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

**Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics, Public Service, Peoples Charter for Change and Progress, Information, iTaukei Affairs, Sugar Industry and Lands and Mineral Resources**

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**SPEECH AT THE MEETING WITH THE ELECTORATE TALANOA SESSION**

**Canterbury Hall, Sydney Sat. 23rd Aug., 2014**

**AUSTRALIA 1500 Hours**

Bula Vinaka and a good afternoon.

It gives me much to be here this afternoon and I would like to thank you for being here. I must admit I have been overwhelmed by the response that I have received since arriving in Sydney yesterday. I was at (name the various place that you visited last night). I think the response in Sydney has been far bigger than in Auckland! Of course Auckland is smaller than Sydney.!

I am here as you know as the leader of *FijiFirst*. In our political meetings in Fiji we keep our meetings very informal and allow more time for question and answer session. We followed this format also when I was in NZ a couple of weeks ago.

I would like to follow a similar format here.

As you know Ladies and Gentlemen, we have a new Constitution in Fiji which has been in force since September of last year.

Our Constitution has been hailed as a leading constitution. The Constitution recognises the special place of the indigenous people or the iTaukei and the Rotuman people. It gives unprecedented protection of the customary ownership of their lands, recognises their language, customary practices and traditions. At the same time the Constitution establishes common and equal citizenry. It ensures that all citizens of Fiji are called Fijians. Common and equal citizenry Ladies and Gentlemen, is not only important to ensure that no one gets treated as a second or third class citizen. This is not only applicable between different ethnic groups but between different socio-economic groups. In other words we should not discriminate between the rich and poor, the rural and the urban, the tenant and the landlord, the chief and the commoner. Many of you who are Fijians or former Fijians know that this was the case.

The Constitution also for the first time ensures that tenants are given unprecedented protection through the Bill of Rights. The Constitution also for the first time has the most extensive bill of rights that not only ensures civil and political rights but a new range of socio-economic rights such as the right to clean and safe water, access to transportation, right to work and just minimum wage. We have copies of the constitution available in all the three languages including in the Braille language and again in the three languages. This is a first for Fiji. I understand not even the Australians have translated their constitution in Braille. In New Zealand of course they don't have a constitution! - A written one that is.

The Constitution also for the first time creates an independent corruption commission, a transparency and accountability commission to keep public office holders right from the President to the Prime Minister and Minsters to senior civil servants accountable. We also have created a human rights and anti-discrimination commission.

The Constitution also creates an electoral system where Fijians for the first time in their history will not be legally forced to vote along ethnic lines. Yes, Ladies and Gentlemen, we have now for the first time universally accepted that principle being implemented - the principle of one person, one vote and one value!

Fijians will no longer have to stand in queues after being categorised into ethnic groups and vote. They will go to the polls and vote as Fijians. Which political party and which individual they will choose will be their choice on 17 September.

In fact this morning in Suva the numbers for the candidates were drawn. You can take down my number for those who are going to vote. My number is **279**. The electoral process is going very well. We of course have our distractors, people who don’t have any regard for the well-being of Fiji and Fijians. They are only concerned about themselves and their personal advancement.

The Fijian Constitution Ladies and Gentlemen, is the way forward. It has the capacity to ensure that our future is secure. That Fiji does not become a failed state. It is for our future. It is for our children. It provides stability and a vision.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is where I speak about *FijiFirst*. *FijiFirst* is a political movement that is dedicated to the service of Fiji and all Fijians. Our entire agenda and motivation as you will see from *FijiFirst's* constitution includes improving service delivery; putting Fiji and all Fijians first; bringing about a partnership between, workers, employers and government; looking after and bringing the marginalised into mainstream society; bringing about economic development; improving the living conditions of all Fijians and ensuring substantive justice.

Our Constitution is available on our website on [www.fijifirst.com](http://www.fijifirst.com). You can also go to our *FijiFirst* facebook.

These values and objectives of *FijiFirst* is what we are pursuing. Of course some of these have already been achieved and which we want to improve upon. Through my government we have improved the law and order situation, we provide for the first time free education, we have free text books, subsidised bus fares for the poor families, we have pension available for those over the age of 70. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been expanded in rural electrification, access to water and building and rehabilitation of our road network.

*FijiFirst* will continue with these programs. Our economy has unprecedented and sustained growth. We are to grow at 3.8 percent. International agencies such as IMF, Standard and Poors and Moodys and even ANZ have given their tick to the economy. There is unprecedented private sector investment and our foreign reserves stand in access of 1.5 billion, the highest its ever been. Of course with my Government allowing for multiple citizenship, many former Fijians are applying to become Fijians again. This has led to new investments.

My Government has brought a completely new way of managing finances. We do so by ensuring that we do not treat government as if it is our own money or that we can keep on spending it without any accountability. Plus we spend more money on capital projects. Our debt to GDP ratio is on average 1.7 percent while in comparison during the same period under Qarase it was 4.3 percent. The Auditor-General’s report will be made available to the new parliament which must sit within 2 weeks of the election results being announced. This would be approximately in the first week of October.

Now of course the Auditor-General’s report will not only sit in the corner after the initial release as was done previously but the Public Accounts Committee can refer matters to the accountability and transparency commission and/or FICAC where public officers including can be charged and prosecuted for misappropriation of funds or abuse of office.

Under *FijiFirst* Ladies and Gentlemen, we want to continue with building Fiji into a modern, a just, fair and progressive Fiji. We believe the politics of deceit, the politics of fear mongering, of being negative should not exist. This elections is a choice between, on the one hand, represented by SODELPA, NFP, Fiji Labour Party and PDP the old divisive personalised politics where individuals want to win office at any cost so they can maintain their privileged positions, advocate prejudice and discrimination, maintain a divided society so only the few benefit and we always remain economically backward. On the other hand its *FijiFirst* which is positive, inclusive, recognises indigenous rights without disenfranchising other Fijians, believes in harmony, building a strong Fiji, empowering all Fijians, building a strong economic base and having a long term goal and vision.

I would now like to open up the floor to any questions that you may have.

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