

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

**Prime Minister of Fiji and Minister for iTaukei Affairs and the Sugar Industry.**

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**REMARKS AT FIJI AIRWAYS RECEPTION FOR THE ARRIVAL OF THE ARRIVAL OF THE ATR 42-600**

Borron House Thurs.9th Oct., 2014

SUVA 1920 Hours

**Honourable Cabinet Ministers,**

**Honourable members of Parliament,**

**Your Excellencies, members of the Diplomatic Corps**

**Fiji Airways Board Chair and members and the Managing Director and CEO,**

**The General Manager of Fiji Link,**

**Fiji Airways and Fiji Link Staff,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Bula vinaka and a very good evening to you all,

I’m always delighted to attend a Fiji Airways function and tonight is no exception. Because Fiji Airways has truly become the pride of our nation and the byword for excellence we always knew it could be.

Tonight, we celebrate the arrival of the new ATR 42-600 and the great performance of the Fiji Airways domestic offshoot, Fiji Link. But we’re also celebrating a new era in civil aviation in Fiji in which we’re putting the passenger first. Not only with state-of-the-art aircraft but with a better experience in the air.

I was fortunate enough to take the Airbus to Los Angeles and back on my way to and from the United Nations last week. On both sectors, the flights were great, I didn’t feel any turbulence(!), the service was great and the food was great.

The new menus by Lance Seeto are really something. And while I was lucky enough to be in Business Class, I’m told the food in Economy has also got a lot better. Tasty and more of it – as it should be in Fiji.

So after a lot of hard work to reform the airline over the past couple of years, we really do have a world-class product that is getting better all the time.

I want to congratulate Fiji Airways for its latest *“on-time performance”* result. In September, 89.95 per- cent of flights departed on time – the best performance ever.

I urge all Fijians to choose Fiji Airways whenever they fly. And if they’ve moved away to other airlines, to give our national carrier another try.

It’s not only about supporting our economy and keeping our money in Fiji. It’s not only because when the going gets tough as with a cyclone, the other airlines simply fly away. The thing that really makes a difference for me is the thrill of an authentic Fijian experience. The sight of Makereta Matamosi’s striking design as you walk along the airport concourse to board your flight. Coming aboard at the end of and feeling as if you’ve already arrived home - the *“Bula Vinaka”* and the smiles.

There’s definitely a new spirit among the Fiji Airways staff of pride in our national airline and pride in taking the Fijian brand of hospitality to the great airports of the Asia Pacific.

So tonight I want to pay a special tribute to the workers of Fiji Airways, whether in the air or on the ground. Because without you, without your understanding and foresight and sense of national pride, we couldn’t have turned the airline around. Nor would we be soaring as high as we are now. Or able to give you a share of the profits that we are now making because of your dedication and hard work.

I also want to thank Stefan Pichler, Shenaz Voss and the rest of the Management team plus Nalin Patel the Chairman of the Board of Fiji Airways. We have been blessed with people who not only know what they are doing but have a vision to create the best boutique airline in the world. And every Fijian joins me in thanking you for your service.

In a few moments, Stefan will be outlining some of the airline’s achievements and where we go from here. But I can assure everyone that Fiji Airways has the total support of the Fijian Government as it keeps improving its service and explores more routes.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is not a night for long speeches. It’s a night to celebrate. So thank you Fiji Airways and Fiji Link for keeping Fijians connected with each other, the region and the world. And thank you for making us proud, especially in a week in which we have a huge amount to be thankful for as Fijians – the launch of our first democracy and tomorrow, our best ever Fiji Day.

Please enjoy the rest of the evening,

Vinaka vakalevu. Thank you.