

**Commodore 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**

**Remarks at Signing of MOU with PGA for Fiji International Golf Tournament**

**Holiday Inn Thurs. 19th Sept., 2013
Suva 1630 Hours**

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Bula vinaka and good afternoon.

We all know the golf community has a language of its own. Birdies and bogies – bends and hooks – woods and irons. Now, a lot of this is new to me. So when someone asked me once if our Minister for Youth and Sports was a *“scratch”* golfer, I replied *“Sure he is, every time he hits the ball he scratches his head and wonders where it’s gone.”*

It’s a great pleasure to be here this afternoon to announce plans for what will become one of Fiji’s largest and most prestigious sporting events: the Fiji International.

This annual golf tournament is set to be the newest leg on the PGA’s tour of Australasia. The first tee-off is scheduled to broadcast to the world in August 2014, hosted at the beautiful Natadola Bay Golf Course, becoming a permanent fixture on the tour for the years to come.

The signing of today’s MOU is a significant moment for Fiji because it demonstrates that the PGA has faith in our country to hold one of its major events. Faith in our infrastructure. Faith in our economy. And faith in our people. I am here to say that we are equal to the opportunity and look forward to a strong and lasting relationship with the PGA.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As one of the world’s most popular sports, golf is a major niche tourism market with huge growth potential in Fiji, poised to take advantage of the game’s rapidly growing popularity in Asia.

That’s why we’re so excited that the PGA is coming here. A PGA golf tournament is a major international event of the highest caliber, attracting some of the game’s best professionals.

Although Fiji has long offered some of the best golf courses in the region, both to our visitors and to our local golfers, the Fiji International will rightfully establish it as one of the world’s top golfing destinations.

With a potential broadcast reach to more than 400 million people across 40 countries, the tournament will showcase Fiji as a must-visit golf and tourist location in countless homes around the globe.

This is very good news for our Tourism Industry. And this is very good news for our economy.

Indeed, we expect the tournament to lead directly to a multi-million dollar boost for Fiji, with many additional flow-on benefits.

One such benefit is that this tournament will increase the value of the FNPF-owned land in Natadola. As a result, after the second stage of development work there, the FNPF will achieve a higher rate of return when it sells or leases that land, profiting all of the funds’ current members, as well as all future generations of members.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As many of you are aware, the Fijian Government has launched an extensive campaign over the course of the last couple years to completely revamp *“Brand Fiji”* – including with the recent launch of the new Fiji Airways.

*“Fiji, where happiness finds you”.*  Not just a slogan, but a belief that Fiji truly has something unique to offer our visitors, who are welcomed with the famous Fijian hospitality, a kind not found anywhere else.

So as Fijians, we take our national brand seriously. We are very proud of our home and we want to make sure that pride is reflected whenever we attach our name to something.

Well, the Fiji International PGA golf tournament is certainly something we Fijians can be proud about. It will give us a fantastic avenue to promote our beautiful nation and show the world what we have to offer.

In fact, I doubt that anyone tuning in at home will view the stunning aerial shots of Natadola and not be tempted to immediately start planning their next holiday.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to keep my remarks brief this afternoon.

With these few words, on behalf of the Government and the Fijian people, it is now my pleasure to welcome the PGA to Fiji.

Vinaka Vakelevu. Thank you.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_