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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**

 **REMARKS AT THE TRADITIONAL CEREMONY OF WELCOME TO H.E. XI JINPING, PRESIDENT OF THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA**

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**Convention Centre Fri. 21st Nov., 2014**

**SHERATON HOTEL, NADI 1950 Hours**

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**Your Excellency, Mr Xi Jinping, President of the People’s Republic of China**;

Ni Sa Bula Vinaka! Nihao! and welcome to Fiji!

It is my great honour as Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji, and on behalf of all Fijians, to warmly welcome you to our shores.

We are particularly delighted and proud today to be witnessing the first ever State Visit to Fiji by a President of your great country, the People’s Republic of China.

Excellency, the iTaukei ceremonies of welcome that have just been accorded to you, are our highest traditional tribute to a visiting dignitary of your stature. These solemn ceremonies have their origins in the antiquity of the traditional culture of our islands.

After almost forty years of bilateral relations between Fiji and the People’s Republic of China, today marks a historic moment in the development of the fraternal ties that bind our two nations. I firmly believe that your visit will be the platform that will launch Fiji-China bilateral relations to even greater heights.

Not for the first time, I would like to emphasise the sincere appreciation of my Government and all Fijians for China’s unyielding support to Fiji in recent years. There is a proverb that says, *“A Friend in need, is a Friend indeed!”* Your Excellency, China has shown itself to be a true friend of Fiji.

Mr President, your visit could not have come at a better time, in the wake of the successful holding of Parliamentary elections in Fiji under a new Constitution guaranteeing all Fijians an equal place of citizenship and sharing in national progress.

It gives me great pleasure to see the Leaders of many of our neighbouring Pacific small island developing States present here at Denarau to welcome you to the Pacific Islands. I am confident that both they and you will have productive talks during your stay, and that their own long journeys to Fiji to meet with you will prove to be of historic value to the countries they represent.

Let me reiterate on behalf of my Government and the Fijian people, our appreciation to the Government of the People’s Republic of China for their enduring friendship and support.

Mr President, I sincerely hope that you and Madame Peng Liyuan will find time over the next two days to enjoy the serenity of Fiji’s natural environment, together with the famed hospitality of the Fijian people.

In closing, I trust that Your Excellency’s historic visit will further strengthen China’s deep understanding of the conditions and concerns of the Pacific small island developing States represented here today; and that together we will meet the great development challenges that face us in the 21st century. We all look forward to the various meetings that will be held with you over the next two days here on Denarau island.

Vinaka Vakalevu and Xiexie.

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