

SG CLMM Opening Remarks

Monday 9 February, 9:00am, 5 minutes

The Honourable Feleti Penitala Teo, Prime Minister of Tuvalu

The Honourable Dr Viliami Uasike Latu, Deputy Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Tonga

The Honourable Siromi Turaga, Minister for Justice and Acting Attorney-General of the Republic of Fiji

Honourable Ministers,

Attorneys-General,

Excellencies,

Colleagues and Friends,

It is a great honour to welcome you to the Commonwealth Law Ministers Meeting here in Nadi - and my sincere thanks go to the Government and people of Fiji for hosting us with such warmth and generosity.

We meet at a moment of profound global uncertainty.

Across regions and systems, we are living through a period of unprecedented turbulence - political, economic, environmental, and technological.

And around the world, the rule of law is under pressure in ways we have not seen in modern times.

Laws are being bent, or broken, without consequence.

Institutions are tested.

Trust is eroded.

And when the rule of law weakens, it is never abstract. People pay the price.

Inequality deepens.

Democracy frays.

Development stalls.

This is the cost of the rule of force replacing the rule of law.

And it is why closing our eyes to the erosion of standards or the assault on long established norms is no longer an option. Like the growing democratic recession, that is at the heart of the weakening rule of law, if we do not take robust steps to discourage impunity and uphold Commonwealth values, we risk destroying the fabric of our civilisation.

History will judge us by how we respond to this moment.

That is a huge responsibility.

For the Commonwealth, the rule of law is not just a technical concept or a legal tradition.

It is foundational to who we are.

It is enshrined in our Charter, reflected in the Latimer House Principles, and central to our new Strategic Plan.

Because when grounded in human rights, the rule of law becomes something deeply human.

It is what gives a young person a voice in democracy.

A worker dignity and protection at work.

A vulnerable community the right to a healthy environment.

And a citizen confidence that institutions will serve - not silence - them.

Here, the Commonwealth brings a unique strength.

Shared legal traditions.

A common law heritage.

A shared commitment to values of fairness, accountability, and justice.

But strength only matters if it delivers for our people.

That is why this meeting matters.

Over the coming days, you will focus on the most pressing legal challenges of our time - democratic resilience and participation; the responsible use of technology in justice systems; climate change and maritime certainty; access to justice for women, young people, and the most vulnerable.

You will consider practical tools - model laws, model contracts, shared principles - not as theory, but as instruments for delivery.

And you will do so here in the Pacific, where the changing tides we speak of are not metaphor alone, but lived reality.

This meeting in Fiji is about turning shared strength into renewed action.

Action to defend democracy, human rights, and good governance.

Action to build fair and resilient economies.

Action to protect people and the planet through justice.

Action to restore trust between institutions and the people they serve.

By working together, Commonwealth Law Ministers can help turn the rule of law into a true Commonwealth advantage - one that benefits all our citizens.

That is the task before us.

And it is a future we must shape - together.

Thank you, and I wish you a successful and purposeful meeting.