

Statement on the Military Coup in the Republic of Fiji

The Commonwealth Lawyers Association (CLA) is extremely concerned about recent events in the Republic of Fiji which have resulted in the overthrow of the democratically elected government and the assumption of executive control by the military. By virtue of its membership of the Commonwealth, the Republic of Fiji is committed to the shared fundamental values and principles of the Commonwealth, at the core of which is a shared belief in, and adherence to, democratic principles.

The CLA is a pan-Commonwealth professional association of lawyers and exists to maintain and promote the rule of law throughout the Commonwealth. The membership is made up of representatives from all 53 Commonwealth countries.

The CLA is also one of a number of legal associations, together with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, that developed the *Commonwealth (Latimer House) Principles on the Accountability of and the Relationship between the Three Branches of Government (2003)*. The Principles provide, in accordance with the laws and customs of each Commonwealth country, an effective framework for the implementation by governments, parliaments and judiciaries, of the Commonwealth's fundamental values. The Principles have been endorsed by Commonwealth Heads of Government at their last two meetings and form an integral part of the Commonwealth's fundamental values. Again, as a member of the Commonwealth, the Republic of Fiji has given a commitment to promote democracy and good governance, human rights and the rule of law.

The CLA calls for urgent action and the full restoration of democracy and the rule of law. We urge Commander Bainimarama to restore the democratically elected Qarase government and to facilitate the return of constitutional rule as soon as possible.

The CLA will continue actively to support the legal profession in the Republic of Fiji in their own efforts to uphold the rule of law.



Graeme Mew
President
Commonwealth Lawyers Association
14 December 2006