**HON PM BAINIMARAMA OPENING REMARKS AT COP23 REVIEW SESSION**

**8/9/2017**

**Cabinet Room, SUVA**

Friends, bula vinaka and a very good morning to you all.

Time is moving on and we now have just three months till COP23 gets underway. Twelve weeks until Fiji's formal Presidency begins for what will be a little over 12 months until we hand over that responsibility to Poland.

This week is about continuing to build a great team, setting priorities, simplifying objectives and being clear about how we will leave behind a worthwhile legacy from our presidency. I ask you all to be totally focused this week and in the weeks ahead as we prepare for the global spotlight that we know will be upon us.

We have assembled Team Fiji with local and international expertise so that we can manage the level of technical detail involved in this process. And to be a credible leader to the parties of this international agreement that is so vital for the future of humanity.

As President, I must take responsibility for the high level politics that governs this entire process. To meet and understand the positions of the key political actors; to build confidence; and to anticipate and ward off any threats to success. And part of this week is about identifying the meaning of success for the presidency, including what we leave behind when the talking is over in November.

The world should be left in no doubt that while Fiji may be small, we are determined to make a big success of this process. And frankly, we have no choice. Because Fiji and the other nations are fighting for our prosperity and in some cases, our very survival.

Friends, I understand that my power as President comes from the parties. But I intend to lead them to some very clear objectives they have already set. The paramount objective, of course, is to keep global warming to well below 2 degrees and to pursue efforts to limit warming to 1.5 degrees. But let me make this perfectly clear. Encouraging and enabling an effort by the global community to stay within 1.5 degrees must be our mission, however hard that appears to be.

Last month, just a few hundred meters away at the GPH where you are staying, other Pacific leaders joined me in committing ourselves to the 1.5 degree goal. It is of the utmost importance to us, our people, our economies and our environment.

So that is what I am going to go for. And I’m looking to you all this week for advice on how to strike the right balance between my duty as COP President and my duty to the Fijian people to get the best possible deal for them.

From where I sit, there has already been too much postponing of the dates for action. The Paris Agreement thankfully is now in force, more rapidly than people expected, but many of its provisions are not due to be implemented until after 2020. And let me also again be frank. In my view, this simply isn’t good enough.

We want more action all over the world and at all levels of government now. And that is why I am helping to build the Grand Coalition. Because national governments alone will not fix this.

Friends, one of the priorities of the presidency is the Facilitative Dialogue. The reason why the Facilitative Dialogue matters to us is not just because it is our duty to do the design work this year, but because we believe that it is the best way to get governments to raise their ambition. And that is vitally important for Fiji, the rest of the Pacific and every vulnerable community, wherever they live in the world.

So that is why we have structured Team Fiji the way we have. Me doing the politics and dealing with those who might get in the way; Our COP23 negotiator, Ambassador Nazhat Shameem Khan, conducting the detailed negotiations; our Climate Champion, Minister Inia Seruiratu, helping me build this Grand Coalition in the action agenda; the Attorney General and Minister responsible for Climate Change, Aiyaz Sayed Khaiyum, leading the Fijian delegation and representing our national interests; our Pacific Regional Representative, Amena Yauvoli, making sure our Pacific neighbours understand our mission and feel part of it; and the whole extended team working as hard as they can to deliver real benefits to the Fijian people from this presidency.

So, Friends, let us begin. And first of all, can I ask Ambassador Khan to give your perspective on the state of the negotiations.

Vinaka vakalevu.