

1st Fiji Public Procurement Symposium aims to improve transparency, efficiency, and accountability in government contracts

The 1st Fiji Public Procurement Symposium was held on Friday 17th February 2023 at the Holiday Inn in Suva, bringing together representatives from government ministries, academia and development partners from Asian Development Bank (ADB) and World Bank to discuss the challenges and opportunities of public procurement in Fiji. The symposium was organized by the Fiji Procurement Office (FPO) and supported by the ADB and World Bank, as part of the government's efforts to modernize its procurement system and align it with international best practices.

In his opening speech, the Assistant Minister for Finance, Mr. Esrom Immanuel, emphasized the importance of public procurement in delivering value for money for goods and services to the people of Fiji. He acknowledged that traditional approach to procurement is no longer sufficient and there must be a change in mindset to value creation. He called for a collaborative and innovative approach to address these challenges, and for a stronger partnership between the government and the development partners to develop public procurement competence which will assist in economic growth.

The symposium featured several presentations and panel discussions on topics such as value for money in public procurement, sustainable procurement, risk management, data analytics and logistic strategies. The speakers shared their experiences and insights on how to improve the procurement process. They also highlighted the benefits of using technology and data analytics to streamline and monitor procurement activities, and to ensure fairness and compliance with legal and ethical standards.

The Head of Procurement, Mr., Saimoni Veramu highlighted that one of the key messages of the symposium was the need to enhance the capacity and skills of public procurement officials and stakeholders, to enable them to make informed and strategic decisions, and to promote a culture of continuous improvement and learning. As a result, the FPO announced that it would launch a series of training programs and online resources to support the professional development of the public procurement community in Fiji.

The participants of the symposium expressed their appreciation for the initiative and the opportunity to network and exchange ideas. They acknowledged the challenges and complexities of public procurement, but also the potential for positive impact on the economy and society. They called for more dialogue and engagement between the government ministries and the private sector, and to continue the work towards proactive and responsive procurement system that would meet the diverse needs and aspirations of the people of Fiji.

In conclusion, the 1st Fiji Public Procurement Symposium was a significant step towards improving the transparency, efficiency, and accountability of government contracts in Fiji. The symposium highlighted the importance of collaboration, innovation, and capacity building in transforming the procurement system, and provided a platform for stakeholders to share their views and solutions. The FPO and its partners will continue to work together to implement the recommendations and feedback from the symposium, and to ensure that public procurement in Fiji is fair, efficient, and effective.