

**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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**PRIME MINISTER’S REMARKS**

**MEETING WITH H.E MR. LI KEQIANG- PREMIER OF THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA**

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**Great Hall of the People Wednesday 29th May 2013
Beijing, China 1700 Hours**

**Excellency, Mr. Li Keqiang, Premier of the People’s of the Republic of China**

1. Ni Sa BulaVinaka! Nihao! and Warm Greetings Your Excellency!
2. It is indeed my privilege to convey my sincere appreciation and gratitude for the invitation extended to visit this great land of the People’s Republic of China. The courtesies that we have been accorded thus far had been splendid and greatly appreciated.
3. As I had conveyed to His Excellency President Xi Jinping this morning, I am delighted and humbled to learn that I am the First Pacific Island Leader to be granted this honour to set foot on your great country in the recent accessions to the helms of leadership of this great nation. Allow me to personally congratulate Your Excellency on behalf of my Government and the people of the Republic of Fiji to your new leadership role.
4. I am confident that with your astounding leadership, the People’s Republic of China will rise to greater heights and further strengthen the relationship between our two countries and our peoples.
5. I also would like to acknowledge the political mutual trust between our two countries which is further manifested in our respect for each other’s sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in internal affairs.
6. Excellency, I wish to reaffirm that China is indeed an integral component of Fiji’s “Look North Policy”. My visit today is to show Fiji’s commitment in reaffirming our Look North Policy to now FOCUSING and ENGAGING with PRC.
7. Moreover, I wish to reiterate our continued support for the “One China Policy” and recognise the People’s Republic of China as the sole legal government and Sovereign State of China, with Taiwan Province, an inalienable part of its territory.
8. Excellency, my Government looks forward to China’s continued support for Fiji’s open and transparent process towards democratic elections in 2014. I would like to reassure you that Fiji is committed to the realisation of its vision of “A Better Fiji for All” through the implementation of Fiji’s Roadmap.
9. As I speak, my Government is well on its way to completing the required consultations that will see the formulation of a new Constitution which will harness the voices and heartfelt desires of our people. The Constitution will be the culmination of my Government’s reform agenda and consequently pave the way to improved socio-economic development for Fiji.
10. Excellency, please allow me to thank your Government for its unyielding support and contribution towards Fiji’s socio-economic development. In the recent past, China has played a pivotal role in the completion of major development projects for Fiji, and these include amongst others, the assistance provided to our cane farmers, the fencing of the Presidential residence, the Navuso and Naqali bridges providing better transport access into our rural farming communities and the multi-purpose fishing vessel which further uplifts the fisheries sector and services of our maritime communities.
11. Excellency, I would like to mention your Government’s generous contribution of the heavy machinery and equipment that are now used by our Military engineers for rural development works. In addition, the donation of the 20 luxury left-hand drive vehicles was timely as it eased operations, leading to the successful hosting of the recent “Group of 77 High Level Panel of Eminent Personalities of the South.”
12. Your Excellency, my Government also looks forward to your continued commitment towards the completion of current projects, namely, the new Navua Hospital, the Somosomo Mini Hydro Power Station, the Vanua Levu Rice Industry Development Project, and the six (6) Rural Sports complexes. I note that a few of these are at the initial stages and I look forward to the undertaking of the necessary work to progress these further. I urge Your Excellency to hasten the process relating to the sports complexes as we have already identified three (3) sites namely Rakiraki, Vunidawa and Seaqaqa in the two (2) main islands of Fiji.
13. Furthermore, I would like to briefly discuss two projects of interest. The first is the Fiji Public Rental Housing Project for low cost housing which was contracted to the China Railway Company Number 1 at a cost of FJ$9 million but now halted due to cost over runs to the tune of FJ$20 million. In order for the project to be completed, my Government anticipates the usual support by your Government and may I urge Your Excellency for your kind consideration to settle the balance or convert the total amount into a grant. This would ensure the completion of the project and guarantee access to affordable housing for Fijians in the lower-income bracket.
14. Second is the Legalega mushroom project. May I inform Your Excellency that this project was brought to Fiji by H.E President Jinping when he was Vice President. The project is worth FJ$14 million and is earmarked for the western part of Viti Levu, the main island of Fiji. I acknowledge the feasibility study that was undertaken by your Government and we anticipate a positive feedback on this.
15. Excellency, China is a friend to Fiji and the Pacific, and has been instrumental in facilitating the solidarity of the region. For Fiji, China’s support has been significantly evident in the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) for which I am Chair. With your significant level of support, the peculiarities and the special case for Pacific Islands and small island states are continually advocated in international fora.
16. To that effect, Fiji in recognition of the challenges being faced by the Region, has been strong in engaging with its Pacific Island neighbours. As a successor to the “Engaging With the Pacific Meeting” (EWTP) in 2012, Pacific Island Leaders agreed to the establishment of the Pacific Islands Development (PIDF). The PIDF will bring together the private sector, governmental institutions and civil society leaders to secure concrete commitments and mobilise action through a green economy.
17. Excellency, my Government is keen to see China as a strategic development partner in support of this bold initiative that will see the autonomy of the Pacific Island region in mapping its own development pathway. Your Government’s support in the establishment of the PIDF Secretariat will be truly appreciated in this regard.
18. Excellency, my Government is hopeful that other areas of cooperation will also be enhanced and these include but are not limited to climate change, tourism, cultural engagements, technological transfer, capacity development and renewable energy initiatives.
19. Excellency, in the commercial sector, an enabling environment has been provided to encourage Chinese businessmen to invest in Fiji. This has seen a positive growth over the years and has considerably contributed to the Fijian economy. While this has been a welcoming prospect, my Government and the people of Fiji would like to see that all relevant laws and policies are complied with by current and potential investors.
20. I now take this opportunity to convey to you the well wishes of my Government and my people, for success and good health in your esteemed Premiership and also for China’s continued prosperity.

**VinakaVakalevu and Xiexie**