



TALANOA



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GREETINGS

As we approach the end of the year, the PILON Secretariat is happy to report to you on the recent work and activities undertaken by PILON in 2020.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in all PILON member countries' borders being closed and our PILON travel ceased. Restrictions of varying degrees, such as stay-at-home orders, shelter-in-place orders, shutdowns or lockdowns, were put in place in many countries and territories in the Pacific.

In the absence of physical meetings and conferences, PILON pivoted to activities and projects suitable for virtual delivery. PILON working groups organised webinars, Q&A sessions and prerecorded video presentations on a variety of themes. This ensured we continued the good work against the PILON Strategic Plan and continued to support PILON Member countries with legal resources to utilise from our homes in all corners of our Blue Pacific continent.

A lot of behind the scenes preparations went into the organisation of these virtual events and the Secretariat

wishes to thank everyone who participated, in particular the speakers who gave freely of their time to support PILON.

Due to the importance of making digital and online connections this year, the PILON Secretariat has worked hard to update the [PILON website](http://www.pilonsec.org) (www.pilonsec.org) and PILON Facebook, so we encourage you to utilise these online resources to keep in touch with the PILON Community.

The PILON Secretariat wishes you a very Merry Christmas and prays that you all have a safe and relaxing break over the holiday period.

Sasae and Rosy



39TH PILON ANNUAL MEETING 2020

In keeping with the strange year that has been 2020, the PILON Annual Meeting was held online on 5 November.

17 PILON Member countries attended the meeting and delegates were happy to see each other's faces and share stories from across the region on the year that has been. Due to the online format, the meeting was significantly shorter, compressing three days into three hours. Although opportunities for networking, which is a major highlight of the PILON Annual Meeting, were severely curtailed, the

online format enabled delegates to touch base with one another and look forward to a time, in the hopefully not too distant future, where the PILON Community can meet in person once more.



First Virtual PILON Annual Meeting 2020

The meeting was pleased to receive updates from each of the PILON working groups and committees and endorsed a number of projects that PILON Members have been working on throughout the year and intend to progress in 2021.

It is hoped that the regional tools developed by PILON in 2020 prove useful to members in progressing law and justice projects throughout the Pacific.

The PILON projects that occurred during 2020 included:

Corruption

In October 2020, the PILON Corruption Working Group organised a series of online modules focused on prosecuting corruption.

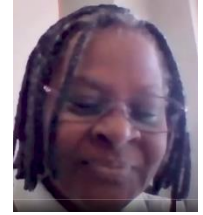


In the first module of the series Thomas McPhee, a former Australian Prosecution Adviser in Papua New Guinea (PNG), discussed the various evidentiary sources and pathways to consider when prosecuting corruption-related crimes.



Graphic scribing of Thomas McPhee's presentation

Rachel Olutimayin, the Solomon Islands Director of Public Prosecutions, delivered the second module, where she discussed the process of analysing and presenting evidence in court for corruption trials. Ms Olutimayin also discussed her experience as prosecutor in the case of *R v Philip Bobongi* which was a Solomon Islands case involving larceny, embezzlement and money laundering.



Graphic scribing of Rachel Olutimayin's presentation

As the final instalment in the series, the Corruption WG organised a live Q&A session to discuss the challenges associated with prosecuting corruption in the Pacific. This is part of the PILON Corruption Working Group's virtual engagement pilot and all attendees had the opportunity to view the two pre-recorded videos prepared by our panel members.

These videos (including Q&A session) are available through the PILON Members' Zone - if you are not a PILON Member and would like to access these videos, please [register here](#) to become a PILON Member, alternatively please contact the PILON Secretariat at pilon@pilonsec.org to obtain a copy of these presentations.

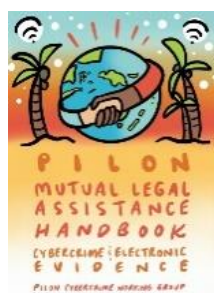
In 2021, the Corruption Working Group will continue to explore opportunities to engage online, including in and around its previous work on whistleblowing and prosecuting corruption. The Working Group also looks forward to further opportunities to collaborate with UN-PRAC.

Cybercrime

The Cybercrime working group prepared a Mutual Legal Assistance Handbook on Cybercrime & Electronic Evidence for the benefit of PILON member countries.

It is part of broader efforts to tackle cybercrime from a regional perspective, focussing on the evidence gathering powers and international cooperation mechanisms with

regional and international partners in line with best practices.



It is intended to be a practical resource for criminal justice practitioners in the Pacific who are making, or receiving, a mutual assistance request, particularly in cases involving cybercrime and/or electronic evidence.

It includes background information on the different types of international cooperation, cybercrime and electronic evidence, helpful checklists and advice on how to go about making an outgoing request, and progressing an incoming request - all supplemented by instructive and fun illustrations. The handbook also includes tips on working with service providers, the importance of preserving internet records and the different kinds of data and what implications that has for investigators and prosecutors. You can scroll through and explore the handbook as an [online resource](#) or [download](#).

Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV)



The SGBV working group presented a booklet with explanatory policy text for the Model Provisions for amending Evidence Acts or Criminal Procedure Acts to incorporate special measures for vulnerable witnesses to SGBV offences. Contributions to the text were made by a number of PILON Country Members.

It is hoped that the explanatory text will assist Pacific lawyers to present robust and sound policy arguments that will change the way that vulnerable witnesses are supported in Court.

If any PILON Member country is interested in legislative amendments to ensure special measures are available for vulnerable witnesses, they can contact the PILON Secretariat at pilon@pilonsec.org or the Australian Attorney-General's Department at pacific@ag.gov.au.

In 2021, the working group intends to work on a Model Prosecutions Guide for Sexual Assault cases and is looking at holding a series of webinars on supporting vulnerable witnesses.

PILON Legislative Drafters' Committee (PLDC)

The PLDC has launched the Australian Attorney-General's Department's [Pacific Toolkit: From policy to legislation](#).

The Toolkit is a useful resource for all legal policy officers who seek to turn a high level policy proposal into a detailed and technical law reform in partnership with legislative drafters. It also provides guidance on developing drafting instructions and how to most effectively work with a legislative drafter to develop a Bill.



The PLDC is looking forward to launching into its new work plan in the New Year, with a focus on capacity building for the region's legislative drafters.

PILON Website

Members also welcomed the new and updated [PILON website](#).

The website now houses a collection of more than 80 digital resources and it became the main tool for connecting the PILON Community during this challenging period, virtually holding a series of public webinars and presentations on the impacts of COVID-19 on PILON's three strategic priorities – Cybercrime, Corruption and Sexual and Gender Based Violence.

We are pleased to see that since new website was launched in October, it has been viewed over 2,400 and recent events have been watched over 250 times across the region. This is a good testament of how well we can all adapt to a digital-first environment, while still working towards strengthening legal systems in the Pacific region.



A copy of the 2020 PILON Annual Meeting [outcomes statement](#) can be found on the [website](#).

PILON WEEK

Following the annual meeting, from 10 to 13 November 2020, PILON held a series of webinars on the impacts of COVID-19 on each of its three strategic priorities – cybercrime, corruption and sexual and gender based violence.

PILON Webinar: COVID-19 and Cybercrime in the Pacific



The Cybercrime working group partnered with the Council of Europe (COE) under the GLACY + project and kicked off the week with a webinar focused on COVID-19 and Cybercrime in the Pacific. The webinar raised

awareness about cyber threats to the region and the importance of finding mutual approaches to augment the adoption of national cybercrime legal frameworks aligned to international standards.

The Pacific region is an attractive target and base for malicious cyber actors due to increasing internet connectivity and limited legislative and operational capacity for Pacific island law enforcement agencies to respond.

At present, countries worldwide are still learning how to cope with the effects of the pandemic, atop of uncertainties around its evolution. The COVID-19 pandemic has rendered individuals and societies extremely vulnerable in all respects. During this crisis, we all have been relying more than ever on computer systems, mobile devices and the internet to work, communicate, shop, share and receive information and otherwise mitigate the impact of social distancing.

Unfortunately, malicious actors have been exploiting these vulnerabilities to their own advantage resulting in an increasing number of attempts to commit crimes through the internet. In this context, criminal justice authorities have been playing a central role in responding to the upsurge of cybercrimes both at global and local levels, despite the inevitable challenges this presents.

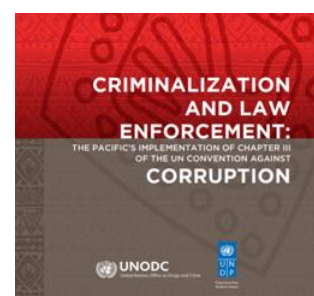
The webinar focused on discussing challenges encountered by criminal justice authorities in the region to address cybercrime issues during the COVID-19 pandemic and presented good practices and possible solutions to further

strengthen the criminal justice response in the Pacific and globally.

You can see an overview poster of this webinar [here](#) and watch a recording of the video [here](#) and see an overview poster of this webinar here.

PILON Webinar: Corruption and COVID-19 Insights for the Pacific

On 12 November 2020 it was the PILON Corruption Working Group's turn to host a webinar, with the support of the UN Pacific Regional Anti-Corruption (UN-PRAC) project on the Impacts of COVID-19 on Corruption in the Pacific. The UN-PRAC



Project aims to support Pacific Island countries (PICs) to strengthen their national integrity systems in order to promote 'clean' governments and to create an enabling environment for trade, business, investment and sustainable development.

Annika Wythes, UNODC Anti-Corruption Adviser, and Sonja Stefanovska-Trajanoska, UNDP Anti-Corruption Technical Adviser, both working on the UN-PRAC project, presented on Corruption and COVID-19 Insights for the Pacific.

The presenters noted that COVID-19 has amplified the effects of corruption in the Pacific region particularly due to the lack of sufficient accountability and oversight mechanisms in crisis response and recovery.



Looking ahead, the presenters anticipated that when safe and effective vaccines for COVID-19 become available, their distribution process globally will be unprecedented in terms of scale and complexity. This will present a number of corruption-related risks that raise vital public health concerns, including the risk of sub-standard and falsified vaccines being distributed in communities; and nepotism or favoritism playing a key role in the distribution, allocation and prioritization of vaccines. These risks should be identified and mitigated to ensure the equitable community access to safe COVID-19 vaccines, particularly for the most vulnerable and marginalized groups.

In conclusion, the presenters reflected on the level of complexity involved with tackling corruption, and the importance of ensuring inter-institutional partnerships and collective action when devising the way forward.

To view an overview poster of this webinar please [click here](#).

PILON Webinar – Impacts of COVID-19 on Sexual and Gender Based Violence in the Pacific

The final webinar in PILON Week was on Sexual and Gender Based Violence on 13 November 2020. Attendees heard from Marcia Kalinoe of the PNG Family and Sexual Violence Action Committee (FSVAC), Stephanie Dunn of the Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre (FWCC) and Mr Frank Fuaava of the Pacific Transnational Crime Coordination Centre (PTCCC).

The panel was capably chaired by Rexona Titi, Assistant Attorney General of Samoa. Attendees heard stories from the region about the increase in SGBV seen during the pandemic and some of the difficulties in supporting domestic violence survivors during lock down periods.

A copy of the recording will be available on the PILON website in January 2021.

DIGITAL PACIFIC CONFERENCE 2020

Apia, Samoa

PILON was invited to participate and present at the Digital Pacific Conference 2020 in Apia, Samoa which highlighted the critical need for digital transformation as the way forward to recovery, post COVID-19.

The Samoa Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) co-hosted the Digital Pacific Conference 2020, with the support of the Australian Government.

The conference provided a participatory platform for constructive debate and dialogue on the theme “Empowering the Pacific: Sustainable Development and Digital Transformation for All.”



Digital Pacific Conference

“Building on the 2018 Pacific Digital Conference, the Pacific Digital Conference 2020 brought together influential development thinkers, practitioners and digital leaders in the region, to deliberate not only on matters of regional and national importance, but more so to tap into developments on the international arena, for which Small Islands States can capitalize on,” said the Minister of Communications and Information Technology, Afamasaga Toeolesulusulu Lepuia’i Rico Tupai, who applauded the conference going ahead despite the challenges brought about by the pandemic.

Joining virtually from UNDP Headquarters in New York to provide opening remarks, was the Assistant Secretary-General, and UNDP’s Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, Ms. Kanni Wignaraja.

BEST WISHES

