

**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 Suva Market Vendors Accommodation**

**Suva Market Thurs. 1 August, 2013**

**SUVA 1430 Hours**

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**The Special Administrator, Mr. Chandu Umaria;**

**Management and Staff of Suva City Council;**

**Government Officials;**

**Distinguished Guests;**

**Market Vendors;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen.**

A very good afternoon.

Today is a happy day for all of us and particularly when, after all these years of market vendoring in Suva, at last, we have an accommodation for our beautiful women vendors.

Indeed, Government is grateful to the Council for their commitment to improve the lives of our rural people. When I visit our rural farmers, I noted that the most important issue they are concerned about, apart from infrastructural development, is the facilitation of a comfortable, market vendoring program so that their women are cared for and supported while in Suva.

I am sure that, as of now, they are breathing a sigh of relief and we, who are here today are with them all the way.

We are very grateful to our Special Administrator, Mr Chandu Umaria, and his team for making the shelter possible by allocating **$100,000** for the construction of this accommodation.

In the past, concern had been expressed by the Ministry for Women, UN Women and other stakeholders about the plight of market vendors with regards to appropriate accommodation. This is a priority need so that I had requested for the formation of a Task Force to include representation from all stakeholders including market vendors, to oversee the plight of market vendors. I thank the Ministry for Women that this has been formed and the Task Force is a co-ordinating body available to market vendors to air their concern.

As from tonight, women market vendors are assured of a warm, restful accommodation that will make them enjoy their market vendoring experience even more. Gone are the days of those cold, uncomfortable nights when, on one hand they long for the warmth of a clean accommodation while on the other, they worry about leaving their produce unattended.

I am certain, that the energy generated from having a restful night will increase the financial returns of your market produce many-fold through happy and friendly service. The onus is now on you to increase your produce that will help you to increase your profits to meet your obligations in terms of family needs, school expenses, as well as extended family functions, community and church *‘soli’*.

In our rural areas, these responsibilities are in the hands of women market vendors. Needless to say, that behind every woman vendor stands a strong supportive man. Together, they generate income for their family needs and they need to be healthy.

Moreover, these women also provide a much needed service to the citizens of Suva and the public at large by providing fresh produce for their sustenance. Without them, the Suva community will be without cheap fresh and healthy food produce. Our women market vendors deserve accommodation to make their stay at the market more bearable, more healthy, more fulfilling, enjoyable and enriching.

On behalf of the Government and the rural women vendors, I thank the Suva City Council for this accommodation – a haven for comfort and well deserved rest for our women.

With those few words, it is my pleasure to declare this accommodation open.

Vinaka vakalevu.

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