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

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

**SPEECH AT THE LAUNCH OF THE DELUXE FOOTWEAR FIJIAN MADE PRODUCTS**

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**Holiday Inn Wed. 12th Nov., 2014**

**SUVA 1830 Hours**

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**Ladies and Gentlemen and Invited Guests.**

Our manufacturers, farmers, fishermen and processors make some of the best products in the world, and by buying their goods; you're not only supporting local jobs and our economy, but also getting great products and produce. It's good for you, it's good for your family and friends and it's good for Fiji and all Fijians!

Fijian products and produce have been manufactured or grown locally to meet our high standards. That means you can have confidence in the quality and know that whatever you are buying hasn't travelled around the world before it reaches your home.

The *“****Fijian Made and Buy Fijian Campaign****”* was mooted by the Fijian Government in 2009 primarily to promote and raise the profile of Fijian made products and produce, both domestically and internationally through a national branding strategy.

The *‘brand’* is categorized with different representations, each having to meet a certain compliance criteria as endorsed by Cabinet in 2011 and reflected in the Industry Emblem Decree and Regulations 2011.

This initiative supports Government’s import substitution policy aimed at promoting production of items which are heavily imported but can be easily be produced or grown in the country.

We have a good mix of skilled crafters who make authentic handicrafts depicting the fine culture and heritage of the country; and established manufacturers who make fine products such as footwear to supply to the local as well as overseas markets.

The Fijian Made and Buy Fijian Campaign has been initiated in light of three major issues. Firstly, to reduce the rising import bills and the country’s negative balance of payment position over the years.

Secondly, to build a sense of loyalty amongst the Fijians to buy their own creations to assist employment generation and expansion of the manufacturing sector to improve the livelihood of the nation as a whole and thirdly, the branding strategy intends to position Fijian made products in the international markets to promote exports to strengthen our declining export sector.

We support our growing manufacturing sector and showcase their products through various events and promotional activities such as this one organized by Deluxe.

This company is one of the leading footwear companies in Fiji and has been run successfully by 3 generations of individuals with more than 60 years of industry experience.

In 2012, they made a more ambitious venture into manufacturing by importing state of the art machines that not only produces quality footwear but also that which simplifies the process of shoe making to increase productivity.

They have taken another step towards investment in Fiji and by setting up a highly advanced footwear manufacturing factory with the aim to support and promote the *“Fijian Made”* initiative proudly launched by this Government.

Their local production line proudly make quality enhanced combat boots and sandals and also manufacture safety shoes and boots and have supplied superior products to our security forces and even across the health cares.

Their vision to make quality yet affordable footwear not only gains recognition locally but gains recognition internationally as a *“Fiji Made”* footwear and product but further, becomes an important contributor to our country’s export growth by producing good range of exportable footwear.

By using locally available resources, they are helping to reduce imports. Further, by selling and promoting local footwear it has reduced its own imports and the imports of few other footwear retail outlets in Fiji who previously were heavily reliant on imported footwear.

There is a direct correlation between consumer purchasing behavior and employment, local economic development and prosperity. When you buy Fijian-made and grown products, you can be sure you are keeping your family members and friends employed.

It comes down to all of us as consumers – the people and businesses that buy things every day – to consciously purchase Fijian-made and grown products. The best way to find these Fijian goods is by looking for the Fiji Made logo which tells you that the product is made or grown here.

So look for the logo when you shop. You'll not only be doing yourself a favor, but you’ll also be supporting our local workers and our environment.

We believe that a product’s provenance is of the utmost importance. By buying authentic Fijian goods, manufactured by skilled craftsman using the finest materials, you are helping to keep these skills alive in this country.

If we don’t support those makers in Fiji that still have these precious skills, we will lose them forever.

We envision a thriving, collaborative community where local businesses are prosperous, and contribute to a healthy environment and the well-being of all Fijians.

We pay tribute to Deluxe Footwear who tirelessly over the last 60 years provided quality goods at an affordable range to all Fijians. We acknowledge the fact that they have capitalized on our investment opportunities and invested well for the betterment of our Fiji.

This Government will always support and promote Fijian Made products.

Thank you – Vinaka vakalevu.

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