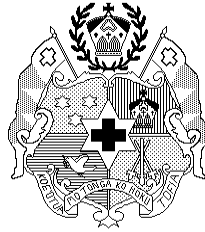


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MEDIA RELEASE

**PACIFIC ISLANDS LAW OFFICERS' NETWORK CYBERCRIME WORKSHOP
23 – 25 MAY 2017, NUKU'ALOFA, KINGDOM OF TONGA**

- 1 Senior officials from 13 Pacific island countries will come together in Nuku'alofa this week to discuss their countries' police and prosecutorial responses to cybercrime and more broadly, electronic evidence. The Attorney General's Office of the Kingdom of Tonga is hosting the Workshop with funding from the Australian Government and the Council of Europe Global Action Against Cybercrime (GLACY+) Project.
- 2 With the arrival of high-speed Internet, the Pacific region has witnessed significant growth in terms of economic opportunities and development. However, this connectivity comes at a price. Malicious cyber actors now have greater opportunities to target victims in the Pacific, for example through online scams, banking fraud and identity theft as well as hacking of individual or company systems.
- 3 The Internet and other technologies are being used every day to facilitate a range of other traditional crime types, from transnational crimes such as drug smuggling and illegal fishing, to more domestic crimes, including blackmail and harassment. As such, electronic evidence is becoming increasingly important in criminal investigations and prosecutions.
- 4 Many Pacific island countries face a threefold challenge when it comes to dealing with cybercrime and electronic evidence: (a) putting in place a comprehensive legislative framework in line with international standards, (b) improving capacity within the criminal justice sector to effectively investigate, prosecute and adjudicate cases involving electronic evidence, and (c) engage in effective international cooperation.

- 5 In 2015, the Pacific Islands Law Officers' Network (PILON) which is made up of senior law officials from 17 Pacific island states, including Australia and New Zealand, identified cybercrime as one of the main priority areas for the Pacific region. PILON subsequently formed a Cybercrime Working Group, whose objective is to strengthen the regional response to cybercrime with an emphasis on the development and implementation of best practice legislation in line with the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime (commonly known as the Budapest Convention).
- 6 The Kingdom of Tonga is the Chair of the PILON Cybercrime Working Group and has recently become the first Pacific island country to accede to the Budapest Convention, having received assistance from the Council of Europe on law reform and law enforcement capacity building and support from the Australian Attorney-General's Department.
- 7 The objective of the Workshop is to provide participants with a greater understanding of how to acquire and handle electronic evidence to ensure effective investigation and prosecution of a range of crimes, including cybercrime. This will extend to discussions on international police-to-police cooperation and formal mutual legal assistance.
- 8 The theme of the Workshop is 'the Pacific response to cybercrime: effective tools and good practice'. The Workshop is aimed at police investigators, prosecutors, and relevant information communications technology (ICT) policy makers. The Pacific island countries participating are Fiji, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Tonga, together with Australia and New Zealand.
- 9 Facilitators include representatives from the Australian Attorney-General's Department, Australian Federal Police, Australian Office of the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions, New Zealand Police, Fiji Police, United States Department of Justice, INTERPOL, Council of Europe and the Attorney General's Office of the Kingdom of Tonga.
- 10 The Deputy Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Tonga, Honourable Siaso Sovaleni in his keynote address at the opening ceremony of the workshop said that this was another opportunity that the Pacific region had to appreciate the seriousness that cybercrime posed to its population. He also said that cybercrime responses had to be based on strong legislation, capable law enforcement and also robust international cooperation. He further stated that one country cannot do it by itself, whether they wanted to or not and that cyber space was a new frontier that we have to deal with whether we like it or not.

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