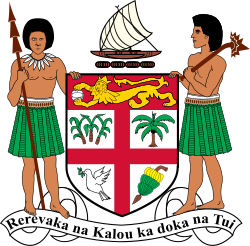
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**Welcoming Remarks by the Chair of the Group of 77,**

**Mr. J.V. Bainimarama,**

**Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji,**

**Opening Ceremony of the High-level Panel**

**of Eminent Personalities of the South: The Future Landscape of South-South Cooperation**

**Natadola, Fiji 7 May 2013**

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**GREETINGS**

* **Honourable Head of States and Governments,**
* **Excellencies,**
* **Distinguished Participants,**
* **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Bula vinaka and a very good morning to you all.

1. In my capacity as Chair of the Group of 77, it gives me great pleasure and honour to welcome each of you to this brainstorming session of the High-level Panel of Eminent Personalities of the South. We are meeting to discuss the Development Platform for the South.
2. Allow me to convey to you, on behalf of the Government and the people of Fiji, our deep appreciation for taking the time out of your very busy schedules to join us in this important meeting here in the beautiful natural surroundings of Natadola.

1. This demonstrates your keen interest and commitment to the promotion of South-South cooperation. I am confident that your wealth of experience and your wisdom will be of immense benefit to our meeting and to the South as a whole.
2. This meeting aims to pursue the Group of 77’s South Summit mandates, in order to address the relevant development challenges of the South, taking into account the evolving realities and hardships facing the developing world. Through our discussions, we will reflect on the future landscape of South-South cooperation and recommend action-oriented decisions that will contribute significantly to the Development Platform for the South.
3. As we prepare for the celebration of the Fiftieth anniversary of the Group’s creation next year, the Group of 77 must continue to take the lead in the transforming landscape of South-South cooperation by updating the South Development Platform. Our efforts should aim to enhance the solidarity of the Group of 77 in order to improve the development efforts of southern countries. We must work together to strengthen the role of the Group of 77 and reshape the architecture of the UN development system in support of our aims.
4. We must also bolster our efforts to make the importance of South-South cooperation clear to our people. This means that we must promote wide public awareness campaigns about its benefits for the developing world through the full use of modern information technologies. Mass media, including social media, has an important role to play and we should encourage its use as widely as possible.
5. Let me add that the outcome of our meeting this week will be included in the upcoming G77 Ministerial meeting to be held in New York in September and will be fully integrated in the commemoration of the 50th  anniversary of the Group of 77, as well as the preparations of the Third South Summit in 2014.
6. I wish you success in your deliberations.

Vinaka vakalevu. Thank you.