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Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics, Public Service, Peoples Charter for Change and Progress, Information, i-Taukei Affairs, Sugar Industry, Lands and Mineral Resources

FAREWELL REMARKS FOR DAVE PFLIEGER

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­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­ Inter-Continental Resort and Spa Fri. 3rd May, 2013

NATADOLA 1800 Hours

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Bula Vinaka and a very good evening to you all.

Tonight is both a celebration of a great success story and an occasion tinged with sadness as we say farewell to the main architect of that success.

Dave Pflieger has taken our national airline to heights, many thought it could never reach.

The airline business is notoriously cut-throat and a string of small island carriers have landed in a heap.

There’s little doubt that Air Pacific was heading in the same direction. But Dave – the pilot turned businessman – seized the controls and pulled it out of its dive.

He leaves with a record that speaks for itself. A loss of $91-million turned into a profit of $16-million…

A rebranding that will see Air Pacific become Fiji Airways next month and take our name to the world…

Our first brand-new wide-bodied planes, with their new livery that embodies our culture…

New systems and technologies - a new reservations system, the signing of a code share agreement with American Airlines, and the introduction of a profit sharing scheme for Air Pacific’s staff….

The Wings of Change program that has assisted under-privileged children, helped protect our reefs and sea life, and created Fiji’s first health and wellness clinic to help prevent some of our most common diseases.

For any airline executive, that would be a proud record. But Dave did something more.

He instilled a new spirit in the airline and renewed pride on the part of its staff. And that spirit and pride spread to the rest of the nation – to every Fijian.

No-one who was there on the day the first new Airbus arrived will ever forget it.

As it emerged from the clouds and flew around our islands, cities and towns, hundreds of thousands of people came out to celebrate.

It wasn’t just the arrival of a new plane. There was a sense of renewal, of better times ahead, of hope that Fiji’s fortunes can also soar.

That plane – the Island of Taveuni with the big “Fiji Airways” on its side – became a symbol of national unity and national pride.

Wherever we were as we looked up, it was a wonderful day to be Fijian.

So we thank Dave not only for his executive talents but for uniting his staff and uniting the nation.

We will miss his can-do attitude, his optimism, his hard work and his ability to inspire others to also go the extra mile.

Dave, on behalf of the people of Fiji, I wish you, your wife Anne and your children all the very best in your future endeavours.

Please join me, everyone, in a toast. Moce, Dave. But here’s to seeing you back in Fiji again soon.

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