



**7 December 2021 (9 a.m. - 4 p.m.) – Japan-Pacific ICT Theatre
The University of the South Pacific, Laucala Campus, Suva, Fiji**

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PRESS RELEASE

The Pacific Youth Summit: The Values of Integrity for the Achievement of Sustainable Development

7 December 2021 (Suva, Fiji) - Around 5,000 youths, professionals and anti-corruption practitioners from across the Pacific converged to commemorate [International Anti-Corruption Day \(9 December\) with the 2021 theme, “Your right, your role: Say no to Corruption”](#), and renew their commitment to advancing anti-corruption, transparency and accountability to achieve progress on the sustainable development agenda in the Pacific.

[The Pacific Youth Summit](#) was organized on 7 December connecting the University of the South Pacific (USP) campuses across the region. The Summit was hosted by the University of the South Pacific Students' Association (USPSA) in partnership with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) under the United Nations Pacific Regional Anti-Corruption (UN-PRAC) Project funded by the New Zealand Government.

Prof. Pal Ahluwalia, Vice-Chancellor and President of the University of the South Pacific opened the Pacific Youth Summit online from Brisbane, Australia. While welcoming guests and youth participants, he said,

“The University welcomes the timeliness of this event, a reflection of the strong commitment by resilient youth leaders to fulfil the 2030 Agenda, specifically Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 in support of building a peaceful, just, and inclusive societies through the promotion of good governance.”

“It is pleasing to note that our youths have seized the opportunity to also commemorate International Anti-Corruption Day, which falls on the 9th of December, through means of such an educational platform to strengthen intergenerational and regional conversations around integrity amongst youths.”

“As you have rightly themed for today, youths play a significant role in driving sustainable development here in the Pacific. You are the hope of our future generation and what you do today will act as a catalyst for our future generations,” said Prof. Ahluwalia.

Participants were also welcomed by the USP Student Association President Mr. Mani Mate. He highlighted the importance of SDG 16 in the overall achievement of the 2030 Agenda, which is part of the focus of the Summit.

“Let’s reinforce commitments, encourage integrity, good governance, transparency and accountability in businesses and all institutions, let’s mobilize resources and reinvigorate concerted action as we move closer to 2030.”

“I encourage each and every one of you today, please make use of this platform and engage with the speakers, the panellists and through the Q &A”, he added.

Participants from 12 member countries of the University of the South Pacific (USP), namely Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, engaged in discussions with focus on the importance of integrity and stronger youth action on anti-corruption, transparency and accountability in governance in public and private sectors.

They also discussed the linkages between the SDGs, including between SDG 16 on good governance, SDG 5 on gender equality, and other SDGs related to youth employment, decent jobs for youth, whereby young people have access to decent, productive work.

Dr Filimon Manoni, Acting Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum commended the leadership role played by youths to address challenges faced in the Pacific such as climate crisis, increasing disaster events and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I appreciate the participation and commitment of youth to the development of the 2050 Strategy of the Blue Pacific Continent, which is a regional strategy to protect and secure our Pacific people, place and prospects. Students and youth leaders from across the region were able to articulate and share their dream of what they would like to see by 2050. Your voices are crucial in shaping and strengthening inclusive policies," said Dr Manoni.

Part of the main discussions of the Summit took place during the workshops which were hosted at six USP campuses in Lautoka, Labasa and Laucala campuses in Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Vanuatu, led by students themselves.

Against the backdrop of the Sustainable Development Agenda and the Teieniwa Pacific Unity against Corruption Vision, the discussions then focused on [the topic of business integrity through the lens of the toolkit 'Business Integrity for Young Entrepreneurs' developed by UNDP](#). The purpose of the Toolkit is to encourage young people to start and operate their own businesses with integrity from the outset. The toolkit encourages young people to do so correctly by complementing their new ideas and commercial instincts with clear values, a strong code of ethics, and an embedded purpose to benefit more inclusive society. Expert presentation by Liviana Zorzi from UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub provided the regional framework on transparency & accountability.

The initiative for promoting business integrity among youth was already embraced in Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Palau in partnership with local partner organizations. The partnership between UNDP and USPSA aims to further scale up this initiative and spread the knowledge across the entire Pacific.

Ms. Surava Elaisa, Development Programme Coordinator of the New Zealand High Commission said that the theme of this Summit was timely and relevant because it aligns with New Zealand's current direction for Pacific engagement which is focused on Partnering for Resilience.

"This builds on New Zealand's Pacific Reset (launched in 2018) acknowledging that New Zealand's priority and future is linked to the Pacific. While this view has not changed, the impacts of COVID-19 and climate change amongst other key challenges have meant that we needed to move towards a resilience focus," Ms. Elaisa said.

"New Zealand, together with UNDP, is therefore pleased to support this event as an initiative bringing together resilient youth leaders under the theme of the values of integrity for the achievement of sustainable development," added Ms. Elaisa.

Avikesh Kumar, Co-Focal Point from US Embassy Youth Council was among the workshop participants who also took part in the panel discussion on integrity in business, anti-corruption and COVID-19 facilitated by U.S Embassy Suva Youth Council.

"We realized that some cultural aspects, such as gift giving, could sometimes be abused for personal gain. That is why it is important to have policy within an organization, within business activities since corruption encompasses so many actions," said Mr. Kumar.

USPSA Vanuatu Branch Vice-President Ms. Angela Tahī, who participated in the workshop in Vanuatu campus as part of the USPSA organizing team said, “Through engaging in the dialogue with other students, I strengthened my knowledge on the values of integrity, anti-corruption and good governance. The facilitator provided many examples that we all could relate to. It was an interactive and eye-opening session.”

UNDP Pacific Office in Fiji Resident Representative, Mr. Levan Bouadze, said “I am pleased that our youth integrity movement has now spread across the entire Pacific. By opting for integrity, around 5,000 young leaders in the Pacific have sent a clear message that they are committed to investing in a sustainable future for themselves. A future with flourishing businesses, and job opportunities for young people. A future that they should be able to create and decide on as resilient, strong, corruption-free young leaders.”

The discussions which took place across the USP campuses in the region will be captured in the ‘Pacific Youth Commitment on Integrity’, an outcome statement of the Pacific Youth’s commitment to take stronger action on anti-corruption, transparency and accountability to achieve progress on the sustainable development agenda in the Pacific. The outcome statement and its implementation will further progress USPSA’s commitment towards providing opportunities for aspirational leaders to respond to unique Pacific challenges that are innovative, relevant and appropriate.

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