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REFERENCE: FHRC

3 October 2007

Dear Dr. Shameem,

I hereby acknowledge receipt of your letters and reports, dated 29 August and 26 September 2007 respectively. I would like to inform you that, in accordance with your request, I have transmitted your reports to the International Coordination Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (ICC), in my Office's capacity as the secretariat for the ICC.

I sincerely regret that the Fiji Human Rights Commission is no longer a part of the ICC and has decided not to pursue re-joining that important body at its up-coming meeting in October. I welcome the public comments you made this week underscoring the need for the Fiji Human Rights Commission to play its independent role. It is my deep hope that the Fiji Human Rights Commission will again restore its status in the ICC and rejoin the family of national institutions upholding the international standards applicable to national human rights institutions (The Paris Principles). This would ensure more confidence and credibility in the institution with respect to the current human rights challenges in Fiji. In this context, I note the public comments you made this week underscoring the need for the Fiji Human Rights Commission to play its independent role.

It has come to my attention that recently there have been references in the media stating that the Fiji Human Rights Commission had investigated and prepared a report on human rights allegations in the removal of the former Prime Minister "on behalf of the United Nations High Commissioner", referring to me by name. I understand that this was in reference to the report the FHRC prepared for the ICC to review at their meeting in October 2007. I understand this same report was part of an application to the court to be a third party intervener, which was declined by the court, but that the FHRC was permitted to intervene as a friend of the court, providing amicus briefs. I am concerned that this has been misrepresented in the media and that there might be any misunderstanding in relation to the court applications. I would be grateful if you would clarify this issue for the public record. As you know, no reports or investigations are carried out on my behalf by anyone outside of the United Nations.

Dr. Shaista Shameem
Director
Fiji Human Rights Commission
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Suva, Fiji Islands
FAX: 679 330 8661

I understand that your report to the ICC and cover letter to me are posted on the Fiji Human Rights Commission website. I have therefore requested that this response be made available on the website of the OHCHR Regional Office in Suva.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Louise Arbour', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Louise Arbour
High Commissioner for Human Rights