



Government of
The Republic
of Vanuatu



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PRESS RELEASE

The Speaker of the House, Honourable Dunston Hilton, opened a special session in Parliament on Wednesday morning. The session was arranged by the Honourable Prime Minister to assist parliamentarians in better understanding the importance and significance of information and communications technology (ICT). At the invitation of the Honourable Prime Minister Mr Siaso Sovaleni, Manager of the Pacific ICT Outreach Programme within the Economic Development Division of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) attended to provide a key note address to Parliamentarians. Mr Fred Samuel, GCIO and Mr Alan Horne, TRR also made presentations and answered questions.

In his opening address the speaker said “I have the pleasure of opening today a session dedicated to discussing how information and communication technologies, or ICTs, could support our activities and thereby further strengthen our democratic system. ICTs consist of such products and services as phones, computers, electronic tablets, various other communications devices, communications infrastructure, as well as services and applications delivered over such infrastructure and devices, including web pages, information databases, and social networks.”

The speaker read out a statement from the Honourable Prime Minister, who was not able to attend the session due to other business. The Honourable Prime Minister wrote: “This session is also about how our actions could support improving access for every Ni-Vanuatu to new technologies in a way that would improve their social and economic well-being. As you well know, our ultimate objective is “an Educated, Healthy and Wealthy Vanuatu”. Effective use of modern ICTs is indispensable in achieving this vision.”

Mr Sovaleni opened his address by saying “I would like to thank the Honourable Prime Minister for the invitation here today. SPC welcomes the strong support from the leadership of Vanuatu to use ICT as a key tool for sustainable development.”



Hon. Dunston Hilton
Speaker of the House

Mr Sovaleni, Manager of the Pacific ICT Outreach Programme, gave an in depth presentation on the importance of Government establishing an ICT Policy. He explained that the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) was established in 1947.

Mr Sovaleni explained the key actions for ICT in seven areas:

- 1. Leadership, governance, coordination and partnerships
- 2. ICT policy, legislation and regulatory frameworks
- 3. ICT human capacity building
- 4. ICT infrastructure and access
- 5. International connectivity
- 6. Cyber security and ICT applications
- 7. Financing, monitoring and evaluation

Priority is given to the development and implementation of an ICT Policy with the Long-term objective to development and implementation of supportive policies and regulatory frameworks that provide a conducive environment for the effective development of the ICT sector.

Mr Fed Samuel, the Government Chief Information Office (GCIO) set out the important work undertaken by Government. Government has invested in a private network linking Government Offices and Government employees. The “Integrated Government” or iGov Initiative is a world-class communications network and a key element in the Government’s ICT (information and communications technology) plan. Now being developed are ICT applications which will be accessed over the iGov network. Mr Samuel stated “Ultimately iGov and applications will improve virtually every part of government and improve its services to society.”

About 40% of national parliaments throughout the world have ICT systems in place. Such systems allow people to Watch live & archived debates, learn about members and voting, read proceedings from home, plan for upcoming debates & events, track bills thru process, get e-mails on relevant actions and comment on Parliamentary debates. In particular the iGov network will enable constituents in remote Islands and their MPs to stay closely in touch and even participate from afar in parliamentary proceedings.

Mr Alan Horne, Telecommunications and Radiocommunications Regulator (TRR) set out the importance of the private sector in the provision of competitive telecommunications networks. He stated “Information and communication technologies, or ICTs, will give every man woman and child the opportunity to leap frog into the 21st Century. Governments recognise that the effective provision of such services is best provided by a competitive private sector.”



International best practice recognises that to achieve good governance there is a clear separation of Policy Makers, Regulators and Operators. Government can invest in Operations, but the Ministerial

individuals involved in the operation must be different from those involved in Policy making. Failure to do so ends up with conflicts of interest and decisions which may not be in the interest of the national as a whole.

The question time from MPs was lively. Questions were asked from a number of MPs including those representing Erramango, North Malakula, central Malekula, Banks and Tana.

Questions included progress on mobile services being provided to Erromango, continuity of connection and operation, extension of internet into schools and health centers, provision of computers, training and connections to MPs, provision of information services over the mobile rather than many promotional junk mails and GoV investment in the telecommunications sector and finally education on the benefits and risks associated with ICT .

Responses were given by Mr Fred Samuel, Alan Horne and Siasoi Sovaleni. The Fred Samuel stated “We welcome the request from MPs for ICT support in assisting them actively participate in the workings of Parliament. This support is a key responsibility of the GCIO.” The GCIO will be arranging other discussions to progress with the ICT support required by MPs as well as Government Officials.

Mr Alan Horne urged MPs to work with their constituents to coordinate the provision of new or improved ICT services. He stated that the operators will welcome direct approaches and requests for service. Further, he said there are good examples where Principals of schools have funded the provision of ICT related courses and connection of their schools to the internet by charging a small fee for each student to participate in the courses.

Mr Sovaleni concluded by saying “It is important to balance the benefits and manage the risks such as using ICT for criminal purposes including on line fraud and child pornography. This can best be achieved by concerted effort by all stakeholders, led from the experts within the office of the Prime Minister.”

About TRR: The Telecommunications and Radiocommunications Regulator (TRR) is the Telecommunications industry Authority. TRR was established under the Telecommunications and Radiocommunications Regulation Act No. 30 of 2009 with the overall responsibility to facilitate the development of the telecommunications sector and manage radio-frequency spectrum in order to promote national social and economic development.

For more information please visit www.trr.vu, phone +678 27621 or email enquiries@trr.vu.