MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER, VOREQE BAINIMARAMA ON NATIONAL YOUTH DAY. THE THEME IS “ENERGY OF THE NATION!”

Young fellow Fijians,

You are the future of our nation – the generation we look to to fulfill the vision we all share of a new and better Fiji. You are also our present – the largest segment of our population and truly the “energy of the nation”.

So I have great pleasure in wishing you all a happy National Youth Day.

You think differently. You embrace change more readily. You are more plugged in to the World through new technology and want better opportunities to interact and be part of that World.

My Government has made it a priority to open up the World to you by giving you better access to the latest technology. We have made access to mobile phones easier and more affordable. We are providing more access to the Internet through our community Telecentres and introducing faster Broadbandspeeds.

So you are being empowered to gain knowledge and to use the Internet for recreation - to access music and video content and communicate with your friends through social media outlets such as Facebook.

We also understand that in order to open up the World to you education at all levels, including university, should be accessible, and should respond to your needs and interests.

That’s why we're looking at creating a university loan scheme that would give every Fijian the chance to attend university. We piloted the program this year and were overwhelmed by the response.

We've put an emphasis on vocational training programs because we believe that school isn’t just for those who want to become doctors or lawyers. We’re particularly proud of the new agricultural and trade scholarships started this year at Fiji National University.

Next year, we're holding an election that will introduce Fiji's first genuine parliamentary democracy. I urge all of you to become involved in the political process.

We want to harness your passion to help build the new Fiji, in which everyone has the same chance to get on in life irrespective of who they are or where they live.

Soon, we will be unveiling our new Constitution that guarantees everyone social and economicrights, such as access to basic services and the right to a just wage and economic participation. After that will come the political phase in which Ihope those of you over the age of 18 will play a big part. For the first time, 18 year olds will have the right to choose who you want to represent you in the new Parliament.

I urge you to use your vote wisely and think about the kind of future you want for Fiji. Think about which person or party is best able to deliver that future.

Above all, I urge you to be patriotic – to be proud to be Fijian and put the overall welfare of our beloved nation and all its people first.

We are building a new Fiji – modern, inclusive and forward looking.

We look to the future with optimism because we have such a great number of young Fijians with vision and ideas.

We celebrate all of you today and salute your dedication and enthusiasm.

J.V Bainimarama

**Prime Minister**