**MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER OF FIJI**

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

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Greetings to You!

I congratulate the Fiji Football Association for the 23rd edition of the Vodafone Fiji FACT.

On this note, I also acknowledge the immense contribution and commitment of the past officials and players which must not be easily forgotten as it is through their hard work that this prestigious event has been maintained and proven to be a success over the years.

After the events of 1987, Fiji Football Association had embarked on identifying ways and possible opportunities to revive the sport to be able to meet their increased financial costs and commitments.

In 1988 Fiji FA organised an open tournament in a bid to initiate football in Fiji and a proposal submitted in 1990 was adopted to introduce and welcome the Fiji FACT, (Fiji Football Association Cup Tournament).

Finance is a huge factor and a major challenge in the running of the daily affairs of a sporting organisation and I must complement Fiji Football Association for taking this initiative which will no doubt generate the much needed revenue.

Football has grown rapidly over the years in our country and is now one of our major and popular sports. Such events like the Vodafone Fiji FACT promote and strengthen positive nation building that notably unifies our multiracial society and display respect of our diverse culture.

This year Fiji Football Association has adopted a new format which will see only eight top teams in the main competition. A premier competition will coincide at the two weekend event.

At the end of the day all this hard work and commitment should contribute towards the progressive development of the sport. Whilst our national football side is yet to qualify for a FIFA World Cup event, I believe, the current Executive members are vigorously working towards achieving this in the not too distant future.

These efforts, I believe should be our ultimate goal. One can have the best administration and facilities but would be futile if at the end of the day if the national side does not progress or succeed. *The success of a sporting association is gauged by the success of the national side.*

Important regional playoffs are lined up for the next few years and an event like the Vodafone Fiji FACT should set a perfect platform to work from.

I express my appreciation and gratitude to Vodafone for continuously contributing towards the development of the various sports in the country. Their return to sponsor the first major football event of the 2013 season demonstrates their continual commitment to sports in Fiji.

My best wishes to Fiji Football Association in this coming event and express assure government’s support of this initiative.

To the football fans and the participating teams, Enjoy the Vodafone Fiji FACT and may the best team win.

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Fri. 14th June, 2013