

**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

**SPEECH AT THE OPENING OF THE RUKUA SMART SOLAR POWER PROJECT**

**Rukua Village Wed. 18th Dec.,2013**

**BEQA 1100 Hours**

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**The Director-General of Inter-Action Corporation of Japan**

* **Mr Hideo Kiji;**

**Your Excellency, The Japanese Ambassador to Fiji –**

* **Mr. Eiichi Oshima;**

**Honourable Ministers;**

**Members of the Diplomatic Corp;**

**The Fiji Ambassador to Japan – Mr. Isikeli Mataitoga;**

**Na Vanua Naduruvesi;**

**Turaga na Tui Rukua;**

**Distinguished Guests; and**

**Ladies and Gentlemen.**

It’s a great pleasure to be here in Rukua village on the island of Beqa to launch a major initiative to promote energy independence in such an important part of Fiji.

We’re all pleased to witness the opening and commissioning ceremony of the Rukua Smart Solar Power project – an $800,000 joint initiative between Fiji and the Inter Action Corporation of Japan to harness the power of the sun.

We both share a firm commitment to increasing our reliance on renewable energy as a way to power our nations. On Beqa today, we see the product of that commitment.

It is truly inspiring that our two countries have joined forces to provide sustainable energy for our people.

I am here as your Prime Minister to commit my Government once again to the task of providing every Fijian with adequate energy to provide their household needs.

Another part of this is to reduce the dependence of isolated and maritime communities on shipments from the mainland. By providing a reliable source of energy, I have no doubt that a number of development opportunities will be unlocked.

Fiji as a whole will also benefit from this initiative. We cannot continue to spend $1 billion a year on fossil fuels. We need to, as a matter of urgency, develop alternative sources of energy, which includes harnessing the power of the sun.

This is something that we need to do, and it is something that we are doing here in Rakua.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are keeping our promises to the people to deliver better services. Previous governments promised and did little. We promise and we deliver.

I consider rural and maritime community development as one of Government’s most important tasks. And by this, I don’t just mean providing basic services, such as water, roads, and electricity. We also need to unlock the development potential of these areas, and where possible, we need to help them develop new economic opportunities.

The opening of Rukua Smart Solar Power project marks another step by my Government to bring development closer to the people.

I am pleased to note that this is the first solar energy system at village level to be implemented in Fiji. I have every hope and expectation that this will set a precedent for the rest of the country.

I believe that initiatives like this will continue to support Fiji’s development and increase the participation of rural Fijians in the economic growth of the country.

I would like to thank the Inter Action Corporation of Japan and the people of Japan.

I would also like to thank the people of Rukua for their support in seeing this project through to completion.

In conclusion, I reaffirm my Government’s commitment to this project and many others like it in the years to come.

With these words, it is my pleasure to officially commission the Rukua Smart Solar Power Project.

Vinaka Vakalevu. Thank you.

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