



MEDIA STATEMENT

FIJI: RIGHTS MUST BE RESPECTED

The action taken to abrogate the Fiji constitution and to curtail individual and media rights will further damage Fiji's ailing economy, and impose further hardships on the ordinary people of Fiji.

Business and investment, and the social and economic welfare of the people, can only succeed in an environment which respects the rights of individuals and businesses and recognises the rule of law.

The censorship laws imposed and the expulsion today of foreign journalists, following the expulsion of three foreign newspapers publishers from Fiji in the last twelve months, demonstrates a lack of regard for the law and due process, and is a direct assault on those media businesses and media freedom.

Fiji has been encountering a perfect storm in which a combination of political, economic and meteorological events, some of which are beyond the control of Fiji, have come together to seriously damage Fiji's already weakened economy.

In Fiji's current circumstances it needs everything going for it, and the political events of the last week are something of an own goal in a situation where the economy is already in deep difficulty.

The Council calls on the Interim Fiji Government to respect the rights of individuals and businesses and to observe the rule of law as provided under Fiji's 1997 constitution.

The Council also notes media reports of an implied threat of economic sanctions by the Australian Government, and calls on the Australian Government to recognise that any imposition of economic sanctions is unjustifiable and will further damage businesses in Fiji, including Australian owned businesses, and damage the livelihoods of the people of Fiji already reeling from reduced working hours and income resulting from Fiji's current economic circumstances.

Brisbane
14 April 2009