



OPENING SPEECH of Solomon Islands Deputy Prime Minister Manasseh Maelanga to the IFJ Regional Media Roundtable

19 October 2011

HONIARA: (IFJ/Pacific Media Watch): Solomon Islands Deputy Prime Minister Manasseh Maelanga spoke to a media forum yesterday, organised by the International Federation of Journalists.

The Regional Media Roundtable, entitled *Pacific Media Rising: Shaping new futures for media, voice and accountability*, is being held at the Iron Bottom Sound Hotel in Honiara, and these were Mr Maelanga's words for the opening speech:

"It is an honor and privilege to be invited to speak briefly to you this morning as you settle down to start your discussions on the important issue of media for democracy and human rights in the Pacific."

First of all, on behalf of the Prime Minister and Government of Solomon Islands, I would like to welcome you all to our shores after you flew long distances from your countries to attend this important regional gathering here in Honiara.

Secondly, I would like to thank your organisers and sponsors for extending your invitation to the government of Solomon Islands to be part of this important occasion.

The topics that you will discuss in the next four days are important to democracy and good governance in the region. The Solomon Islands Government has considered media as an important partner in development and human rights.

It is with this consideration that we continue to uphold media freedom and freedom of expression in this country in our national constitution.

I believe that any violation on media freedom and freedom of expression by governments, businesses and individuals is undemocratic and that kind of attitude should be discouraged. Any actions and decisions that infringe these fundamental democratic principles is a violation of human rights.

However, freedom comes with responsibility and this is why it is important that media practitioners around the region should keep in mind that ethical journalism should be the cornerstone of your watchdog role.

The media plays an important role to keep citizens informed and to check on government and private institutions to see whether they carry out their duties to its citizens.

The media also has the skills and duty to investigate, analyse and dig deeper into events that often affect the Pacific region such as global financial challenges, climate change, sea level rise and organised crime and explain it properly to our citizens.

I understand the challenges that many of our Pacific newsrooms including government information services are facing. These challenges can be addressed if we focus our attention more on journalism and communication training and building networks around the region.

Collaborative efforts are found to be more helpful than individual and isolated struggles.

The workshop that you are sitting in right now is a classic example of networking and my government is pleased that you have selected Solomon Islands as your host this year.

We believe that this workshop will encourage further partnership between the Solomon Islands media and their friends from around the Pacific region.

It is also encouraging to note that there will be a special session that will provide insights and recommendations on expectations of the news media as well as strategies for information sharing and right to information.

I understand that this roundtable will also provide a parallel space for media partners focused on governance and development outcomes in media work and links between non-mainstream pacific networks who view the media as stakeholders in their work.

The roundtable will also provide an opportunity for discourse on topics of media rights monitoring and reporting, media freedom, freedom of expression and freedom of information.

These are topics that are important to democratic governance in our region.

Ladies and gentlemen, with those list of topics lined up for your discussions in the next four days, I will not bore you further with anymore words, but I wish you all the best in you deliberations throughout the week.

Once again, thank you very much for attention and enjoy your stay in Honiara.

Tagio tumas!

*HON. Manasseh Maelanga
Deputy Prime Minister of Solomon Islands*

PACIFIC MEDIA WATCH PROJECT

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