Press release - For immediate release

National Digital Strategy Validation Workshop Held to Shape Fiji’s Digital Future

Suva, Fiji, May 30, 2024 – The International Telecommunication Union (ITU), UNOPS, and Fiji’s Ministry of Trade, Co-Operatives, Small and Medium Enterprises, and Communications (MTCSMEC) co-organized a National Digital Strategy Validation Workshop in Suva from May 27 to May 29. The event brought together key stakeholders from the public and private sectors, academia, civil society as well as development partners, for a comprehensive review of the draft Fiji National Digital Strategy.

The National Digital Strategy aims to provide a practical and impactful roadmap for Fiji, adopting a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to ensure it leaves no one behind in the transformation process. The draft was co-developed by ITU and UNOPS through rigorous consultations with over 60 Fijian stakeholders, including Ministries, public and private sector organizations, academia, religious organizations, and civil society organizations, from January to April 2024. The validation workshop created a collaborative environment where participants could contribute insights, share expert knowledge, and address concerns to refine and enhance the draft.
The opening ceremony on May 27 convened more than 50 senior representatives from the Fiji government, the UN system, the private sector, academia, civil society and development partners in the Pacific, moderated by Mr. Vivek Anand, UNOPS ICT Specialist.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Kishore Babu Yerraballa, ITU Area Representative for Southeast Asia and other Member States in the Pacific, emphasized, “This workshop is not merely about collecting inputs but also aims to connect the opportunity dots, identify gaps, and capture big-ticket issues; it is about establishing the foundation for a resilient and inclusive digital future.”

The United Nations Resident Coordinator for Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu, Mr. Dirk Wagener, delivered a special address, stating, “Digital transformation forms an integral part of the UN Pacific Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for 2023-2027. It is not merely a technological advancement. It represents a profound societal shift that impacts every facet of our lives. It is a journey toward inclusivity, efficiency, and sustainability.”

On behalf of the Fiji Government, Mr. Shaheen Ali, Permanent Secretary for Trade, Cooperatives, Small and Medium Enterprises, and Communications, delivered the keynote address, “For a small island developing state like Fiji, digitalization can help us overcome the challenges of our small size and remote location from major markets, allowing us to leapfrog to newer technologies. However, embracing these opportunities requires a strategic approach, which is why we are here today.”

Following the opening ceremony, five thematic sessions were held to discuss the draft National Digital Strategy for Fiji in detail, focusing on infrastructure, inclusion, innovation, governance, cooperation, and the way forward. The sessions elaborated on the rationale behind the strategy development, including the vision, key strategies and key outcomes.

During the workshop, a consensus was built on the national vision for Fiji’s digitalization agenda, aligning with local, regional, and international developmental goals. The participants recognized that the draft strategy reflects the unique needs and aspirations of Fiji to guide the country’s transformation into a digitally empowered and dynamic economy, making it the digital hub in the Pacific.

The draft National Digital Strategy was developed by ITU and UNOPS at the request of the Government of Fiji under the UN South Pacific Digitisation Joint Programme, officially named "Advancing the SDGs by Improving Livelihoods and Resilience via Economic Diversification and Digital Transformation." The joint programme is funded by the Joint SDG Fund and led by ILO with ITU, UNESCO, OHCHR, UNOPS, and UNODC as participating UN agencies.
Inputs received from the validation workshop will be incorporated into the draft strategy, which will then be circulated for stakeholder endorsement before finalization.

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About Fiji’s Ministry of Trade, Co-Operatives, Small and Medium Enterprises, and Communications
The Ministry is responsible for formulating and implementing policies and strategies that create and facilitate growth in industry, investment, trade, tourism, transport, co-operative businesses, micro and small enterprises and enhance metrology, standards and consumer protection in Fiji. Read more: [https://mcttt.gov.fj](https://mcttt.gov.fj)