



## **Commonwealth Parliamentary Association**

In collaboration with the

### **World Bank Group**

#### ***'Meeting of the Public Accounts Committees of the Pacific Region'***

#### **Hosted by the CPA New Zealand Branch**

**Wellington, New Zealand, 25-26 August 2015**

#### **The importance of an effective Public Accounts Committee**

In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the importance of PACs in ensuring proper Public Financial Management. Developing parliamentary capacity for effective financial scrutiny is crucial.

The CPA firmly believes that the most effective way in which PAC performance in every jurisdiction can be improved is by developing ways to exchange information. Information is a key resource in building capacity for the PAC to function well. Even well-established PACs need to keep abreast of developments, identify trends and try to anticipate the varying range of audit issues which it will eventually have to deal with.

Support for PACs has come from an increased recognition over the last decade that they can play a central role in promoting good governance, improving financial management practices and curbing of corruption in developing countries.

#### **Background to this meeting and the establishment of a Pacific Network of PACs**

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in collaboration with the World Bank has carried out extensive work examining how Parliament manages public funds – to this end, a number of Study Groups, Workshops and Seminars have been convened to investigate PACs and the role they play in parliamentary scrutiny and good governance. The programme builds on the body of work which was done in collaboration with La Trobe University and the Centre for Democratic Institutions between 2009 and 2012, with the aim to support Public Accounts Committees in the Pacific Region.

A 2003 report by the World Bank Institute and Commonwealth Parliamentary Association on PACs internationally identified capacity building and information exchange as main priorities for action. The report was looked at by a Study Group convened by the CPA which included among its recommendations, that:

- Parliaments should regard the PAC as their pre-eminent committee;
- Specially structured training should be provided to PAC members;

- PACs in smaller and developing Parliaments needed improved access to information technology; and
- Research should be undertaken into establishing a basis for making international comparisons of PAC performance.

The World Bank and CPA are assisting in the convening of a meeting of Chairs of Public Accounts Committees from across the Pacific Region to establish a Network where there is a means to exchange information and ideas to enable PACs to keep up-to-date with important developments, changing standards and best practices as they emerge. A network of Pacific PACs is the perfect platform in which to do that.

Without doubt, a Pacific Network of PACs has a lot of potential and will make a very significant contribution to the quest for value for money in public spending, effective scrutiny and oversight and enhancing the assertiveness and power of parliaments in holding government spending to account.

### **A track record of successful regional associations of PACs**

There are a number of regional networks of PACs that exist, including the West African Association of Public Accounts Committees (WAAPAC), the Asia Association of Public Accounts Committees (ARAPAC), the Southern African Association of Public Accounts Committees and many more.

Many of the networks are mandated to enhance the knowledge of Members of Parliament, senior professional parliamentary staff and representatives from Supreme Audit Institutions on issues related to effective financial oversight, and to assist parliaments to strengthen their relationships between national audit institutions. The networks have been an excellent platform to share experiences and learn lessons from best practices in other parliaments and to enhance collaboration among member countries.

The meeting will provide an opportunity to draw from the experiences of these other regional networks.

### **Aims and Objectives of the Meeting**

- To agree on the formation of a Network of Pacific PACs.
- To agree the vision, objectives and priorities of the network moving forward
- To agree on the financing, administration and leadership of the Network
- To agree a programme of work and activities for the Network – both Parliamentarians and Parliamentary Staff