**H.E THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS AT THE LAUNCHING OF THE NATIONAL SPORTS AND WELLNESS DAY 2017**

**6/30/2017**

• The President of FASANOC, Mr. Joseph Rodan
• The Director for Youth and Sports, Mr. George Francis
• The National Director for Fiji’s Campaign Against NCDs, Dr. Isimeli Tukana
• Mr. Binesh Prasad who read the Olympic Message this morning
• Senior Government Officials,
• Members of the National Sporting Organisations,
• Ladies and Gentlemen,
• Boys and Girls,
• My fellow Fijians.

Ni sa Bula vinaka, Namaste, Asalaam Alaykum, Ni Hao, Noa’ia ‘e mauri and a very good morning to you all.

As Fiji’s Champion in our National campaign against Non-Communicable Diseases, I am delighted to join you, my fellow Fijians this morning to celebrate this year’s National Sports and Wellness Day.

And before I invite us to relook at how we can become a healthy Nation, I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate and thank Government for its Budget announcement last night.

The new Budget will continue to build on Fiji’s economic growth. And a positive and consistent economic growth means that all Fijians can improve their socio-economic status. It means that we can all continue to focus on what is important to our lives. On this occasion, we have gathered in numbers this morning to emphasise the point that our health is critical to living a fulfilling life.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is common knowledge that physical exercise is good for the mind, body and spirit. And Government recognises this by approving a Public Holiday to promote Physical Activity and Sports as an essential part of Healthy Living.

However, our real challenge is to participate and find the time to make physical activity a part of our daily lives.

The theme of today’s national event is: “Fiji – Let’s get Moving More”. Very appropriate and timely indeed.

This morning, we join Fijians in two other major centres in Lautoka and Labasa; and 50 other small centres around Viti Levu and Vanua Levu to commemorate this year’s National Sports and Wellness day and participate in physical activities.

I thank the Fiji Association of Sport and National Olympic Committee for organising the ‘Fun Run’ as part of our celebrations of Olympic Day.

I congratulate everyone who participated in the Run. I wish to quote the words of the founder of the modern Olympic Movement, Baron Pierre de Coubertin:

“The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not winning but taking part; the essential thing in life is not conquering but fighting well.

“The important thing in life is not to triumph but to compete.

“All sports for all people.” Unquote.

I hope everyone will find the time and indeed the courage to try out all forms of physical activity today and to entrench it in your daily schedule. It will go a long way to maintain and improve your health. We all need to adopt some form of physical activity whether it is walking or weeding and planting in our backyard gardens.

Ladies and Gentlemen and my fellow Fijians, WELLNESS is defined as the quality or state of being healthy in body and mind.

Wellness is an active process of becoming aware of, and making the right healthy choices. Wellness is more than just sports or physical activity. There are several ingredients to attaining holistic healthy lives.

I acknowledge the Ministry of Health’s Wellness Centre for their advocacy work and programmes on physical activity, diet and all programmes directed at achieving a healthy society.

I also acknowledge the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Fiji National Sports Commission, FASANOC and our national sports organisations for their sports outreach programmes;

I also applaud the Ministry of Education for its Physical Education programmes engaging young Fijians into active participation in sport for fun and competition.

Government through relevant Ministries and sporting organisations can only do so much in promoting healthy living and interventions.

The onus is on the general public and individual Fijians to take ownership of our health.

Over the past years, Government has steadily increased its annual health budget to meet the increasing health care demands from members of the public. What all Fijians should to do now is to participate collectively to address our health concerns.

I want to emphasise that in order to be healthy, we must be in the best shape physically, emotionally or mentally, spiritually and socially.

Physical wellness means activity as well as reviewing our diet. These complement each other and for the impact to be really effective, we need to change other habits like reducing our salt intake, drinking and eating less sweetened drinks and food, eating more vegetables and not eating too many carbohydrates.

It is only through a combination of healthy eating and sufficient exercise that we can really make an impact in the fight against Non Communicable Diseases.

Sufficient exercise, Ladies and Gentlemen, means at least 30-45 minutes of strenuous, heartbeat raising, exercise. It helps reduce the risk of preventable NCDs.

Emotional or Mental Wellness refers to our general psychological wellbeing or the ability to understand ourselves and cope with challenges or stressful situations in life.

Stress has an impact on every part of our wellbeing; physical, spiritual and intellectual. Our thoughts, feelings and behaviours are connected, both positively and negatively and we need to control our stress levels or situations.

Youths are often vulnerable to peer pressure, as are older folks too. Who, where and when we socialise often affects our emotions and physical well-being.

Social wellness is enjoying time with friends, families and communities building positive relationships and the network of relationships, which support our quality of life.

Our communities can and should take an active role in promoting a healthier environment.

We are also mindful of our environment, as any harm caused to our stunning natural environment has an impact on us all. I plead with every Fijian to lead an environmentally conscious lifestyle, which respects our surroundings that influence our survival and health. This will not only be in-line with Fiji’s presidency of COP23, but it will go a long way towards building a progressive and sustainable Nation.

Non-Communicable Diseases place a burden on our families, society and our economy. We need to promote our common goal of creating a healthy nation. We need to take ownership of our individual health. Our holistic wellbeing – especially being physically active; have positive effects on individuals, the economy and society in general. NCDs can be avoided and reduced. The onus is on us individually and collectively.

I also call on civil society organisations, faith-based organisations, businesses, youth and other organisations to unite and promote healthy living to bring the greatest health benefits to the greatest number of people.

Suva City has set a precedent as a Health or Wellness promoting city through the installation of fitness machines along Albert Park and the Suva Foreshore. We need to provide such amenities and facilities that promote physical activity. I hope all other municipalities will provide the same for your ratepayers and members of the public that patronise your City and towns.

Government hopes that after today, every Fijian will realise the need to make a commitment to stay healthy.

Government recognises that the most critical factors that can influence and help us achieve our National goal are our individual, collective and consistent efforts. This is why we need to relook at our habits, our needs, our aspirations and our expectations of a healthy, prosperous and successful life.

As Fiji’s President and Head of State, I challenge every Fijian to value sports and physical activity to help reshape the health status of our country.

May you all enjoy this year’s National Sports and Wellness Day, and May Almighty God continue to bless our beloved nation, Fiji.

Vinaka vakalevu, Dhanyavad, Shukaran, Xie Xie, Fai’eksia and thank you all very much.