



Press Release

30th August 2007

Working together to eliminate illicit trade

Fiji Islands Revenue and Customs Authority and British American Tobacco Fiji has formalised and strengthened their relationship by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to address the issues of illegitimate tobacco products in Fiji. Such MoU is not a new arrangement, as many countries around the world continue to formalise relations and work towards a common goal of addressing illicit issues.

Illicit trade is a huge global problem and governments are losing billions of dollars annually as a result of weak border controls and weak legislations. Globally, it is estimated approximately \$9 billion dollars in government revenue is lost through the illegal sale and illegal manufacture of tobacco products.

Fiji is a signatory to the Framework Convention of Tobacco Control Treaty (FCTC), which also places significant emphasis on addressing illicit trade issues surrounding tobacco products.

FIRCA acknowledge this fact and as a step up have now further strengthened the existing Anti Illicit Trade Committee by signing the MOU. This committee is led by FIRCA and includes stakeholders like British American Tobacco, Immigration, and Police. The AIT committee also works together with the Fiji Tobacco Control Enforcement Unit to achieve common goal of reducing illicit tobacco products. The key objective of MoU is to further strengthen the relationships between the stakeholders, thus enhancing platform for information sharing, knowledge and expertise to help eliminate illicit trade of tobacco

products in Fiji. Globally, illicit traders are often seen to be linked with criminal syndicates who are involved in money laundering cases, drugs and weapons dealings.

The South Pacific countries are often targeted by the illegitimate traders therefore border control laws and enforcement requires incorporating stringent deterrents to stop illegal activities. The Fiji Customs should be commended for their continuous commitment to address these concerns. Some key initiatives the illicit committee looks at highlighting and recommending to the government for changes includes;

1. Creating awareness on illicit issues so that the general public understand and refrain from using illicit tobacco products.
2. Reviewing the current Customs laws and recommend to the government to adopt stringent laws and measures to deter illicit intentions.
3. Strengthen border control activities through information sharing and better capabilities.
4. Conduct workshop to up skill the stakeholder's capability and knowledge so that they can provide the necessary support to Fiji Customs, Police and Immigration to address illicit issues.

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