. ALVICK MAHARAJ**  
**(CHAIRPERSON)**



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**HON. ROHIT SHARMA**  
**(DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON)**



.....  
**HON. RATU SULIANO**  
**MATANITOBUA**  
**(MEMBER)**



.....  
**HON. DR. SALIK GOVIND**  
**(MEMBER)**



.....  
**HON. MOSESE BULITAVU**  
**(MEMBER)**

**DATE: 27/08/2020**