

CBSI Governor's Remarks at the opening of the Financial Inclusion Consultation Workshop for Senior Government Officials, Heritage Park hotel, Thursday 19th November 2015

Salutation

Secretary to PMO & Cabinet, Special Secretary to Prime Minister, Chief of Staff, Representative of DFAT
Permanent Secretaries, Secretaries and Under Secretaries, Directors and Managers

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me welcome you all to this consultation workshop this morning. Let me also acknowledge the initiative taken by CBSI and the Pacific Financial Inclusion Program (PFIP) to organize this workshop.

This is a very important consultation especially for those of us involved in financial inclusion activities in our country. The focus of this workshop is to assist selected Government Ministries identify linkages between Government's programs, action plans and policies that they administer and implement to the Financial Inclusion agenda that is currently being facilitated and spearheaded by the National Financial Inclusion Taskforce (NFIT).

This consultation is important for **three reasons**.

Firstly, it is part of our efforts to mainstream financial inclusion in the country. One of the discussion sessions this morning will look at the question of *'integrating financial inclusion in government planning and budgeting'* processes. Hopefully, following this consultation financial inclusion will be featured in important Government policy frameworks such as the National Development Strategy, budget, and mid-term development plans. We believe that financial inclusion is a game changer in this country so the more it is included in government policies and programs, the greater contribution it will make to our country's development. And all of you as senior government officials are critical players in this process.

Secondly, it is important to highlight the important role that financial inclusion has played and will continue to play in complementing our efforts to achieve the new UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The new SDGs were launched in September this year in New York by many World Leaders and all UN member states including Solomon Islands have endorsed these SDG's.

These SDGs, especially the task of achieving them in the next 15 years, fall under your respective ministry's areas of responsibilities. Many ministries and departments represented here this morning have a direct role in implementing these SDGs. So it is very important to understand and appreciate the positive linkages that financial inclusion has in progressing some of these SDGs. And that is why this workshop is important. It is expected that at the end of this workshop, positive outcomes and better understanding of how financial inclusion can appropriately contribute towards achieving our National Development Strategies and specifically the DCC Government development priorities will be enhanced.

Lastly, but certainly not the least, the National Financial Inclusion Strategy 2011-2015 that we have been implementing in the last five years will end this year. A lot has been achieved in terms of access and use of new digital delivery channels using agents to deliver financial services around the country. But more work still needs to be done. So this consultation is part of the ongoing efforts that CBSI and PFIP have undertaken to develop the next National Financial Inclusion Strategy 2016-2020. As senior government officials, I encourage you to contribute to this process so that your input will become part of the national strategy that will be put in place for the next five years.

I hope that by the end of this workshop, you would better understand and appreciate the financial inclusion agenda and efforts in this country and how it links to the National Government Programs and policies so that hopefully we will design appropriate policies and mechanisms under a new five-year national financial inclusion strategy to find a way forward to achieving the new UN SDGs and other mandates.

With these few words, ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to officially open this workshop and I wish you all the best in your deliberations.

Thank you.