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## **RAMSI Presents Media Encouragement Award to Local Photographer**

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The Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands today presented the inaugural Special Coordinator's Media Encouragement Award to the newspaper photographer, Charles Kadamana.

At a lunch for local journalists to mark World Media Freedom Day, RAMSI Special Coordinator, Graeme Wilson, said the award was in recognition of the key role the media played in all aspects of Solomon Islands development.

Presenting the award, Mr Wilson said that RAMSI had decided to have an annual encouragement award for the media as a way of acknowledging the important contribution that a free and robust media can make to rebuilding the nation.

"In working with the people and government of Solomon Islands to develop the nation's capacity to govern itself effectively and accountably, RAMSI recognises the crucial role of the media and is committed to helping to strengthen this important Solomon Islands institution."

Mr Wilson said the goal of the award was to provide recognition and encouragement to an individual or media organisation demonstrating consistent effort, imagination and commitment to professional excellence.

"I am happy to say that the striking images captured by Charles Kadamana and regularly published in the Solomon Star in the past year have caught our eye and made him a very worthy choice for the inaugural Special Coordinator's Media Encouragement Award," Mr Wilson.

"I would like to congratulate Charles for his consistent effort to develop his 'eye' and the imagination and commitment he has applied to capturing the mood of key national events."

The Solomon Star should also be congratulated for giving Mr Kadamana's work prominent display, Mr Wilson said.

Accepting the award, Mr Kadamana said he felt very humbled to receive it as he had simply joined the Solomon Star straight out of high school in 2000 and gone out on the road trying to get a story.

“This award is not really just for me but it should serve as an encouragement to all of us here today to keep going out to get the story, freely.”

Mr Wilson went on to congratulate all the media in Solomon Islands.

“It is heartening to see just how vibrant the media is in Solomon Islands,” Mr Wilson said.

“This is no small achievement given the recent history of Solomon Islands; only a matter of years ago, the media in Solomon Islands operated under constant threat and intimidation. It is a credit to the individual media personnel as well as their proprietors, editors and colleagues that the media in Solomons has emerged from the tensions, stronger and no doubt wiser, from the experience.”

Mr Wilson also acknowledged the commitment of the Solomon Islands Government to media freedom and the important role the Government plays in sustaining an environment that is conducive to a free media.

Last year, RAMSI launched a new program to strengthen the media in Solomon Islands.

Known as SOLMAS (Solomon Islands Media Strengthening Scheme), the program is working with the local media industry body, MASI (Media Association of Solomon Islands), SIBC (Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation) and the Department of Communications to provide industry wide training, technical support and regulatory strengthening expertise.

The President of MASI, John Lamani, thanked RAMSI for the support the mission had given to the media since its arrival nearly six years ago.

“In the early years of RAMSI, it brought in staff to help train journalists in SIBC and Solomon Star, training which was of great importance to us. Now SOLMAS is here to see that actual training of media personnel is carried out,” Mr Lamani said.

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