



STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2025

A transparently
modern, inclusive and
efficient Parliament.



STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2025 - PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES
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P.O. Box 13 – Rarotonga – Cook Islands

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STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2025

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OUR VISION

A transparently modern, inclusive and efficient parliament.

OUR MISSION

A parliament that effectively, efficiently and transparently represents the people of the Cook Islands, legislates and scrutinizes the Executive; and enables the People of the Cook Islands to observe and participate in the country's governance and development process.

OUR CORE VALUES

A competent team of professional staff proficiently engaged in the efficient delivery of support services to members of Parliament based on the core values of:

1. Cooperation
2. Encouragement
3. Fairness and consistency
4. Honesty and trust
5. Professionalism
6. Respect.

FOREWORD BY THE SPEAKER



HON. TAI TURA
Speaker of Parliament

Kia orana.

The Parliament of the Cook Islands is constituted under Part III of the Constitution to make national laws, supervise the spending of public money, and scrutinize government activities.

In my capacity as Speaker of Parliament, I am most delighted and honoured to present the *Parliament of the Cook Islands Strategic Plan 2021-2025*.

This is a historic and important document for the Cook Islands as it is the first ever Strategic Plan developed for Parliament. It outlines the strategic objectives we have identified to help Parliament realize its full potential and better achieve its vision of a modern, inclusive and transparent parliament that fulfils its constitutional duties and effectively serves the people of the Cook Islands.

The mission of this new plan is to foster a parliament that represents all citizens, legislates and scrutinizes the Executive in an effective, efficient and transparent manner, and enables Cooks Islanders to observe and participate in the country's governance process and development decisions amidst the demands and challenges of these changing times.

With this plan, I am confident that Parliament will grow to be a high performing Constitutional Institution, competently serving the members and in turn the people of the Cook Islands over the years to come.

In conclusion, I wish to thank the UNDP Pacific Office and the Government of New Zealand for the financial support in engaging Mr Jean-Raphael Giuliani to guide the development of this plan and further thank all my staff who contributed so readily to its fine-tuning.

Meitaki maata e kia manuia.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Tai Tura'.

Hon Tai Tura
Speaker of Parliament

INTRODUCTION BY THE CLERK



TANGATA VAINERERE
Clerk of Parliament

Kia Orana.

I am pleased to join the Hon. Speaker in introducing this pioneering roadmap that will translate the vision of Parliament into reality.

The aim of the plan is to set out the direction, intention and activities of Parliament over the five years period from 2021 to 2025 and beyond.

This plan is a clear and compelling statement of what Parliament wishes to pursue during the plan period.

It describes in more detail how we aim to meet our priorities and allows us to monitor progress towards them. It will inform the development of Parliaments Business Plan for the same period and also its annual work plan.

The strategic objectives demonstrate a strong commitment to the development and consolidation of efficient support services for Members of Parliament so they can perform their law-making, representation and oversight functions more effectively.

The plan also serves as a framework for Parliaments internal decision making and operations to support the achievement of its mission and make progress towards its vision. It is designed to assist Parliament build its capacity to discharge its duties while at the same time taking into account the ongoing development and strengthening of the Parliamentary Services which will assume the lead role in implementing the Strategic Plan.

To ensure better effectiveness in the delivery of our programmes and activities, the implementation roadmap articulates comprehensive implementation and monitoring strategies to build on the direction of the strategic plan, setting out specific tasks, activities, responsibilities, and targets for the plan period.



Tangata Vainerere
Clerk of Parliament

1. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: A Parliament that represents the People of the Cook Islands in a more inclusive manner

Parliament is the pivotal institution of modern representative democracy. Through the election process, the People of the Cook Islands elects members of Parliament to represent their interests at the national level, discuss and debate matters of concern to the community and ensure that public institutions are adequately tackling the challenges that the country faces.

It is essential that adequate and efficient mechanisms are developed and implemented to ensure that the people of the Cook Islands fully understand the role and functioning of Parliament, that they are consulted and engaged in parliamentary work, in a way that also systematically includes the most vulnerable members of the community.

1.1 Providing timely and adequate information on Parliament to the constituents of the Cook Islands

1.1.1 Civic education and public information on parliamentary work

General awareness and understanding of the institutional system of the Cook Islands should be strengthened among the public. The Parliament aims at developing programs, knowledge products and information material on public institutions, the distribution and separation of powers between Executive, Legislative and Judiciary, with a strengthened focus on the role of Parliament.

Schools will be more specifically targeted, as civic education should start from an early age. The Parliament will build on existing activities aiming at informing the public on current parliamentary work, such as the “Speaker’s debates” on key development issues; it will also strengthen its presence on social media in order to convey reports on ongoing parliamentary activities and work.

1.1.2 A fully open and transparent Parliament

Parliament is the house of the People and as such, the principle of full transparency should always guide its activities and functioning. All documents, legislation, motions, reports, agendas and working papers are to be made easily accessible to anyone who has an interest to be informed. Proceedings are public, and parliament’s sittings are already radio-broadcasted; Parliament will strengthen its use of modern information and communication technology (ICT) to ensure that they are also live-streamed through a revamped internet website.

Accurately and efficiently recording proceedings in Parliament for record keeping purposes, public information and to assist Members of Parliament and staff with their work is a central requirement. Parliament will aim to ensure that a Daily Hansard of every plenary and committee meeting will be

available by a clearly stipulated time before the next meeting. The Hansard report will be published within the same timeframe on the Parliament's website.

Parliament will aim at making its work accessible to the largest number of inhabitants of the Cook Islands. The Constitution provides that discussions and debates can take place in both Maori and English, and that bills must also be available in both languages. However, proceedings must be recorded in English only. Using information and communication technologies, Parliament will develop innovative solution to extend the accessibility of records to all resident of the Cook Islands.

1.1.3 Communication strategy / engaging with the media

Parliament aims at developing a strong partnership with the media to facilitate and increase accurate, neutral and timely journalistic reporting on the work of Parliament. The function of a communication officer will be created within the parliamentary Secretariat, with the task to develop a sound communication strategy, engage with journalists and strengthen institutional relations with traditional media platforms (newspapers, radio, TV) as well as modern media – social networks, blogs, websites etc.

1.2 A parliament that efficiently engages with stakeholders

1.2.1 A timely and efficient response to citizens' expectations

Parliament will aim at facilitating a proactive engagement of the civil society and other external stakeholders. In order to interact effectively with Parliament, stakeholders must not only be adequately informed about the role of parliament and its current work, but also precisely understand its working processes, in order to assess when and how best to engage with the institution. Parliament will aim at developing dedicated training programmes for stakeholders such as Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and will develop and maintain an updated network (and related database) of stakeholders' representatives at both national and community level. Guidelines for MPs and staff members on engagement with the civil society will be developed, and the secretariat will strengthen its internal capacity and resources on community engagement.

1.2.2 A parliament that actively engages with stakeholders

Transparency and openness come hand in hand with new expectations; providing a timely answer to requests expressed by the citizens is essential to create – and maintain – trust between the institution and the constituents. Parliament commits to improve the timeliness of its responses to requests for information made in the framework of the Official Information Act of 2008, which requires from public institutions to answer specific requests for information within 20 days of reception. The secretariat will strengthen the capacity of its staff and develop dedicated operating procedures to comply with this legal requirement.

1.3 An inclusive parliament for the People of the Cook Islands

The parliament as an institution will work at actively engaging with segments of the population which traditionally suffer from a deficit of representation at the national level, such as women, the youth, or people living in remote communities; it will develop new frameworks of action to strengthen participation of these population groups in the national governance process.

1.3.1 Gender mainstreaming and inclusion of women

The Parliament of the Cook Islands is committed to fight discriminations based on gender, and actively promotes gender equality. As such, it will work at the ‘gender neutralization’ of its own internal rules – the parliament’s Standing Orders; it will develop dedicated communication tools targeting women; and it will establish the practice that the selection to committees’ membership and overseas delegations will follow a gender-sensitive approach.

The parliamentary Secretariat will also provide a specific attention to the support provided to female MPs, in particular when they are tackling specific challenges linked to gender. In that sense, the Cook Islands Women Parliamentarians Caucus, created during the previous term of Parliament, will be re-established; and its workplan with regular meetings will be developed.

1.3.2 Inclusion of youth as the Nation’s future

Parliament recognizes that the future of the Cook Islands lies in the hands of its youth. As such, it will aim at developing a specific approach to communicate with the youth of the Cook Islands, raising awareness on public institutions and their work, and strengthening their contribution to parliamentary work.

It will also promote the development of a parliamentary internship programme with the combined aim to bring new skills and talents to the pool of expertise of the parliamentary secretariat, and to promote the development of new professional vocations for the parliamentary services.

Parliament will also build on existing initiatives, such as the Cook Islands Youth Parliament, to build bridges between the institution and the youth and facilitate the exchange of ideas between youth and with MPs on ongoing key development issues. The consultation of youth organizations’ representatives in the course of parliamentary work, particularly during consultations processes during legislation or oversight work, will be facilitated.

1.3.3 Engaging remote communities

Like other Pacific Islands Countries, the Cook Islands face the challenge of being a small island nation, with a relatively small population scattered over a large oceanic area. The lack of access to simple, affordable transportation and communication means between islands groups are affecting citizens' lives and are particularly impacting their capacity to contribute to national governance processes.

Parliament will aim at strengthening the involvement of remote communities in parliamentary work; these communities, including inhabitants from the Northern Islands Group, will be systematically involved in the consultation processes on new draft bills.

In parallel to traditional consultation involving physical travels of MPs, Parliament will aim at developing new tools and methods of consultation through the use of modern information and communication technology – such as the development of a “Virtual Akarau Vānanga”.

2. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: A Parliament that legislates more efficiently through more inclusive processes

2.1 Increase the contribution of Parliament to the improvement of the Cook Islands' legislative framework

Article 39 of the Constitution of the Cook Islands provides that Parliament has the power to make laws “for the peace, order and good government of the Cook Islands”. It is one of its key constitutional mandates. Parliament will therefore work at improving its capacity to discuss, amend and vote legislation in the best interest of the People.

2.1.1 High-level legislative skills for MPs and staff

Members of Parliament have a crucial role in analyzing, debating, amending and passing new legislation. In order to be able to fulfil their mandate, MPs require a broad understanding of the whole legislation process in the Cook Islands, and an in-depth knowledge of law-making procedure within parliament; their work also needs the adequate substantial support on specific policy areas, especially in terms of policy research and access to information and knowledge resources.

The secretariat will aim at providing a stronger support to MPs in these areas, as well as expand its own capabilities regarding in-house research, drafting and legal counselling skills.

2.1.2 Improve the Cook Islands' legislative process

Parliament will aim at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of its internal processes related to law-making, especially at the occasion of the amendment of its Standing Orders. It is essential that Members have enough time to analyze and discuss new legislation to ensure that its objectives, and

means to attain them, are aligned with the citizens' interests and represent the best choices for the country.

Ultimately, all draft bills will go through committee stage – either through a single Bill committee to be created or through select committees, allowing for the substantial scrutiny on the draft bill and the appropriate report to Parliament, before it will be debated in plenary sitting.

The secretariat will ensure that MPs benefit from an adequate and timely information on bills tabled in Parliament, as soon as technically possible once the drafts are submitted to the Clerk. The secretariat will develop solution based on ICT tools at its disposal to facilitate the MPs' early information.

All members of Parliament will also receive an adequate substantive information on the different bills and the related policy area before these are discussed in Parliament, building on current initiatives – such as the “workshops on bills” – with the support of external partners. At medium to long term, a sustainable model will be developed ensuring that Parliament can provide this support to MPs without the use of external resources.

2.1.3 Consolidate the country's legislative framework

Parliament will work at consolidating the current legislative framework of the Cook Islands. The legislation has not been consolidated since the country's independence, and an important work must be done in this regard, to ensure laws are more accessible and readable by all inhabitants of the Cook Islands.

This consolidation exercise will also need to include work on the Constitution, in order to reflect the amendments considered to the Standing Orders; the same will apply to the three legislative Assembly acts from 1968-69.

2.2 Strengthen parliamentary planning – Setting-up of a parliamentary schedule

Quality legislative work requires that MPs can spend enough time working on draft bills, either working in committees, consulting with their constituents, and discussing and voting in plenary. Travels from and to constituencies can be challenging considering the geographical context of the Cook Islands; and MPs need to attend parliamentary work in Rarotonga, with logistical implications. Furthermore, MPs, especially government members, are often travelling overseas on duty, in which case quorum regulations can affect the capacity of parliament to meet.

Parliament will aim at developing a regular parliamentary schedule, such as a sitting calendar, in order to facilitate the regularity of meetings, and improve the capacity of MPs to plan ahead their attendance

to sittings in Rarotonga. In parallel, parliament will aim at developing methods, based on international good practices such as the proxy vote, which will help to limit the impact of members' absence on the parliament's capacity to sit.

2.2.1 Systematic public consultations on new bills, including in the outer islands

Consulting the people of the Cook Island during the legislative process is essential, in order to guarantee that constituents are adequately informed on the goals, substance and background of new draft bills, and that their concerns and interests are taken into account when legislators are developing and improving the nation's legal framework.

Parliament's current working processes provides for public consultations on draft bills, especially when these are addressing complex, technical or sensitive matters which require a more comprehensive effort of explanation.

Parliament aims at systematically conducting public consultations on new bills, on all islands, so that all communities can get involved in the legislative process; to that end, the current resources allocated to consultation will be adequately increased.

Parliament will also provide substantial information on draft bills in advance of consultations, among other by sending comprehensive and substantive explanatory notes prior to meetings to citizens and stakeholders; it will also promote the submission of written positions and comments during the consultation process.

3. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: A strengthened efficiency of the parliamentary oversight of the Executive

3.1 A more robust parliamentary contribution to Public Financial Management in the Cook Islands

The work on the budget is historically one of the core functions of Parliament – an institution that has been originally developed to ensure that no tax could be levied without the agreement of the tax payers, through their representatives. Parliament will aim at strengthening its contribution to the development of frameworks and policies that ensure accountability and transparency in the way public money is used in the Cook Islands.

3.1.1 Reform of the MFEM Act

A review of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management Act 1995-96 (MFEM Act) and the Parliament Standing Orders is planned during the legislative term. This review will notably aim at

strengthening the role of Parliament during the national budget cycle, which will include a new role for the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) in exerting scrutiny during the budget adoption stage (*ex ante* review of the appropriation bill) as well as during and after budget implementation (*ex post* review of public expenditures).

Furthermore, the reform will aim at simplifying the institutional framework of public financial management in the Cook Islands, especially with regard to institutions and bodies involved in the review of the Cook Islands Audit Office reports. Parliament's Public Account Committee, as a body composed of elected members of Parliament, elected by and accountable to the constituents, should be at the core of the accountability mechanisms developed.

3.1.2 Automatic review by PAC of annual reports (ministries, agencies, SOEs)

As a mandatory obligation under the MFEM act, public entities such as ministries, agencies or SOEs are reporting every year on their expenditure of public money. These reports, submitted to the Speaker of Parliament, are usually exhaustive and require an in-depth technical review exerted by a dedicated body.

Parliament will aim at systematically referring all submitted annual reports to the Public Accounts Committee, who will report back to Parliament within a stipulated timeframe. The parliamentary Secretariat will therefore provide the adequate support to the Public Accounts Committee to undertake the review of the reports, will work at establishing good working relationship with the Office of the Auditor General, and will also develop programmes with external partners aiming at developing the committee's members skills and knowledge on financial and budgetary issues.

3.2 A more efficient parliamentary scrutiny exerted by a parliament with “teeth”

Parliament is unique in being the only institution with a political mandate from the people to monitor the management of the State by the government¹. The Parliament of the Cook Islands will make a more comprehensively use of the tools at its disposition to scrutinize the Executive and will work at improving its internal mechanisms ensuring that scrutiny is also followed by concrete actions.

3.2.1 A better use of the tools at the disposition of Parliament: questions addressed to government

Questions to government are a powerful tool in the hand of members of parliament members to receive clarification on any matter related to public affairs and public policy. Parliament will work at improving the use of the daily question time.

¹ See “Global Parliamentary Report 2017 – parliamentary oversight: Parliament's power to hold government to account”, Inter-Parliamentary Union and United Nations Development Programme, 2017.

In the general context of the Standing Orders review, parliament will clarify and improve the procedural framework related to questions addressed to government; it will also strengthen the capacity of its Secretariat staff to manage the procedural aspects of questions asked by members (especially regarding the support to the Speaker when assessing the admissibility of a question or a supplementary question, or the need to provide a period of notice when the question requires substantial research to be answered).

Parliament will also aim at developing internal research capacities within the secretariat, in order to provide technical and substantive support to members when they are drafting their questions.

3.2.2 Select committees will be used as a tool to strengthen the oversight role

Parliament has the power to refer any matter to a select committee, with instructions to inquire into the matter at stake and report back to Parliament. During its work, the committee has the power to call for public submissions, hear witnesses, request for documents and evidence, etc. This is a powerful tool to obtain in-depth information on issues of public's interest. Depending on the findings of the inquiry, the chairman of the select committee has the power to move a motion requesting government to take any necessary action as highlighted in the committee's report.

Over the medium to long term, Parliament will aim at establishing at least three select committees every year with the task to conduct such inquiries. With the support of external partners, it will develop capacity building programmes for MPs and staff on processes specifically related to the oversight role of parliament and parliamentary inquiries. Parliament will also develop standard operating procedures on the work of select committees, aiming at improving and harmonizing the support provided by the Secretariat to committee members, especially during inquiries.

3.2.3 Respond efficiently to petitions through parliamentary inquiries

Constituents have the right to address petitions to Parliament, highlighting a public or personal matter of concern or asking for specific actions to be taken. Once the petition is presented by a member to Parliament it is tabled and referred to a select committee that will inquire into the subject.

Parliament will aim at systematically refer all petitions to a select committee tasked to investigate and report back to Parliament.

3.2.4 A systematic follow up of the oversight activities

Oversight activities undertaken by Parliament, in the form of questions addressed to government or inquiries for instance, become significant when they are followed by concrete effects: either a comprehensive response from the executive on a request for factual explanation, or a corrective

action taken by the government aiming at a policy change, or tackling a specific concern expressed by the constituents.

Parliament will therefore develop internal working processes aiming at efficiently tracking oversight activities undertaken, and responses given by the Executive, in the form of organized information made available by the secretariat to the members of Parliament, together with additional substantive research on the issue, for their further action. In the medium to long term, this information will also be made available to the public in a user-friendly format.

4. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4: Improved parliamentary structures and processes

4.1 MPs and staff are better equipped to undertake their roles – the capacity strengthening

For Parliament to be able to fulfil its constitutional mandate, it is essential that its members, and the Secretariat staff working in their support, have a full knowledge and understanding of the mandate of parliament, of the parliamentary processes as well as of the substance of parliamentary work.

4.1.1 MPs are better informed and trained on their mandate and issues of national interest

Parliament will continue developing comprehensive induction programmes for MPs on the institutional system of the Cook Islands, the country's legal framework, the mandate of Parliament, the Code of conduct for officials and political leaders, etc.

It will also develop advanced capacity strengthening activities in the course of the parliamentary term on parliamentary procedure and processes – such as the processes related to legislation or oversight already mentioned – as well as on key development issues of particular relevance for the Cook Islands or the Pacific region.

Parliament will also develop information activities and material on the privileges and remuneration of members, especially in relation to integrity matters and the Code of Conduct.

4.1.2 The secretariat is better structured, equipped and trained to support the work of MPs

Parliament aims at continuing the development of a fully functional secretariat that efficiently support MPs in their work. A functional review of the Secretariat will be performed, aiming at the re-organization of its departments by the end of the parliamentary term, and the inclusion of new services supporting the work of members and committees.

Research and library services will be created, as well as a legal counselling unit. A new organogram will be drafted, aligned with the objectives of the Strategic plan. A comprehensive training plan for the staff will be put in place, in partnership with sister parliaments and international partners.

4.2 Simplified and updated parliamentary procedures

In order to function efficiently, Parliament needs a clear and functional procedural framework, easily understandable by members, secretariat staff and the public. The Standing Orders review which has been launched during the previous term will be finalized at short to medium term.

4.2.1 A sovereign parliament: the administrative and financial autonomy of Parliament

Administrative and financial autonomy of Parliament is inherent to the concept of separation of Powers, which guarantees a governance system where institutions are kept accountable. Parliament will work in close collaboration with the Executive to develop the legal framework that will establish its autonomy, and on the other hand will work at strengthening its own internal capacities to ensure its full ability to comply with the procedural, financial and reporting requirements stemming from institutional autonomy.

4.2.2 Appropriation of its own budget by Parliament

In the current budget process, Parliament has no power to determine its own annual budget, which is set based on a process guided by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM). In close collaboration with the MFEM and relevant departments of the Executive, Parliament will work at developing a more participatory process in which Members and the parliamentary Secretariat have a stronger role in establishing the priorities of Parliament's annual budget, in the form of annual financing plan, which will also reflect the priorities of the Strategic Plan once it is adopted.

The Secretariat will be adequately capacitated, in terms of human resources and skills, in order to fulfill all reporting and accounting duties – especially the timely drafting of comprehensive annual reports.

4.2.3 Parliament as a fully-fledged institution – an efficient and accountable parliamentary management

The parliamentary Secretariat needs qualified staff able to perform financial-accounting activities of the Parliament and of the parliamentary Secretariat, but also in order to ensure accounting inventory of the Parliament's assets, buildings and properties. Dedicated staff will deal with management of financial resources, including planning, implementing and monitoring the budget execution.

The Secretariat will also develop clear and harmonized internal working methods, notably a set of Standard Operating Procedures, and will work at developing a comprehensive accounting

management system able to generate detailed analytics for transactions, costs, assets and liabilities. The parliamentary Secretariat will also develop comprehensive training programmes for its staff on parliamentary corporate management, in collaboration with sister parliaments and international organizations.

4.3 Development of parliamentary infrastructures

4.3.1 Towards the e-Parliament

Modern parliaments are progressively moving towards the “e-Parliament”, in which the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is becoming increasingly prominent. Having systems and standards for managing documents in digital formats is an essential element for improving Parliament’s operations and also in increasing transparency and accessibility, aligned with Strategic Objective 1.

The Parliament will develop and implement an e-Parliament Strategy aiming at utilizing the latest technology in order to ensure working processes and procedures in Parliament become more effective. The Parliament will develop internal networks, such as an intranet system for Parliament staff and Members, to facilitate the sharing of documentation and improving work processes; it will finalize the development of its new website and ensure the full digitalization of its parliamentary and administrative archives; new buildings within the Parliament complex will be networked and fully equipped with the necessary ICT hardware; and the Parliament will progressively switch to a fully paperless parliament.

The provision of hardware and systems needs to be complemented with a continuing programme of professional development for Parliament staff and Members in terms of utilizing the latest ICT in their work.

4.3.2 A new Parliament House for the People

The Parliament of the Cook Islands is currently located in a building complex which does not allow to provide adequate working spaces to the Members and caucuses, limits the Parliament capacity to welcome the public for visits or during sessions and meetings, and hinders the Secretariat ability to develop its services in support to the Members. The parliamentary Secretariat has therefore started to work on a concept for a new Parliament House, which would provide Parliament with the required physical environment to implement the Strategic Plan.

At short term, the concept, including a resources mobilization strategy, will be finalized in close collaboration with Members, the Executive and the international community.

4.4 Engaging with international partners

4.4.1 Strengthening of inter-parliamentary relations

The Parliament of the Cook Islands recognizes the importance of inter-parliamentary cooperation. The Parliament is committed to strengthen its partnerships with sister legislatures in the Pacific region and beyond, and its participation to regional and global parliamentary networks, such as the ones developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) or the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). These networks effectively contribute to the exchanges of parliamentary practices, which in turn support the development of more efficient and effective legislatures, which are better capacitated to answer to the People's expectations.

The Parliament of the Cook Islands will especially explore new avenues of cooperation with regional (Pacific Island Countries) and sub-regional (Polynesian countries) parliamentary partners, and work at strengthening its already vibrant exchanges and relations with the Parliament of New Zealand, its twin Parliament in Australia – the Parliament of Western Australia, the Parliament of Fiji, the Parliament of Niue, the Parliament of the Solomon Islands, etc.

4.4.2 Active mobilization of resources for parliamentary development

The Parliament welcomes the close cooperation and support given by its international partners. The Parliament of the Cook Islands recognizes that in order to deliver this ambitious but realistic Strategic Plan, the continuing engagement of the international community will be essential. The Parliament is confident that partners will continue to acknowledge the important work undertaken and will support the specific efforts of Parliament in implementing this Strategic Plan, that will lead to the development of a more effective, efficient and relevant Parliament to serve the people of the Cook Islands.

The Parliament will therefore actively engage with traditional donors of parliamentary development, such as New Zealand, Australia, the European Union and Japan, but also potential new donors to fund the implementation of the Strategic Plan; the Parliament will also remain engaged to the current support frameworks implemented by the United Nations agencies, especially the United Nations Development Programme, which will provide technical support during the Strategic plan implementation.

5. Implementation, monitoring and evaluation framework

This Strategic Plan outlines key areas of strategic development that the Parliament of the Cook Islands will prioritize in the period 2019-2025.

While this Strategic Plan is ambitious, the reality of the impact of the plan and progress made towards achieving the Parliament's Vision will lie in the need for effective implementation. For this reason, an implementation Roadmap, outlining how and when the activities outlined in this Strategic Plan will be implemented, has been developed with the Plan.

The challenges of long-term planning and implementation in a legislative setting can be unpredictable due to the nature of political events; the implementation Roadmap should therefore be seen as a flexible document that is a guide, and that can be amended to better overcome any implementation challenges that may arise in the period.

The Parliament will draw from the Strategic Plan and implementation Roadmap to produce an annual workplan for Parliament that will reflect the Parliament's Strategic Objectives. The annual workplans will include specific indicators of success for actual activities.

Overall responsibility for the implementation and delivery of the Strategic Plan lies with the Speaker. The Clerk is responsible for administering the Strategic Plan and for reporting on a regular basis to the Speaker on the overall progress. An annual written report outlining progress made in implementing the Strategic Plan will be developed by the Secretariat on behalf of the Speaker; this annual report will be tabled in Parliament.

Annex 1: ROADMAP – STRATEGIC PLAN OF THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COOK ISLANDS 2021-2025

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: A Parliament that represents the People of the Cook Islands in a more inclusive manner			
Action	Implementation	Timeframe	Priority
Development of programmes and material for the Public, (esp. schools) on Parliament	Speaker, Clerk, Hansard, MPs	(Year)	(2019 Short, 2020-2021 Medium or 2022-2025 Long term)
1 Speaker's Debate organized every year	Deputy Clerk and Speaker's Executive Assistance	Early October 2021, Sep/Oct 2022, Sep/Oct 2023, Sep/Oct 2024, Sep/Oct 2025	Medium
Presence on Social networks (Website/Facebook)	Deputy Clerk, Administration & Financial Support Officer, Technical Operations Coordinator, Sub-Editor of Debates	Immediately after each activity	High
Finalization of new Website	Technical Operations Coordinator and Director of Te Araveka	Ongoing	2021
Timely publication of Hansard report	Editor and Sub-Editor of Debates	Ongoing	High
Develop solutions to address the language issue	Chief Translator	Ongoing	High
Fill the position of a Communication Officer	Clerk and Deputy Clerk	2021	High
Development of a communication strategy	Communication Officer	2021-2022	High
Develop a network among Civil Society Organisation (CSOs)	Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Communication Officer	Ongoing	High
Guidelines for MPs and staff on engaging with Civil Society	Clerk and Deputy Clerk	Ongoing	Medium
Comply with requirements under OIA	Clerk and Deputy Clerk	Ongoing	High
Standing Orders for Gender Neutral	Standing Orders Committee	2021-2022	High
Gender-sensitive approach for overseas delegations developed	Parliamentary Secretariat	2021-2025	Medium
Cook Islands Women Parliamentarians Caucus re-launched	Deputy Clerk	2021-2022	Medium
Development of dedicated communication tools targeting women	Communication Officer	2021-2022	Medium
Provide specific support to Women MPs	Parliamentary Secretariat	Ongoing	High
Development of parliamentary internship programmes (Tai A Kiwa Programme)	Clerk and Deputy Clerk	2021-2025	Medium

Involvement of Youth into the work of parliament	Administration & Financial Support Officer, Technical Operations Coordinator, Sub-Editor of Debate	2021-2025	Medium
Systematic involvement of remote communities in consultation processes	Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Committee Secretary	Ongoing	Medium
Development of a “Virtual Akarau Vananga”	Technical Operations Coordinator	2021-2025	Medium

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: A Parliament that legislates more efficiently through more inclusive processes

Action	Implementation	Timeframe	Priority
Training programme for MPs and staff on legislation developed	Clerk and Deputy Clerk	2021-2025	Medium
Review of legislative procedure finalized	Speaker, Clerk and Deputy Clerk	2021-2022	High
Creation of a research and library unit	Clerk and Deputy Clerk	2021-2022	Medium
All bills go through committee stage	Clerk and Deputy Clerk	Ongoing	High
Bills are transmitted to Members prior to being tabled through ICT solutions	Chamber Clerk	Ongoing	High
All Members receive adequate information and background on substance and objectives of bills	Clerk and Deputy Clerk	Ongoing	High
Consolidation of the CI legislative framework finalized	Clerk and Deputy Clerk	Ongoing	High
Parliamentary schedule set up	Speaker, Clerk and Deputy Clerk	2021-2025	High
Resources allocated for systematic public consultations in the outer islands	Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Committee Secretariat	2021-2025	High
Comprehensive explanatory notes on bills sent prior to consultations	Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Chamber Clerk	2021-2025	High

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: A strengthened efficiency of the parliamentary oversight of the Executive

Action	Implementation	Timeframe	Priority
Contribution of Parliament to MFEM Act review in order to strengthen the role of PAC	Speaker, Clerk and Deputy Clerk	2021-2023	High

Automatic review of financial annual reports by PAC	Speaker, Clerk and Deputy Clerk	Ongoing	High
Training programmes for MPs and staff on financial and budgetary issues developed	Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Corporate Services	2021-2025	High
Review of the procedural framework on questions addressed to government	Standing Orders Committee, Clerk, Deputy Clerk, Committee Secretary	2021-2022	High
Strengthen the capacity of staff to provide support to Members on questions	Clerk and Deputy Clerk	Ongoing	High
3 select committees created every year to inquire into matters of public policy	Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Committee Secretariat	2021-2025	High
Systematically create a select committee to look into petitions submitted	Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Committee Secretariat	2021-2025	High
Tracking process for oversight activities put in place	Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Committee Secretariat	2021-2022	High
Tracking of oversight activities available to public	Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Committee Secretariat	Ongoing	High

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4: Improved parliamentary structures and processes			
Action	Implementation	Timeframe	Priority
Long term capacity strengthening plan developed for MPs and staff (2 plans)			
Conduct Induction Program for MPs	Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Manager, Corporate Services	2021/22	High
Conduct Awareness Program for MPs on Code of Conduct	Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Manager, Corporate Services	2021	High
Produce a Brochure on MPs privileges and remuneration	Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Manager, Corporate Services	late-2022	Medium
Conduct basic IT training for Pa Enea MPs	Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Manager, Corporate Services	Ongoing	High
Conduct Staff Development program	Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Manager, Corporate Services	Ongoing	High
Functional review of the current staffing finalized			
Conduct review of Human Resource requirements	Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Manager, Corporate Services	2021	High
New organogram developed			
Revise Org Chart to reflect HR needs	Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Manager, Corporate Services	2021	High
Creation of a legal counsel unit			
Conduct a scoping exercise	Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Manager, Corporate Services	2021	Medium
Budgetary autonomy granted to Parliament			
Dialogue to be initiated with MFEM	Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Manager, Corporate Services	2022	High
Secretariat fulfils its managerial, reporting and auditing obligations			

Introduce efficiency processes into Parliament Administration	Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Manager, Corporate Services	Ongoing (annually)	High
Parliament Annual Reports to include Audit Management and IPSAS Reports	Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Manager, Corporate Services	Sept 2021; Sept 2022; Sept 2023; Sept 2024	High
Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on parliamentary corporate management are put in place			
Upgrade Parliaments Personnel Policy	Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Manager, Corporate Services	2021	High
Develop Manual of Operations		2021/22	High
Improve Administrative Notices system	Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Manager, Corporate Services	2021	High
Accounting management systems are developed			
Migrate financial transactions to FMIS	Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Manager, Corporate Services	2021	High
Assets management systems are developed			
Develop a customised user-friendly Assets Management System	Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Manager, Corporate Services	2021	High
Conduct annual review of assets	Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Manager, Corporate Services	2021; 2022; 2023; 2024	High
An e-parliament strategy is developed			
Produce e-parliament strategy	Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Manager, Corporate Services	2022	Medium
The concept for the new Parliament House, including the resource mobilization strategy, is developed			
Develop a concept for additional Office Space for Staff	Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Manager, Corporate Services	2022	Medium
Develop a Resource Mobilization Strategy	Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Manager, Corporate Services	2022	High