**HON PM BAINIMARAMA CLOSING ADDRESS AT THE CLIMATE ACTION PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP EVENT**

**7/4/2017**

Your Excellencies, heads of state and governments, Honourable ministers,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bula vinaka and a very good afternoon to you all.

I apologise for being absent for part of today as much of the nation gathered on the other side of Viti Levu for the funeral of a wonderful lady and one of our most respected chiefs – Adi Laite Koroirua, Na Marama Na Tui Ba.

But as we bring our deliberations to a close, I want to warmly thank all of you for the commitment that you have brought to making this conference a success.

We have been newly reminded of our vulnerability in the Pacific not only to climate change but our transport links. Problems with an aeroplane prevented two important people from joining us – the current chair of the PSIDS, His Excellency the President of Nauru, and the leader of one of the more climate vulnerable of our members, President Heine of the Marshall Islands.

But I’m sure that you will all join me is sending our greetings to them and the people of Nauru and the Marshall islands. And to thank them for their own commitment to the struggle against climate change.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, the feedback that I have got about our meeting has been very positive. I think there was an expectation on the part of some delegates that much of the sessions would be pretty dry and technical. But several people have remarked to me that they were pleasantly surprised to find that they got so much out of the presentations in the way of practical information. Information that was news to them and can really make a difference.

We ranged across many subjects, from climate adaptation funding and insurance to ways in which we can boost our food security in the face of climate change. And I know there was certainly a great deal of interest in the issue of agriculture, such as the way the use of compost can transform our ability to grow crops on even the most isolated and sandy atolls.

So to all of our speakers - no matter what your area of specialist knowledge - vinaka vakalevu, the biggest of thank yous – for contributing that expertise to the bank of knowledge we so badly need in the Pacific as we build our resistance to climate change.

To my fellow island leaders, thank you once again for honouring me with your presence, not only as Fijian leader but as incoming President of COP23. We all bring a particular perspective to these discussions based on personal experience and the experience of our peoples. And there is certainly nothing wrong with having differences of emphasis and even differences of opinion about the best way forward.

What’s important given the immensity of the challenge we face to persuade the world to act on climate change is to stick together. Because we are going to be far more effective if we speak with one voice - the voice of the Pacific, the voice of the some of the most vulnerable, demanding action and demanding to be heard.

I want to thank my fellow island leaders for the sentiments they expressed about the importance of Fiji’s presidency of COP – this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to put our case. And let me close this conference by repeating that I see this as a Pacific presidency and want all of you beside me as we make our case.

I will again see many of you at the Climate Action Week in New York in September and the annual gathering of the UN General Assembly. But the date I would really like you all to put in your diaries is the Pre-COP in Nadi on October 17 and 18.
This is a critical event a month out from COP itself that will refine our collective position and set the tone for our overall approach in Bonn. So I ask you all to be present as honoured guests. We are also inviting a number of leaders from outside the region to join us in a collective act of solidarity with the Pacific and other vulnerable nations. And some of the biggest global names in climate activism have also accepted our invitation to be there.

Excellencies, as you all know, COP23 – unlike previous COPS – does not include the usual gathering of world leaders. Our prime task is to advance the implementation guidelines for the Paris Agreement - the Rulebook - and lay the groundwork for more decision climate action in the Facilitative Dialogue of 2018. Yet right from the start, Fiji wanted Pacific leaders to be the exception. And we were able to secure the agreement of our German hosts for you to all be present in Bonn – the Pacific presenting a united face alongside Fiji as president to remind the global community of what’s at stake. And remind it of its obligations to pursue decisive climate action.

So again, please set aside November 6 to 17 to be in Bonn as honoured guests and to be with me as COP president as we pursue our collective agenda. As I’ve already said, I want to use your mana as leaders individually and collectively. As well as the mana of former Pacific leaders who have been at the forefront of the climate struggle over the years and whose experience and wisdom we also want to tap. And I appeal to all of you to come.

I also want to make special mention as we wind up our conference of our two distinguished guests from our larger neighbours - the Australian Minister for International Cooperation and the Pacific, who is still with us, and the Deputy Prime Minister of New Zealand, who has already returned home. As incoming COP President, I very much appreciate the high level engagement of our friends – the Kiwis and Aussies. Geography binds us together in perpetuity. And while we may have our own differences of emphasis and opinion, we have a shared destiny that also binds us together. And the island nations especially look to you for leadership on climate change. Not only to preserve the multilateral consensus for decisive action but to build our resilience.

I want to say to both countries again how much we in Fiji appreciated the way your wonderful servicemen and women came to assist us in the wake of Cyclone Winston last year. We know we can rely on New Zealand and Australia to come to our assistance at times of grave emergency due to the extreme weather events cause by climate change. And we also hope that you can stand shoulder-to-shoulder with us as we work to persuade the world to tackle the underlying causes of those events. It’s been great having both ministers gracing us with their presence here in Suva.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, as you know, we have been working on a joint statement to wrap up the CAPP Event. But right now, it remains only for me to again thank you all warmly for your participation. And until we gather together again in Nadi in October and Bonn in November, to wish you all a pleasant and safe journey home.

My thanks go to the entire team that has dedicated so many hours to making this gathering a success. To the head of the COP23 Fiji Secretariat, John Connor, and his hard-working staff. And especially our Climate Champion – my minister and friend, the Honourable Inia Seruiratu. He has shown great energy and commitment crisscrossing the world pursing the action agenda. And as you know, has played a very important role in these proceedings.

I now have the pleasure to formally close the Climate Action Pacific Partnership Event. And until we continue our talanoa elsewhere,

Vinaka vakalevu. And moce mada.