

THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION

REPUBLIC OF FIJI

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Handover of Touch Screen Voting Machine and Equipment for Server Room

Statement by the Chairperson of the Electoral Commission

Mr Suresh Chandra

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Suva – 23rd November, 2017 – 10:00am



The Director General of A-WEB, Mr Seongbae Kang, The Korean Ambassador to Fiji, Mr Kim Seong-in; KOICA Country Director, Ms Hyunwon Kim; Fellow Electoral Commissioners; The Supervisor of Elections; Distinguished guests.

Ni sa Bula Vinaka and a very warm welcome to the Fijian Elections Office.

I would like to specially extend a warm welcome to our distinguished guests from the Association of World Election Bodies [A-WEB] based in Incheon, Korea.

Ladies and gentlemen, as we all know technology plays a very important role in our everyday lives. The first thing that many of us do in the morning is look at our mobile phones.

Whether it is for turning off alarms; checking the time or to read the daily news even before holding the newspaper. Apart from smartphones, most of our daily activities involve the usage of technology such as laptops, tablets, e-ticketing machines and the list continues.

Ladies and gentlemen, the use of information and communication technologies in the electoral process is something that we should not be afraid of. The introduction of ICT in elections is generating both interest and concern among the people around the world.

Today most Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) in the world use new technologies with the aim of improving the electoral process. The appropriate application of technology to elections can increase administrative efficiency, reduce long term costs and enhance political transparency.

Ladies and gentlemen, while I can confirm that we will not be using any electronic voting systems in the 2018 General Election, it does not mean we cannot try it anywhere else.

Today we will receive 53 touchscreen voting machines from AWEB which will be used for Trade Union Elections in the country as well as elections for the University Student Bodies.

The FEO conducts up to 100 elections for Trade Unions in the country and these machines are specifically for use in these elections. In fact, the FEO has conducted more than 200 elections for trade unions to date since 2014.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is just a mere opportunity for just us to explore what technologies are there in elections so that we can test it on small scale elections.

We believe in the ability of the Touch Screen Voting machine to simplify the election processes and minimize cost while at the same time give Fijians the opportunity to experience voting as they would in the Republic of Korea, Estonia, Australia, Belgium, India and the United States to name a few.

The use of Touch-screen Voting Machines means that small scale elections can be conducted much quicker, with more efficiency, fewer resources and less manpower while still delivering high standards.

We understand that there are more than 25000 registered members of trade unions but the impact of that experience should be multiplied 5 times because in Fiji we have grog bowl discussions and we expect the topic of trade unions to be discussed around grog bowls.

This is a very high level of outreach that we tend to obtain by simply introducing a new gadget in the voting process. Whilst I reiterate that the 2018 General Election will not have any electronics involved, the Electoral Commission welcomes the FEOs futuristic approach in exploring what's out there in the market and ensuring that Fiji is not left behind in this age of information enhancement.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is just one of the many examples of how the FEO is committed to the theme, 'Raising the Standards in the Delivery of Elections in Fiji', set out by the Commission.

To A-WEB, I extend my sincere thanks for your assistance and contribution towards the development of this country as a whole and I look forward to more collaborations in the future.

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for your attendance to witness this historic handover.

Thank you very much or as they say in Korean, Gam-sah-amnida.