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American Samoa, Guam Lead Pacific In Governance Indicators

Monday: September 18, 2006

(By Alex Rheeney in Singapore, Pacific Magazine)

American Samoa and Guam lead Pacific Island states in governance indicators released by the World Bank at its annual meetings with the International Monetary Fund in Singapore.

The U.S. territory and Guam have recorded consistent percentile rankings of above 65 for voice and accountability, political stability, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law and control of corruption.

Out of a scale of 100, the two Pacific states have same rankings for voice and accountability (65), political stability (70), government effectiveness (61), rule of law (87) and control of corruption (78) but differed slightly on regulatory quality with Guam ranking 68 over American Samoa's 63.

Samoa was next with percentile rankings above 60 for voice and accountability, government effectiveness, regulatory quality and control of corruption, and had a ranking above 80 for political stability and rule of law.

Fiji scored between 51-55 for voice and accountability, political stability and government effectiveness but had rankings between 36-48 for regulatory quality, rule of law and control of corruption.

While Vanuatu scored highly for government effectiveness (93), it scored between 54-66 for voice and accountability, regulatory quality, rule of law and control of corruption.

Papua New Guinea had the worst record in the region, scoring low percentile rankings for political stability (24), government effectiveness (17), regulatory quality (20), rule of law (19) and control of corruption (13). Its voice and accountability indicator of 45 was the only indicator close to the halfway mark.

The report *The new Governance Matters 2006: Worldwide Governance Indicators* surveys over 200 countries and was based on hundreds of variables and compilation of more than 120,000 responses from citizens, experts and enterprises worldwide and distilled from 30 underlying sources.

Daniel Kaufmann, World Bank Institute director (global governance) and co-author of the report, said good governance was gaining prominence around the world as being crucial to improved living standards.

He said governance problems were not exclusive to developing nations and pointed out that non-OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries such as Slovenia, Chile, Botswana and Estonia scored better in rule of law and control of corruption than industrialised countries Greece and Italy.

"Good governance is becoming widely recognized by government reformers, citizens, domestic enterprises, aid donors and foreign investors around the world as crucial to improved living standards. Governments in a number of countries are implementing transparency reforms, such as procurement, asset disclosure, and in financial management, and some are also giving more voice to their citizens and the media. These reforms can translate into improved governance ratings and into improved aid effectiveness and poverty alleviation," he said.

Voice and accountability measured political and civil and human rights, political stability measured the likelihood of

violence associated with politics, government effectiveness looked at the competence of the bureaucracy, regulatory quality measured incidences of market-unfriendly policies, rule of law was based on the quality of contract enforcement, the police and courts while control of corruption measured the abuse of public office for personal gain.

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