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MEDIA STATEMENT

MILLIONS OF $s LOST THROUGH POOR MANAGEMENT – DEPUTY AUDITOR GENERAL

Millions of dollars have been lost through poor management, corruption and fraud within the government financial system.

The Audit Adviser and Deputy Auditor General, Mr Richard Woodgate revealed this today during a presentation on the role of the Office of the Auditor General during the Political Governance Workshop for Members of Parliament and provincial premiers held in Honiara.

Mr Woodgate said this was among a number of findings after the recommencement of the activities of the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) following the arrival of the Regional Assistance Mission in Solomon Islands in mid 2003.

He said other key findings included:

- Widespread non-compliance with the Public Finance and Audit Act
- Serious breakdowns in critical management and accounting system
- Millions of dollars of uncollected arrears in fees and licences

Mr Woodgate said with the assistance from RAMSI, the Office of the Auditor General is now implementing a Capacity Building Program and recommencing the functions of the Office.

“We would like to see the reinstatement of the Auditor General Office as a self sustaining and effective supreme audit office,” Mr Woodgate said.

“What we are striving to achieve is a Parliament that is aware of the importance of the role of the OAG and the Public Accounts Committee to provide transparency and accountability in Government, a Parliament that is well informed through regular tabling of audit reports and a Parliament that values and has confidence in the OAG as a source of advice and assurance on the performance and accountability in the Public Sector.”

Mr Woodgate explained the role of the OAG is to report to the Parliament on financial operations of Government.

However, he pointed out that there is conflict of interest when the Auditor General also has the function of being Secretary to the Public Accounts Committee.
“In my opinion the situation should return to what was before when Parliament had a Public Accounts Committee and a Public Expenditure Committee with one considering the budget before being tabled in Parliament and the other looking at how the government had spent the money approved by Parliament.”

ENDS.

Johnson Honimae
Executive Director.