

The **Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions** participated in the *Continuing Medical Education (CME) for Doctors at the RON Hospital: Introducing the Regional Guidelines for prosecutors and support officers to support vulnerable witnesses through the prosecution of Sexual and Gender Based Violence cases.*

The participation of the ODPP in the Continuing Medical Education (CME) for Medical Practitioners at RON Hospital on Wednesday 1 May 2024 is the start of a collaboration between Prosecutors and Doctors on dealing with vulnerable witnesses of sexual and gender-based violence. It could also be the start of many opportunities to share knowledge and strengthen our network.

The DPP, Ms. Andie Driu, and her team of prosecutors were welcomed by a generous number of Medical Practitioners who showed interest in the topic.



Senior Public Prosecutor, Margaret Suifa'asia, introduced the *Regional Guidelines* that sets out a step-by-step approach to supporting vulnerable witnesses of sexual and gender-based violence. The Guidelines sets out the roles and responsibilities of Prosecutors and Support Officers in the process of prosecuting SGBV cases.



As presented, Medical Practitioners are “Support Officers” in their professional capacity within the meaning of the Guidelines. Medical Practitioners receive patients who are alleged complainants of SGBV incidents, and a medical report is prepared following their examination of the patient. Their report is expert evidence that will form part of the SGBV case brief.

One of the pressing questions asked by the Doctors were, ***why is it necessary for a doctor to present a written statement besides their medical report?*** The DPP drew reference to Part 5 of the *Criminal Procedure Act 1972*, in particular Sections 146 and 147A, where it states that in any criminal proceedings a written statement by a person shall be admissible as evidence subject to meeting conditions set out under those Sections.

Following much constructive discussions, it was observed that the Medical Practitioners appreciated the importance of their role in supporting vulnerable witnesses. The ODPP looks forward to strengthening a concrete relationship with the health sector and extending networking with other relevant stakeholders to implement the Regional Guidelines.