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**SPEECH AT THE OPENING OF THE CHINA BEIJING INTERNATIONAL FAIR FOR TRADE IN SERVICES \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Great Hall of the People Wednesday 29th May 2013
Beijing, China 1100 Hours**

Bula Vinaka. A very good morning and Ni hao.

On behalf of the Fijian people and Government, I would like to thank the People’s Republic of China for their kind invitation for Fiji to be part of the official opening ceremony of the “**China Beijing International Fair for Trade in Services.”** This is the first comprehensive platform specializing in the trade in services around the world, and it is indeed a great pleasure to be here.

Honorable Chair, Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the Fiji–China friendship has strengthened considerably since we first established diplomatic relations in 1975. The relationship has broadened to encompass a wide range of interests, including agriculture, trade, higher education, telecommunications and tourism.

Together, our two countries continue to discover new areas of partnership and common interest.

Together, Fiji and China are expanding trade in services – a critical sector of economic growth where we – as with all developing nations – are exploring exciting new opportunities.

China’s experience in using its service industry to advance development and restructure its economy is a great example, especially for its role in the continuing improvement of the quality of life of both urban and rural Chinese.

Honorable Chair, Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, as the chair of the Group of 77 plus China – the largest negotiating bloc at the United Nations – Fiji is committed to advancing the interests of the developing world.

A top priority must be to help grow the contribution service industries make to the national economies of developing nations.

For Fiji, the services sector has been vital in spurring economic growth and creating jobs. Thanks to a thriving tourism industry and significant developments in the ICT sector, services now contribute close to 70 per cent of Fiji’s GDP – up from 64 per cent a decade ago. Around 90,000 Fijians – more than a quarter of our workforce –  rely on this sector for employment.

But on average, in developing nations, services account for a little more than half of gross domestic product.

Collectively, for developing nations, there is still much progress to be made in the services sector.

Today, the South makes up only 30 per cent of the 4.4 trillion dollars worth of annual service exports.

However, in the developed world, services contribute on average 74 per cent to national GDP. We need to close that gap.

Although resources and manufacturing will continue to play an important role in our economies, the service industries are where the most future growth will come for the developing world, and with this growth, a huge potential for improving the lives of our peoples.

This forum which promotes new networks and partnerships for the advancement of the services sector – especially amongst developing nations –is of great importance to the Government and people of Fiji.

Once again, I thank our hosts for inviting Fiji to take part in this event.

On that note Honorable Chair, Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I wish the hosts and participants of the China Beijing International Fair for Trade in Services all success.

Vinaka vakalevu. Thank you and Xiexie.