

Solomon Islands happy with report of elections

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Chairman of the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission and Speaker of Parliament, Sir Allan Kemakeza

Chairman of the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission and Speaker of Parliament, Sir Allan Kemakeza, says he is delighted to receive the Commonwealth's report card on the national general election and an offer of support to assist Solomon Islands electoral reform process.

Commonwealth Secretary-General Kamalesh Sharma congratulated the people of Solomon Islands and the Electoral Commission for a peaceful and transparent election.

The report says key benchmarks for democratic elections were met and the poll was well-organised.

However, the report also noted that the current electoral system weakens the electoral and the democratic framework and needs reform.

"The Commonwealth Secretariat stands ready to assist the Government of Solomon Islands to help further strengthen the democratic process and democratic institutions in the country," Mr Sharma said.

Sir Allan thanked the Secretary-General for his generous offer of assistance and the Chair of the group, Dr Arthur Donahoe, QC, for the group's independent observations and recommendations.

"The Electoral Commission greatly appreciates the interest shown by all observer groups, local and international, in supporting the development of our electoral system," Sir Allan said. "Such reports provide us with the baseline information for any work towards improvement of the electoral system."

The report recommendations echoed those of local observer group, Development Services Exchange, released earlier this month.

Sir Allan said that recommendations and suggestions from such reports are crucial to helping the Electoral Commission advocate for continuous reform towards the 2014 election and beyond.

"The Electoral Commission has already identified many of the report recommendations such as reforms to allow it to clean up the voters' list, a system of voter identification, a system for postal voting and allowing people cast their vote after 5.00pm if they are already standing in the polling station queue," Sir Allan said.

"These independent observer reports will help guide the Commission regarding where to do reform to strengthen the electoral democratic process of the country."

Sir Allan said that the Commission is currently undertaking a post-election review process and will use the reports in its recommendations to help ensure an election process that earns the confidence of our people.

"The Electoral Commission is looking into ways to improve in those areas and appreciates working with any internal or external organisation while doing its reform."

SOURCE: SOLOMON STAR/PACNEWS