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SOLOMON ISLANDS

POLITICAL PARTIES INTEGRITY ACT 2014

POLITICAL PARTIES INTEGRITY STANDARDS 2014

**Issued by the Political Parties Commission pursuant to section 72 of the
Political Parties Integrity Act 2014**

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1. AUTHORITY AND SCOPE

- 1.1. These Integrity Standards are issued by the Political Parties Commission under the authority of the Political Parties Integrity Act 2014. They are intended to promote good governance and to eradicate political malpractices in the Solomon Islands.

1.2. The Act requires every registered political party to comply with these Integrity Standards. Failure to comply with them can lead to de-registration of the party.

- The constitution, manifesto, policies and strategies of every registered political party must be consistent with them.
- They govern the behaviour of all members and office holders of registered political parties.
- They also govern the behaviour of aspiring candidates, selected candidates and their supporters and agents.

1.3. A political party must:

- (a) take effective steps to ensure that its officers, candidates, members and agents are familiar with and comply with these Standards;
- (b) take all reasonable steps to discourage any type of conduct by its supporters which would, if undertaken by a party official, candidate or member, be in breach of these Standards; and
- (c) not abuse the right to complain about violations of these Standards, nor make false or frivolous complaints.

1.4. In these Standards –

- (a) a reference a “political party” means a political party that is registered under the Act and any group of persons that aspire to be registered as a political party under the Act;
- (b) a reference to “the Act” is to the Political Parties Integrity Act 2014;
- (c) a reference to “the Regulations” is to the Political Parties Integrity Regulations 2014.

2. AIMS AND ACTIVITIES OF POLITICAL PARTIES

2.1. A political party must:

- (a) work towards a political environment conducive to the socio-economic development of Solomon Islands and the prevention of climate change and other threats to the environment;
- (b) advocate for economic and other policies aiming to ensure that all citizens have access to food, clothing, shelter, education, health care and protection of the law;
- (c) respect and promote human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, as well as human dignity, equity, social justice, equality and non-discrimination;
- (d) abide by the Solomon Islands Constitution, the Political Parties Integrity Act 2014, the National Parliament Electoral Provisions Act, and any other written law or regulation governing democratic processes and local governance;
- (e) respect and uphold its own constitution, election rules and selection rules and abide by resolutions for the government of the party, developed and agreed upon in accordance with the Integrity Standards.

2.2. The legitimate activities of a political party include:

- (a) promoting the interests of the party both within and outside existing political structures in Solomon Islands;
- (b) soliciting funding in a transparent manner and engaging in other activities for the furthermore of its objectives;
- (c) identifying suitable candidates from among its members, representative of its membership, to stand for elective public office;

- (d) providing and facilitating education, training and awareness programs for its members, including potential members;
 - (e) promoting and safeguarding the rights of its members including the rights and interests of women, youths and other under-represented groups;
 - (f) promoting and strengthening human rights, dignity and equality in the community generally; and
 - (g) promoting and encouraging transparent and accountable administration and reporting mechanisms in compliance with the Act and any other relevant laws.
- 2.3. A political party should make every effort, whether by a formally constituted grouping or otherwise, to maintain peaceful dialogue with other parties and candidates for discussion of issues of common concern, particularly during an electoral campaign.

3. **DEMOCRACY PRINCIPLES**

- 3.1. Political stability and legitimacy is a subject matter of public interest and welfare.
- 3.2. The legitimacy of a government chosen through democratic multiparty elections requires that voters are able to express their choice –
- (a) freely and without interference, fear, undue influence or bribery; and
 - (b) after being fully informed through an electoral campaign about the ideas, programs, policies and qualities of all political parties and candidates.

3.3. A political party must therefore:

- (a) recognise elections as the expression of the free choice of the voters; and
- (b) peacefully accept the final result of that choice.

3.4. In any matter relating to the election process, a political party must:

- (a) respond to the interests, concerns and needs of the citizens of Solomon Islands;
- (b) respect and uphold democratic processes in competing for political power and in seeking to advocate and to implement its programs and manifesto promises;
- (c) not engage in or condone or collude in activity that endangers or detracts from the livelihood of the citizens of Solomon Islands, or that destroys the natural environment and heritage of the Solomon Islands, including any activity that aggravates global warming;
- (d) promote patriotism and national unity.

3.5. A political party must:

- (a) encourage non-discriminatory and inclusive participation of all party members, on an equal basis, in its own affairs and in governance generally;
- (b) respect, uphold and promote democratic values, principles and practices in its organisation and administration;
- (c) foster good governance, integrity, transparency and accountability in the conduct of its affairs;

- (d) observe the principles of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and of other applicable international and regional instruments ratified by the Solomon Islands.

4. ORGANISATION

4.1. A political party must:

- (a) maintain a membership support base and a membership registration system and a database relating to them;
- (b) endeavour to maintain a presence in all the local government units of Solomon Islands;
- (c) embrace free and reasoned debate as the most appropriate means of reaching decisions and of formulating party policy;
- (d) take decisions at the most local practical level to allow maximum public participation;
- (e) provide freedom of and access to information about party affairs to the extent compatible with the reasonable protection of confidentiality and the efficient conduct of its affairs;
- (f) elect office holders, select candidates and appoint party organs periodically by secret ballot and according to the principle of one party member, one vote;
- (g) include in its internal affairs special temporary measures to allow women and other under-represented groups to achieve effective and proportional representation in candidacies and in party leadership positions; and
- (h) guarantee equal treatment and non-discrimination of its members, as well as among its selected candidates.

5. CAMPAIGNING

5.1. A political party must:

- (a) respect the right of all persons, candidates and registered political parties to participate in the political process, including the right of others to express opposing views in public and in a free media;
- (b) seek to ensure reasonable freedom of access by all parties to all potential voters and to the media; and
- (c) cooperate with other registered political parties in allowing voters to reach their polling centres, without unilaterally influencing the free expression of their choice through inducements.

5.2. A political party, its officials, candidates, members or agents must not:

- (a) harass, bribe or obstruct journalists or news editors in order to influence news coverage in its favour;
- (b) prevent the distribution of handbills and leaflets, and the display of posters, of other parties and candidates;
- (c) deface or destroy the posters of other parties and candidates or disrupt, destroy or frustrate the campaign efforts of any other party;
- (d) prevent any other party from holding rallies, meetings, marches or demonstrations;
- (e) seek to prevent any person from attending the political rallies of another party.

- 5.3. A political party must use its best endeavours to prevent or discourage its supporters from doing anything prohibited by the previous paragraph.
- 5.4. A political party and its candidates must:
- (a) organise and conduct election campaigns in a manner that contributes toward a congenial and peaceful atmosphere during the campaign period, the polling, the counting, and the post-election period; and
 - (b) act at all times with a sense of responsibility and dignity befitting their status.
- 5.5. A person seeking to support a political party in public must avoid using language, in speech or writing, that –
- (a) is inflammatory or falsely defamatory; or
 - (b) threatens or incites hatred or violence in any form against any other person or group of persons.

6. THE ELECTION PROCESS

- 6.1. A political party and its officials, candidates and agents must co-operate with election officials in order to ensure:
- (a) peaceful and orderly polling and counting;
 - (b) freedom for voters to exercise their franchise without being subjected to annoyance, undue influence or obstructions;
 - (c) the safety and security of electoral officials and electoral materials and equipment before, during and after the polls.
- 6.2. A political party must respect and not in any way interfere with the secrecy of the vote.

- 6.3. A political party, its officials, candidates, members, agents or supporters must not:
- (a) procure votes by forcible occupation of polling stations or through illegal activities or through tampering with voting materials.
 - (b) interfere unjustifiably or in bad faith with the duties of election officials or disturb the process of casting or counting of votes;
 - (c) falsely assert to voters that their votes will not be secret;
 - (d) serve or distribute alcohol on polling day and during the 48 hours preceding it;
 - (e) commit or assist in the commission of any other offence under the National Parliament Electoral Provisions Act.
- 6.4. A political party must:
- (a) peacefully submit any grievance against preliminary election results to the courts by way of election petition; and
 - (b) accept and comply with the final decisions of the court.

7. GENERAL CONDUCT

- 7.1. Intimidation or the exercise of undue influence by or on behalf of a political party is unacceptable in any form. A political party must therefore:
- (a) use its best endeavours to ensure that its officials, candidates, members, agents and supporters do not intimidate or unduly influence any person in respect of political or electoral matters at any time;

- (b) publicly oppose violence or threats of violence, and acts of vandalism or public disorder committed or threatened by its officials, candidates, members, agents or supporters; and
- (c) take all reasonable steps to respect the physical safety and property of members of other political parties.

7.2. A political party must instruct its officials, candidates, members, agents and supporters that no firearm, axe, knife or weapon of any kind, including including any traditional weapon, may be brought to any political rally, meeting, march or other demonstration, nor into any polling station or other election administration facility.

8. ABUSE OF PUBLIC RESOURCES

8.1. A political party, its officials, candidates, members agents and supporters, must not:

- (a) abuse a position of power, privilege or influence for electoral campaign purposes, by offering a reward, threatening a penalty, or by any other means; or
- (b) use official State, Provincial, Municipal or other public resources, facilities or personnel, including public media, for campaign purposes, except for those lawfully, transparently and equitably allocated to the political party.

In this paragraph –

- (i) “a position of power, privilege or influence” includes a position of parental, patriarchal, religious, governmental, police, military or traditional authority;
- (ii) “public resources” include vehicles, vessels and means of communication.

- 8.2. The party in power, whether at national or at provincial level, must ensure that no cause is given for any complaint that it has used its official or elected position for the purposes of an election campaign and in particular –
- (a) members of the government must not combine official visits with electioneering and must not make use of public resources, equipment, facilities or personnel for party political purposes in connection with an election, or at any other time;
 - (b) partisan advertisements should not be inserted at the cost of public revenues in newspapers or in other media.
- 8.3. Members of a political party who are standing for election to Parliament, a provincial assembly or any other elective body must not:
- (a) sanction or promise grants or payments out of constituency development funds as part of an election campaign;
 - (b) lay foundation stones of projects or schemes of any kind or make any ad-hoc appointment in Government or public undertakings, which may have the effect or influencing the voters.

9. BRIBERY

- 9.1. A political party must use its best endeavours to ensure that its officials, candidates, members and agents do not offer any moneter or other inducement:
- (a) to persons to vote for or against a particular party or candidate, to to abstain from voting, or to declare or to renounce his or her membership in a party, or to sell their voter identification card;
 - (b) to persons to stand, or not to stand as a candidate, or to withdraw or not to withdraw their candidacies;
 - (c) to procure the support or assistance of any official or civil servant or election administrator to further or to hinder the election of a candidate or party;

- (d) any candidate in an election for Parliament or a provincial assembly to resign from any party or to join any particular party; or
- (e) any elected member of Parliament or of a provincial assembly to renounce his or her party affiliation or independent status, to resign from any party, or to join another party.

10. FINANCIAL INTEGRITY, ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

10.1. A political party must:

- (a) comply with the financial reporting and transparency requirements of the Political Parties Integrity Act and the Regulations;
- (b) use its best endeavours to ensure that its candidates comply with the financial reporting requirements of the National Parliament Electoral Provisions Act;
- (c) notify the Registrar of Political Parties of all bank accounts used by the political party, including bank accounts outside Solomon Islands, as well as accounts held in trust for the direct or indirect benefit of the political party or its agents;
- (d) deposit all donations, whether in cash or otherwise, and including any loans, only into bank accounts duly notified to the Registrar of Political Parties;
- (e) issue receipts for all contributions received, in cash or in kind, including services rendered or procured on its behalf by third parties;
- (f) use contributions to, and funds of the Party only in pursuance and for the furtherance of its objects;
- (g) use direct and indirect public funding only for their legal purposes;

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- (h) comply with auditing procedures and standards; and
- (i) ensure honesty in all accounting and reporting, especially when disclosing the identity and interests of funding sources.

10.2. A political party and its candidates must not:

- (a) accept or use illicit or illegally laundered or acquired funds, or the proceeds of illegal activities;
- (b) accept donations or benefits that are anonymous, or of which the donor's identity cannot be established with certainty;
- (c) accept cash donations above the amount permitted by the Regulations;
- (d) accept donations or benefits from persons or entities whose objectives endanger the general health, welfare and interest of the citizens of Solomon Islands or its natural environment and heritage;
- (e) accept donations or benefits from persons or entities who represent interests that conflict with the economic and security interests of Solomon Islands;
- (f) accept donations or benefits from any person or entity which conducts business with the government of Solomon Islands or its provinces giving rise to a conflict of interest.

10.3. A political party and its candidates must not:

- (a) conceal assets, benefits, funds, contributions, liabilities, property or donations, including loans;
- (b) conceal the true identity of sources of contributions or donations;
- (c) conceal bank accounts or trusts held by or for the benefit of the political party or its agents;

- (d) exceed spending caps;
- (e) obstruct audit procedures or scrutiny by the Registrar of Political Parties.

10.4. Officers and members of a political party must not use funds of the party for personal purposes.

11. LEADERSHIP

11.1. Leaders of a political party (that is to say its officers and its members in Parliament) are expected to –

- (a) act in a corporate manner, rather than as a representative of any particular interest or group;
- (b) have strategic ability and ability to analyse complex data and information and identify the major issues;
- (c) apply intelligence, knowledge and experience to the party's advantage; and
- (d) be an effective contributor to discussions in the organs of the party.

11.2. Leaders are also expected to observe the following principles –

- Selflessness – They should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their families or their friends.
- Integrity – They should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their party duties.
- Objective – In carrying out their functions, leaders should make choices on merit.

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- Accountability – They are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
- Openness – They should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
- Honesty – They have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

11.3. Leaders have an overall duty to promote and support these principles by influence and example.

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Sir Paul Tovua, KCMG, CSI
Chairperson
Political Parties Commission



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