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## USPBeat Magazine

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The Acting Head of Delegation of the European Union for the Pacific, H.E. Mr Alistair MacDonald presents the Europa Shield to members of the winning USP Team 1. Receiving the Shield is team captain, Jope Tarai. Other members include: Aashqeen Hasan, Jason Titifanue (*far right*) and Robinshon Chand (*back*).

## USP TRIUMPHS IN DEBATE COMPETITION

The University of the South Pacific was declared winner of the Europa Shield, repeating its feat from 2010 when it won the tournament for the first time.

The Europa Shield, which has been held for three consecutive years, is the much anticipated debate tournament of universities in Fiji.

For this year's competition held on 30 October, two teams each from the Fiji National University (FNU) and USP faced each other at the Multi-Purpose Theatre, Japan-Pacific ICT Centre located at the USP Laucala Campus in Suva.

In opening the debate tournament, the Acting British High Commissioner to Fiji, H.E. Mr Martin Fidler said that the debates would help deepen students' understanding of issues facing Pacific Island societies and enhance their confidence in public speaking.

"Perhaps in this way, the Europa Shield tournament can contribute towards the development of the Pacific's future leaders," he added.

H.E. Mr Fidler said that the debate topics were really challenging and touched on issues very real to the Pacific.

The debate topics included:

- There should be a quota for youth in the parliament;
- Specific jobs need to be created for people with disabilities;
- Climate change is an act of God;
- Reserved seats for women in parliament are a way to overcome women's political marginalization;
- Voting should be compulsory;
- There is no discipline without corporal punishment; and
- The media should shape public opinion.

USP's Team 1 and Team 2 competed against each other in the final while both teams from FNU were outclassed in the lead up to the final.

After compelling arguments were presented from both the teams in the final, USP Team 1 was declared the winner.

The team captain of the winning team, Mr Jope Tarai, also received the Best Debater Award. He said that every member of his team worked hard for the debate.

"Winning the debate is a relief after all the hard work," he added.

Mr Tarai expressed gratitude to the Almighty and the staff members of USP for their support towards the victory and also thanked the FNU teams for putting up a good challenge.

As the recipient of the best debater, Mr Tarai will attend the Asia-Pacific Model United Nations Conference as part of the UK delegation fully sponsored by the British High Commission. This conference will be held in July next year in Wellington.

At the conclusion of the event, the Acting Head of Delegation of the European Union for the Pacific, H.E. Mr Alistair MacDonald said that each of the debaters spoke with eloquence and intelligence.

He elaborated that in debates, people confront each other with ideas to convince and open minds to the ideas of the other.

H.E. Mr MacDonald thanked all the teams for participating and the judges as well as the sponsors.

The Europa debate is the innovation of the European Union Delegation Office in Suva with support from the French Embassy and the British High Commission.

Both debate teams from the University were congratulated for their outstanding performances by the Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra.

He said that the University was very pleased with the hard work of its students in winning the Europa Shield, and thanked all those involved in contributing towards the success of the teams.

Professor Chandra said that the debate topics were well selected to bring out the best from the debaters.

The Vice-Chancellor said that such topics help young people express and generate fresh and innovative ideas on issues affecting the region, which he added, was quite an important part of studying at USP.



# DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS FORUM

Discussions led by the Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra with the development partners at the forum.

A meeting was held to facilitate discussion and exchange of views between the University of the South Pacific and its development partners on the University's new six-year Strategic Plan (2013 - 2018).

The Development Partners Forum was hosted at the Japan-Pacific ICT Centre at the Laucala Campus in Suva on 27 September, 2012.

In welcoming the development partners, the Vice-Chancellor and the President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra thanked the development partners for their support towards the University.

A number of key areas were highlighted and discussed from the new six-year Strategic Plan that will lead up to the University's 50th Anniversary in 2018.

These included comprehensive timeline development of regional campuses, a larger focus on accreditation at programme and institutional levels, greater emphasis on postgraduate studies, becoming one of the leaders in leveraging ICT for education, human resource development and significant shift towards creating a better link between world of academia and the world of work.

Professor Chandra pointed out that the overriding theme of the new Strategic Plan is to transform the University from good to excellent.

He explained that by 2018, USP wants to increase its enrolment from 12000 to almost 16000 effective full-time students, double the number of professors and achieve 300 percent increase in research output.

His presentation outlined the priorities in the new Strategic Plan as well as the overall vision, mission and values of the University.

During the forum, the development partners shared their governments and organizations' priorities and views on the new Strategic Plan and the possible assistance that they can provide on the priority areas of the new Strategic Plan.

Development partners responded positively to the discussions on the new Strategic Plan.

Partners like Australia and New Zealand, which provide funding support towards the implementation of the University's Strategic Plan, expressed their satisfaction with the progress made by USP under the current Strategic Plan, which ends this year.

Both partners conveyed their continued support for the priorities in the new Strategic Plan which largely reflects on the University's core business of producing quality graduates who will make an impact on the development of their countries.

The First Secretary (Regional Development), NZ High Commission, Dr Helen Leslie, said that New Zealand welcomes the continuity between the current Strategic Plan and the next one and looks forward for further engagement on the new Strategic Plan.

Similar support for the University was indicated by Japan and Indonesia. Representatives of both countries acknowledged the Vice-Chancellor for his presentation on the new Strategic Plan.

The Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia to Fiji, His Excellency Mr Aidil Chandra Salim recommended a few new areas that the University can explore to help bridge business between Asia and the Pacific.

Japan's long standing support to USP in the areas of grant aid assistance, dispatch of experts and people to people exchanges was also noted at the forum.

The University was commended for its pursuit for quality and international accreditation of its programmes particularly around the areas of Pacific culture and marine resources by United Nations agencies present at the meeting. They also expressed their desire to collaborate more strongly with CROP agencies including USP.

During the conclusion of the meeting, Professor Chandra thanked the development partners and their governments and institutions' commitment towards the University and the development of the region.

He also invited further feedback on the new Strategic Plan which will be considered by the University Council in November, this year.

Present at the meeting were representatives from Australia, New Zealand, Japan, France, India, Indonesia, Taiwan, Asian Development Bank, JICA, UNDP, UNFPA and the World Health Organisation.



The USPSU President, Mr Ruben Colata and the Secretary, Ms Litiana Waqalevu and the Vice-Chancellor and President of the USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra at the signing of the collective agreement.

A collective agreement for 2010 - 2012 was signed on 31 October, 2012 between the representatives of the University of the South Pacific's Management and the University of the South Pacific Staff Union (USPSU).

The signed agreement portrays the good working relationship between the parties to confidently communicate on issues and reach a mutual understanding for the benefit of the University and the members represented by the Staff Union.

The collective agreement will be the platform for future collective agreements as well as for staff contributions towards the University's success in reaching

## USP STRENGTHENS RELATIONSHIP WITH STAFF UNION

the strategic goals planned for the next six years.

The good faith bargaining is recognized as a great help to open and transparent practices. Consultation practices that were used in bargaining and in the University generally are appreciated and reflects the value given to all staff at USP. As well as for the next round of bargaining, discussions are already underway with the two parties.

The USPSU President, Mr Ruben Colata and the Secretary, Ms Litiana Waqalevu, said that, "we are committed to working closely with the University to achieve its strategic plans for the next six years. We acknowledge the University's recognition of our contribution and we are ready to contribute positively into our next negotiations."

The Vice-Chancellor and President of the USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra, highlighted that the success of the University depends on its staff. "The University is committed to working with the Union on human resource matters to ensure best practices and to achieve the University's vision of excellence," he added.

Professor Chandra said that he was pleased with the collaborative and constructive approach taken by the Staff Union and the University Management.





## COOK ISLANDS PRIME MINISTER VISITS USP

*(left - right):* The Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra, Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum and Prime Minister of Cook Islands, Honorable Henry Puna and the Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Tuiloma Neroni Slade at the lecture.

The Prime Minister of Cook Islands and the Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum, Honorable Henry Puna presented a guest lecture during his visit to the University of the South Pacific in Suva on 19 October 2012.

Honourable Puna, who was sworn in as Prime Minister of the Cook Islands in 2010, is well known for his interest in the development of young people around the region.

Delivering his talk on 'Thinking 'Outside the Rocks': Re-imagining the Pacific', the Prime Minister emphasized the need to reverse a self-imposed limitation of believing that Pacific Islands are simply "dots on a map."

"A changing world demands changing mindsets, and those demands are pressing for a renewed effort on our part to re-define our thinking in ways that reflect who we are, and what we want to be, on our own terms. For too long we've allowed a sense of smallness to underscore our outlook and projection to the rest of the world," he shared.

He stressed that island nations carry enormous significance well beyond tiny volcanic specks and atolls in what is a vast, collective territory of the Pacific Ocean. These collective territories, the Prime Minister said are nearly two times the size of Russia, and more than three times the size of the People's Republic of China.

With the conduct of business evolving in competitive ways that demand new thinking, Honourable Puna explained that collective interests of Pacific governments are being pressured and shaped towards a new Pacific Order – one that will

not necessarily meet the expectations of others or the perceptions of outsiders.

"What is important is that we choose what's best for us. We have the ability to define what's good, and we have the right to take commanding ownership of our future. I think the time is right that we take on a more concerted effort, as a region, to define ourselves on our own terms," he said.

While alluding to the theme of the 2012 Pacific Islands Forum – 'Large Ocean Island States – the Pacific Challenge', Honourable Puna explained that it is time for the Pacific to re-focused its lens on the world and sharpened its strategy towards greater economic growth and sustainability.

His lecture also looked at the Pacific Plan and what it means to Pacific Island Countries and their aspirations for the future, the role of tourism in the region, and the significance of voyaging and celebrating migratory peoples across the vast Pacific Ocean.

Talking about USP, Honourable Puna mentioned that the University is a microcosm of Pacific relations and the "seed" of the Pacific way of regionalism.

The Prime Minister said he is proud that Cook Islands is a founding member of USP, and added, that it is no surprise that his country is a strong supporter of the University.

"I would like to encourage you to continue to uphold this University with pride and make the most of your time here," he told University staff and students.

Honourable Puna said that nations are being

enriched through USP as it has represented the region's interests since its establishment in 1968.

The lecture was well received by the audience gathered at the Multi Purpose Theatre at the University. Participants included representatives from regional and international organizations, University staff and students, media and the general public.

The Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra said it was a "privilege" to have the Prime Minister speak to the USP community.

"The Prime Minister has chosen a very interesting topic to speak to all of us and it is important that issues relating to the region are brought up at the University so there is an active engagement with our staff and students," he added.

Professor Chandra highlighted that the Cook Islands is a very important member of the University and the Cook Islands students add a significant number to the multi-cultural student population of the University.

The Vice-Chancellor also spoke of the University's plans to further develop its 14 regional campuses and to build a much stronger sense of ownership of the University throughout its member countries.

After delivering his lecture, the Cook Islands Prime Minister was accompanied by Professor Chandra, and other guests took part in a tree planting exercise organised by the USP Student Association and the Properties and Facilities section.

## USP SIGNS COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS



PHPIJSU President, Mr Josefa Wata and the Secretary, Mr Noel Tofinga with the Vice-Chancellor and President of the USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra after the signing of the collective agreements.

Two collective agreements for 2010 - 2012 were signed on 31 October, 2012 between the representatives of the University of the South Pacific's Management and the Permanent Hourly Paid and Intermediate & Junior Staff Union (PHPIJSU) of the University.

The signed agreements portray the good working relationship between the parties to confidently communicate on issues and reach a mutual understanding for the benefit of the University and the members represented by the Staff Union.

Senior representatives of PHPIJSU including the President, Mr Josefa Wata and the Secretary, Mr Noel Tofinga stated, "this agreement reflects the management's right to manage and with the Union's participation it is done with good dialogue, mutual and mature understanding and in good faith. We, as the Union, are willing to work with the management for a better working environment for USP staff in the Fiji campuses."

The Vice-Chancellor and President of the USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra, highlighted that the success of the University depends on its staff.

"The University is committed to working with the Union on human resource matters to ensure best practices and to achieve the University's vision of excellence," he added.

Professor Chandra said that he was pleased with the collaborative and constructive approach taken by the Staff Union and the University Management.

# CHEMICAL SOCIETY AWARDS CEREMONY



Students participating in the National Titration Competition in the grand final.

The Chemical Society of the South Pacific (CSSP) summed up its activities for the year 2012 with an Awards Ceremony held at the University of the South Pacific's Laucala Campus in Suva.

The annual event to reward successful students who did well in the activities organized by the Society throughout the year was held on 13 October 2012.

Since its inception in 1985, the CSSP has been greatly involved in organising National and Regional Chemical Science events especially for aspiring young chemists in high schools. It has now become the most prominent and active society in the region for secondary school students and staffs.

The activities of CSSP for 2012 were: the Regional Chemistry Quiz; National Titration Competition; National Chem-Knowledge Battle and National Poster Competition.

About five thousand students from seventy schools from the Central, Western and Northern Division participated in these activities.

The winners from this competition battled it out for 1st, 2nd and 3rd position in their respective competitions on Saturday at the national level. The finals were held at two venues; Laucala Campus and Labasa College in Vanua Levu.

President of CSSP and senior lecturer in Chemistry at the School of Biological and Chemical Sciences (SBCS) at USP, Dr David Rohindra said the society is very grateful for the support shown by the University and other sponsors for this year.

"We thank the Faculty of Science Technology and Environment (FSTE) and SBCS of USP to allow the use of its facilities, Mobil Oil, DHL, Williams & Gosling Ltd for providing financial sponsorship, Vodafone for providing mobile phones as the prize for one of the competition, and CDP for providing free delivery of our parcels," Dr Rohindra said.

Dr Rohindra highlighted that 2012 was a very memorable year for all the present and future chemists.

"This is because in August, the Nobel Laureate in Chemistry 2010, Professor Akira Suzuki visited our University and met with many of us. Students from the Suva area also had the opportunity to meet him in person and listen to his life journey in a public seminar organized by the CSSP," he added.

He further added that the Chemical Society will continue to strive to bring the latest knowledge and discoveries to the door steps of the aspiring young students "through the support of our sponsors."



JICA expert on mobile technology, Professor Shigeyoshi Watanabe (*far left*) and Mr Varunesh Rao from the Centre of Distance and Flexible Learning (*back*) with staff and students of the Alafua Campus showing the new iPads.

## iPADS FOR CLASSROOMS - USP'S REGIONAL M-LEARNING INITIATIVE

A five-member team recently visited the University of the South Pacific's Alafua Campus in Samoa, to conduct training on the use of iPads in classrooms and further develop m-Learning at the Campus.

The visit, from 9 - 20 October 2012, was part of the USP-JICA ICT for Human Development and Human Security Project. The project, funded under the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Technical Cooperation Programme, aims to broaden and improve the borders of distance learning across the Pacific with the use of ICT.

With more than 90 percent of USP students estimated to own mobile phones, the USP mobile learning (m-Learning) initiative aims to utilize mobile devices in the areas of learning and teaching.

Mobile phones and tablets can be used for distance education to supplement learning in particular to communicate information regarding availability of assessments, results, venue changes and cancellations notices via SMS text services.

Students can also receive information on school events and emergency notifications instantly without accessing a computer. This alternative way of communication will be beneficial especially for students who do not have internet connections at home.

Together with the SMS-based services, the m-Learning team in USP is currently developing mobile applications for classroom assessments, course finder, campus maps and edutainment.

The team's visit looked at how smart phones and tablet devices were radically transforming the current style of learning as well as education delivery and access.

The implementation of m-Learning is one of the objectives in USP's next Strategic Plan 2013-2018 and this new form of learning will be extended in the region.

In order to support USP's m-Learning initiative in regional campuses utilizing tablet devices, JICA provided the latest model of 25 Apple iPads to USP under the ICT for Human Development and Human Security Project.

Twenty iPads will be used by the students and lecturers at the Alafua Campus and 5 will be used by the Fiji USP m-Learning project in Fiji for further m-Learning development in USP.

Samoa is the first member country to receive these iPad tablet devices for mobile learning.

The Alafua Campus Director, Ms Ruby Vaa, said that students are expected to use the device in classrooms to enhance group collaboration among students and lecturers.

"For students who require learning outdoors, they can go to the field with the device, taking notes, pictures and videos then later sharing them in classrooms for further discussion on the outcomes of the field study," she added.

The team comprised JICA expert on mobile technology, Professor Shigeyoshi Watanabe; JICA expert on ITIL and Network Operation Centre, Mr Yoshinori Kurachi; Mr Varunesh Rao from the Centre of Distance and Flexible Learning; and Mr Vipul Ramrakha and Mr Marika Qalomai from the IT Services based at the Laucala Campus in Suva.

The m-Learning initiative was taken by the Faculty of Science, Technology and Environment (FSTE) in 2010 and the implementation of this new learning tool has been extended to the region by USP and JICA since 2011.

"Tablet learning can be seen to be a stepping stone for m-Learning and the positive outcomes of this pilot project certainly heralds an exciting future of m-Learning at USP," said Dr Bibhya Sharma, USP academic and Chair of the m-Learning team.

He further added that a number of m-Learning services and applications will be rolled out in 2013.





## USP HOLDS HIGH-LEVEL CONSULTATION WITH AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

A tripartite consultation meeting between the University of the South Pacific and its development partners, Australia and New Zealand, was held at the University on 27 September, 2012.

The HLC was chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and President of USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra.

The objectives of the meeting were to discuss and consult with Australia and New Zealand on the following:

- Progress on the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2010 - 2012;
- Progress on the implementation of projects/programmes funded through assistance from the Government of Australia;
- Review of the Partnership Agreements (2010 - 2012) between USP and the Governments of Australia and New Zealand and discussion on way forward for future partnerships; and
- New draft Strategic Plan 2013 - 2018.

In his opening remarks, Professor Chandra welcomed the Australian and New Zealand representatives to the meeting and acknowledged the continuous support of their governments.

Both Australia and New Zealand provide support for the University's core budget and for the Strategic Plan implementation. Australia fully funds Priority Areas 2 and 3 which are Student Support, and Research, Graduate Affairs and Innovation, while New Zealand funds the implementation of the whole Plan, with a focus on Priority Areas 1 and 6 which are Learning and Teaching, and Governance, Management and Continuous Improvement.

Australia also funds a number of projects in different thematic areas through separate project arrangements.

Professor Chandra said that USP will continue to engage closely with both the governments to continue its efforts to successfully deliver its goal of facilitating effective learning and teaching for the region.

He assured both Australia and New Zealand that the University is on track and fully committed to accomplishing all the targets under the current Strategic Plan 2010 - 2012 by the end of the year.

The Vice-Chancellor explained that the recent work in the area of accessibility attests to the University's commitment on increasing disability access and making learning and teaching facilities more responsive to the needs of disabled people.

"We need your confidence and support on our next Strategic Plan that clearly

demonstrates our commitment to position USP as a university of excellence by its 50th anniversary in 2018," he told representatives from both sides.

Representatives from Australia and New Zealand expressed their thanks and appreciation to the University for organising the tripartite high level consultation, which was the second one for the year.

While giving his remarks, the Acting Counsellor Regional, AusAID, Mr Simon Flores, said that, Australia values its relationship with the University.

He made reference to Australia's Comprehensive Aid Policy Framework which is a guide to Australia's aid distribution over the next four years. Under this policy, Asia and the Pacific will continue to be the highest priority regions for the aid program, receiving an estimated 75 percent of Australian aid.

Mr Flores mentioned that education is also a critical area with about 25 percent of aid to be spent on education assistance.

Similar views were shared by the First Secretary Development, NZ High Commission, Mr Richard Dirks, who said that New Zealand was pleased to provide support to USP and with the changes that have occurred over the past two years at the University.

He added that while performance has been good, significant challenges remain for the University, particularly around sustainable funding.

"New Zealand would like to congratulate USP on its success in addressing some of these challenges through the appointment of key roles and the leadership of the Vice-Chancellor and through regional engagement. We are pleased with the progress that has been made in terms of Strategic Plan implementation and governance and management," he continued.

Mr Dirks highlighted that New Zealand's partnership with USP is evidence of the increased confidence that New Zealand has in the University.

"We consider core support to USP as the most effective and efficient way of delivering support since it allows you to use your resources in line with priorities agreed and expressed in the Strategic Plan. This approach also aligns well with NZAID programmes as we move towards deeper and fewer engagements overtime."

New Zealand is looking to develop a new partnership agreement based on the new Strategic Plan and the result of the joint review undertaken with AusAID.

Both sides expressed their strong confidence in working with the University in the future.



## DIPLOMACY STUDENTS UNDERGO NEGOTIATIONS TRAINING

The University of the South Pacific's Diplomacy and International Affairs programme hosted a special workshop on International Negotiation Skills for its postgraduate students from 17-19 October, 2012.

Facilitated by two experienced negotiators, Ambassador Peter Rodgers and Ms Francesca Beddie, the three-day workshop was designed to impart practical skills on international negotiation and diplomatic writing through a step-by-step preparation for participation in a mock multilateral conference on climate change.

On the first day, the facilitators introduced the participants to the basic elements of diplomatic writing and then moved into practical group exercises focused on the first stage of international

negotiations - research, dialogue, and persuasive writing within the home government in order to reach an agreed negotiating position.

The second day focused on preparing for the mock multilateral conference. Participants were divided into delegations representing different countries and international agencies and instructed to prepare their talking points and opening speeches for the conference.

On the latter part of the second day and the third day the various delegations gave their opening speeches, lobbied and drafted conference resolutions. In the last session, the facilitators reviewed the conference and delegation performances.

The Academic Co-ordinator of the Diplomacy and International Affairs program, Associate Professor Greg Fry, said that although many of the participants are highly experienced civil servants, diplomats, journalists and private sector managers, they all said they gained a great deal from the workshop.

For many participants, the workshop provided a huge understanding about negotiations and how it is carried out on the international stage.

"The workshop enabled me to get firsthand training from former diplomats on best negotiation practices and how to prepare and present a delegation's perspective or views," said Mr Zoher Jannif, one of the participants.



## STAFF EARNS RECOGNITION

Ms Nirupa Ram-Tokuma receives her award during celebrations to mark the 25th anniversary of the 'Montreal Protocol Treaty on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer'.

To mark the 25th anniversary of the 'Montreal Protocol Treaty on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer', Ms Nirupa Ram-Tokuma, alongside others, was recently presented an award for her pioneering strong leadership.

Ms Ram-Tokuma is the Manager, Administration at Pacific Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development, which is the flagship agency for Climate Change Modelling Research at the University of the South Pacific (USP).

The Montreal Protocol is an international treaty designed to protect the ozone layer by phasing out the production of numerous substances believed to be responsible for ozone depletion.

Ms Ram-Tokuma was the former National Project Officer for Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS) for the Fiji Department of Environment.

In this role, she was responsible for leading Fiji's implementation of the Montreal Protocol, which Fiji ratified and became a party to in 1987.

During this time, she spent over six and half

years working with local refrigeration and air-conditioning industries in Fiji to phase out the use of the globally-banned chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), which has a high ozone depleting potential.

Some of her national activities including facilitating over 200 'Train-the-Trainer Good Practices in Refrigeration and Air-conditioning Workshops' for small businesses, hotels, supermarkets and vehicle service centers. This was to make provisions for distribution of recovery and recycling equipment to private sector industries and at the same time to facilitate the work of enforcement agencies to adopt and implement aspects of the Ozone Depleting Substances Act, 1998.

In parallel to this, she set up the Fiji national ozone unit, and conducted numerous awareness activities to raise awareness in schools, tertiary institutions as well as for the general public.

With the financial support from the United Nations Environment Programme Division of Technology, Industry and Environment, the Nairobi-based

UN Ozone Secretariat and the Montreal-based Multilateral Fund Secretariat (MLF), Ms Ram-Tokuma coordinated a number of capacity building and technology transfer activities to help the Fiji Government achieve its obligations under the Protocol and to reduce Fiji's consumption of ODS gradually in accordance with the timelines set out in Fiji Country Programme and the Phase Out Schedules for Article 5 countries as stipulated in the Treaty.

Nirupa's work at the national level is often used to advocate for success in countries struggling with implementation in the South East Asia region and as such she has travelled widely in those regions.

In the Pacific, Ms Ram-Tokuma has continued to work closely with a number of USP member countries, mainly government line agencies and national ozone focal points to provide legal and technical advisory services. Since 2006, based on her experience she has continued to be called upon to provide her support to these countries when the need arises.



## 2012 FIJI ECONOMY UPDATES

The Chief Executive Officer of the Fiji Revenue and Customs Authority, Mr Jitoko Tikolevu, delivers his keynote address at the Fiji Economy Update in Suva.

The University of the South Pacific facilitated two successful Fiji Economy Updates around the country to bring together research outputs on various aspects on the Fiji economy in an attempt to assist policy-makers to make informed policy decisions.

The Economy Updates, which were organised by the University's School of Economics, were held in Suva and Nadi on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of October respectively.

This provided an opportunity for academic researchers, policymakers, and the general public to contribute to the discussions on Fiji's economic issues.

The Head of the USP's School of Economics, Professor Saqib Jafarey, explained that the flagship event demonstrated the School's commitment to advancing economic policy-making in the region by facilitating discussion and dialogue between academics and policymakers.

He made these remarks in the context of having observed that USP's influence and participation in shaping policy in its own region considerably exceeded that of even some of the world's most famous universities.

The annual event attracted a wide range of speakers from different sectors of Fiji

including government officials, academics, and representatives of international organisations.

In the welcome session at the Economy Update in Suva, the Vice-Chancellor and President of the USP, Professor Rajesh Chandra called on representatives from the different sectors to use the opportunity to make input and have free and constructive discussions concerning Fiji's economy.

"We are very excited by updates of this nature and by the partnership that has been created between the work that the University does and the work that the Government and communities do so that we see value in each other's work," he added.

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed the large turnout at the event and thanked members of the various sectors for showing their keen interest to actively participate in the discussions.

The keynote address was delivered by the Chief Executive Officer of the Fiji Revenue and Customs Authority, Mr Jitoko Tikolevu, who revealed that Fiji's economy and revenue growth was progressing well.

While noting a nine percent increase in revenue growth for 2012, Mr Tikolevu said, this did not correlate with the increase in real GDP growth of 2.7 percent forecasted for this year.

"There have been some inconsistencies with the growth in real GDP and revenue growth. Despite the natural disaster this year and major reforms taking place, revenue growth remains very strong," he explained.

He added that the hotel industry, construction and government were consistently contributing to GDP growth and revenue growth in the country.

Mr Tikolevu believes Fiji could be considered a tax haven. This, he stated was because Fiji was not a heavily taxed economy with very competitive tax rates when compared to other countries.

He expects the recent tax reforms by Government to stimulate further growth for Fiji.

The Economy Updates in Suva and Nadi consisted of the following sessions:

- Economic Survey of Fiji;
- Macroeconomic Policy and its Consequences;
- Sectoral Issues; and
- Poverty, Social Welfare and Housing.

Panel discussions on Fiji's Macroeconomic and Growth Performance, and Societal Developments, Poverty and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were also part of the programme.



## LAND MANAGEMENT SCHOOL WINS DEBATE SERIES



FBE's Associate Dean (Research), Dr Gurmeet Singh presents the Dean's trophy to Ms Chethna Ben from the winning SLMD debate team.

A series of debates within the schools in the Faculty of Business and Economics (FBE) at the University of the South Pacific were successfully concluded with the School of Land Management and Development (SLMD) taking out the top honours.

The 2012 FBE debate series had eight teams vying for the top spot with the best four teams making it into the playoffs to determine the champion debate team. The teams from SLMD and SAFT came out on top in the playoffs to face each other in the final on 5 October, 2012.

The SLMD team was declared the overall winner for this year's competition. They won in the final against the School of Agriculture and Food Technology (SAFT) from the Alafua campus in Samoa.

The FBE debate series was launched last year by the Acting Dean, Dr Kesaia Seniloli. The initiative was the brainchild of the former Dean of the Faculty, Professor Biman Prasad.

The event was aimed at encouraging students to think about contemporary issues and to allow them to prepare and articulate issues publicly.

In welcoming the two debate teams, Dr Seniloli commended the students for their hard work in making it to the finals after having had to debate twice with the other teams.

She acknowledged that debating is a powerful tool for enlivening and energizing students, adding that when students engage in debates, they take an active role in their education.

Dr Seniloli explained that students have to be on their feet as they have to verbally articulate ideas while thoroughly analyzing the arguments of their opponents and making a case against them.

In addition to building their confidence, debating helps students to develop their leadership and team skills. Many traits and skills acquired from participating in a debate are underpinned in USP's Graduate Attributes, she pointed out.

"These are attributes that we hope you as students will take with you when you leave the University," she added.

During the final, the SLMD team argued against the notion that 'academic performance is the best indicator of potential for success in life' while the SAFT debaters were supporting the view that success in life was depended upon academic performance.

After hearing compelling arguments from both sides, the three judges declared the SLMD team as the winner. The winner received prize money and was awarded the Dean's trophy.

The best debaters from the two teams were Mr Penaia Donuca and Mr Jason Titifanue from SAFT and SLMD respectively.

The judging panel consisted of FBE's Associate Dean (Research), Dr Gurmeet Singh, Director of USP's Development, Marketing and Communications, Mr Jaindra Karan and Dr Donasiano Ruru from the School of Education in the Faculty of Arts, Law and Education.

## LAUNCH OF THE PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS FORUM

The newly-established Pacific International Relations Forum, an initiative of the Graduate Studies in Diplomacy and International Affairs Programme at the University of the South Pacific, was launched by the President of Kiribati, His Excellency Mr Anote Tong, on 9 October 2012, in Suva.

The Forum seeks to promote interest and understanding of international issues within the Pacific Islands region.

Head of USP's School of Government, Development and International Affairs, Professor Vijay Naidu, said it was pleasing to note that the Forum was an initiative of the students and graduates of the Diplomacy and International Affairs programme within the School.

The programme, which was launched in December 2010, has attracted a very talented and highly experienced student body of around 100 postgraduate students in its first two years of operation.

It was out of this very talented group that the idea for the establishment of a Pacific International Relations Forum was mooted.

In conveying USP's support towards the initiative, Professor Naidu said that the University sees this as an opportunity to encourage debate and knowledge-sharing around international issues and challenges that are crucial to Pacific societies.

"We welcome the fact that it links the University to the wider community and that it is committed to fostering a regional knowledge network, a value dear to our hearts at the regional University," he commented while speaking on behalf of Professor Rajesh Chandra, the Vice-Chancellor and President of USP.

Professor Naidu expressed his delight and said that the University is very honoured that H.E. President Tong agreed to launch the Forum.

In his remarks, the Head of State of Kiribati said that the launch of such a forum was timely for the Pacific as it is now entering a new phase - a paradigm shift where the Pacific needs to chart its own course and lead global thinking in crucial areas such as climate change, ocean governance and sustainable development.

"For a long time we have been branded as "Small Island Developing States" since we emerged into the global stage as independent and sovereign states. Our mindset and vision of ourselves and the world has been influenced by this doctrine."

"More often than not, we see a world where developed countries will continue to dominate global politics and economics, whether we have a say in it or not," he continued.

The Kiribati President emphasized the need to engage even more aggressively internationally because the key to Pacific's survival will depend on international action on key issues such as climate change.

H.E. Mr Tong noted that there have been a number of developments to indicate the increase in engagement of the region in some significant groupings within the United Nations.

For example, Nauru's selection as Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States and Fiji's appointment as the Chair of G77 and China, as well as Samoa hosting the Global Small Island Developing States Conference in 2014.

"But as we focus our attention on our relations beyond our region, we need also to look at how we relate with each other within our own region. There can be no doubt that there is greater strength in regional solidarity."

He congratulated the University, the student organizing committee and all those involved with the initiative of establishing the Pacific International Relations Forum.

H.E. Mr Tong anticipates that some of the issues he touched on will in turn raise a number of challenging and unprecedented international issues that will provide fertile ground for discussion within the Forum.

"As leaders we do not always have the answers and we look forward to inputs into our foreign policies which the Forum may care to put forward," he said.

The Forum will promote discussion of a broad range of international issue areas including international trade and investment; international security; conflict, international peacekeeping and conflict resolution; global and regional environmental challenges; and the impact of developments in global and regional governance.

The Forum's administrative home will be the School of Government, Development and International Affairs in the Faculty of Business and Economics. The Forum's day-to-day activities will be managed by a committee drawn from the alumni and current student body of the Graduate Studies in Diplomacy and International Affairs Programme.

## TOURISM SCHOOL HOSTS SUCCESSFUL CAREERS FAIR

A resort operator conducts an interview with a tourism student at the Careers Fair.

The University of the South Pacific's School of Tourism and Hospitality Management (STHM) recently held its annual Careers Fair at the Shangri-La Fijian Resort & Spa in Sigatoka, Fiji.

The event, which has been hosted by the luxurious resort for two consecutive years now, was held this year on 28 September.

The Careers Fair provides final year tourism students with the opportunity to meet with key stakeholders in the tourism and hospitality sector and learn about employment opportunities and current trends within the industry.

It also offers the chance for employers to scout for talents for upcoming graduates for trainee programmes within their organisations.

A total of 13 major industry partners attended the Careers Fair.

The head of the STHM, Professor David Harrison, said that it was promising for the School to see multinational brands represented and looking to employ the School's graduates. These included organisations like Hilton, Starwood, Accor, Shangri-La, InterContinental, Outrigger, Warwick and the Tanoa Group of Hotels.

The Careers Fair was also attended by Carnival Australia, which has been attending the event for the last five years. Jacks of Fiji was the only non-hotel organisation at the event.

Carnival Australia is part of Carnival Corporation, the world's leading cruise holiday company, representing iconic brands including Carnival Cruise Lines, Cunard, Holland America Line, P&O Cruises, P&O Cruises World Cruising,

Princess Cruises and Seabourn.

Ms Scarlett Yim from Carnival Australia interviewed second-year students in preparation for a placement in 2014. Meanwhile the first six students earmarked for their Cruise internship will leave Fiji in January next year.

The flagship event was attended by 60 graduating students from STHM as well as second-year Bachelor of Commerce in Hotel Management students, who were interviewed for placements for their third year.

The School received positive feedback from the stakeholders on the calibre of students who attended the event.

"Many employers found that the students were confident and professional in the interview sessions and several students have already received calls for further interviews," Professor Harrison added.

University students from Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands studying tourism were also encouraged to attend the Careers Fair.

This, according to Professor Harrison, was to build the confidence and exposure of regional students in seeking employment when they return home.

He said that the School is grateful to Mr Michael Monks, the General Manager of the Shangri-La Fijian Resort & Spa, for his continuing support towards the School's initiatives.

The InterContinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa has offered to host the Careers Fair next year.

## EXPO FOCUSES ON RESEARCH



An exposition aimed at encouraging research through the promotion of archival and data repositories as integral sources of information for researchers began at the University of the South Pacific in Suva on 24 October, 2012.

Facilitated by USP's Faculty of Arts, Law and Education, the event was supported by archival and data repositories like the National Archives of Fiji, Fiji National Museum, Ministry of Information, Fiji Bureau of Statistics and the Pacific Collection of the University's library.

The two-day expo saw displays of materials and artifacts from the different repository and archival/data collection agencies as well as information sessions for the general public to benefit from including University staff and students.

During the opening of the expo, the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and International), Professor John Bythell said that while data collection and archiving is an enormous task, it is also a powerful and valuable tool in answering some fundamental questions that help us understand regional and global issues.

"It is not only the existence of data sets that are important, but our ability to search and find the information we need to be able to answer specific questions," Professor Bythell reminded those present.

He briefly spoke about the importance of the knowledge economy and the drivers behind the changing rules of business and national competitiveness. These included factors like globalization, information technology, new media and computer networking and connectivity.

Professor Bythell said that USP is looking to develop the Pacific Regional Knowledge Hub.

This, he shared, will be a suite of data storage, archiving and dissemination facilities to also enable and develop the capacity and use of data in novel and innovative ways.

He urged people to take the opportunity to know more about data repositories from the expo, as such agencies are at the heart of the knowledge economy and drive significant change in the way the region and the world does business in the future. The expo concluded on 26 October.