

03 April, 2011. **"The Prime Minister of Tonga and Minister for Information and Communications, Lord Tu'ivakanō wishes to acknowledge World Press Freedom Day commemorated worldwide, today 3 May each year.**



Media Freedom has been enshrined in the Tongan Constitution for over a century, and forms the very fabric of our democracy. However, the people of Tonga ought to understand that media freedom belongs to the people. It is the right of the people to receive and to have access to information that is accurate, true, fair and impartial at all times. This is what clause 7 of the constitution seeks to empower with the common people of this great Kingdom. And this is what clause 7 of the constitution also provides for the media to carry out their work with care and responsibility.

Tonga is a signatory to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, in which Article 19 states that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including the right to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers.

With a new and more democratic system of government, it is more critical now than ever that the Government, the media, and the public understand the importance of transparency, freedom of information and freedom of the press in building a more informed and educated society.

But at the same time, the Government and the people of Tonga expect the highest levels of professionalism from the media. Reporting must be fair, accurate and balanced in the best interests of the public. One must not take lightly the power of the media to build a nation through quality journalism or break a nation through unethical standards.

In highlighting his views for World Media Freedom Day, the Prime Minister concludes that he can ask for no greater gift to commemorate World Media Freedom Day, but for the opportunity for all media operators in the Kingdom to reach out to the public with informed and accurate information that can only prove useful for the development and strengthening of our democracy.

ENDS

Issued by: Prime Minister's Office, Nuku'alofa, 2011. (**Photo:** Talanoa Langi)