

**Commodore J. V. Bainimarama, CF(Mil), OSt.J, MSD, jssc, psc**

**Prime Minister of Fiji and Minister for Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics, the Public Service, People’s Charter and Change and Progress, Information, iTaukei Affairs, Sugar Industry and Lands and Mineral Resources**

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**STATEMENT DURING PM’S PRIVATE SECTOR TALANOA SESSION**

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**Training Room, Level 2 Building 3 Wed. 21st August, 2013**

**FRCA Complex - NASESE 0900 Hours**

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Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen.

First, let me take this opportunity to thank you for taking the time to participate in today’s session.

Some of you here today were also present at the Talanoa Session held last year. The collaborative spirit of that talanoa session and the exchange of information and ideas provided very useful feedback in formulation of the 2013 Budget.

I have invited you all this morning to continue that spirit of open and honest dialogue and consultation on areas you feel Government needs to address to facilitate growth and investment.

As I have often stated, I am of the firm view that the private sector should be the key driver and an engine of growth and investment in the country. My Government in turn, has and will continue to provide the support that is needed to enable the private sector to fulfil this role.

I am delighted to note that with the bold measures introduced by my Government in the last two Budgets, private sector activity has picked up strongly and is the major driver for the current improved investment and economic outlook.

Today I would like to hear from representatives of how your various sectors and businesses have fared in response to the current Government policies. What are the impediments that continue to hinder private sector progress and what are some of new opportunities for growth that are being pursued. I also want your candid views on Government services – what has improved and what more can be done to remove red tape and bureaucracy.

Like my Government’s previous budgets, the 2014 budget will be focused on improving the livelihoods of our rural and outer island communities, providing them with the basic necessities of life as well as opportunities for income generation. I would encourage private sector participation in the development of our rural and outer island communities, particularly in terms of employment creation. As you are aware, Government this year has heavily invested in roads infrastructure to allow for easy access and connectivity to markets, information and public goods. This momentum will continue.

Before I open up the floor, I would ask that your contributions be concise and frank, and as much as possible, take a sector wide approach. That is, your views and/or suggestions take into account the linkages across the economy and the competing demands on Government resources.

I now open the floor for discussions.

Vinaka vakalevu.

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