**HON PM BAINIMARAMA REMARKS TO PSIDS LEADERS AT BREAKFAST MEEETING ON COP23 UPDATE**

**6/8/2017**

Your Excellencies, my fellow Pacific Island leaders,
Honourable Ministers and officials,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bula vinaka and a very good morning to you all.

I have said all along that Fiji has taken on the role of incoming President of COP23 on behalf of all Pacific islanders, as well as the citizens of vulnerable nations throughout the world. So I’m honoured to have the opportunity to give you a progress report on what we are doing to make our leadership of the ongoing UN climate negotiations an unqualified success.

I very much see this as a Pacific presidency – an inclusive process in which I ask you all to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Fiji as we give voice to the concerns of our own countries, our own region. And because we are among the most vulnerable to climate change, to also lead the fight on behalf of every vulnerable person on earth.

As you all know, the stakes for all of us are extremely high. And especially for our friends from Tuvalu, Kiribati and the Marshall Islands, whose very existence is threatened.

It is an absolute imperative for all of us that the Paris Agreement of 2015 is fully implemented. And that we try to persuade the rest of the world to embrace even more ambitious action in the years to come. Because we all know that even the current national contributions to the Paris Agreement are not enough to save us.

We are all, quite naturally, bitterly disappointed by the decision of the Trump Administration to abandon the Paris Agreement. Not only because of the loss of American leadership on this issue of critical importance to the whole world. But because it may also encourage other nations to either back away from the commitments they have made or not implement them with the same resolve.

But something wonderful is also happening. The American decision is galvanizing opinion around the world in support of decisive climate action. Other nations and blocs like China, the European Union and India are stepping forward to assume the leadership that Donald Trump has abandoned. And within America itself, there is a widespread rebellion against the decision the President has taken. Dozens of state governors and city mayors are banding together with leaders of the private sector, civil society and ordinary citizens to redouble their efforts to meet this challenge. So while the Trump Administration may have abandoned its leadership on climate change, the American people haven’t.

Next week, I will go to California to meet the Democrat Governor Jerry Brown and sign up to the climate action initiative that he is spearheading. I am also in contact with his Republican predecessor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, who shares Governor Brown’s commitment. The point is that on both sides of American politics, we have friends who are standing with us in this struggle. And I am inviting both Governor Brown and the famous Terminator to come to our Pre-COP gathering in Fiji in October, where we hope they will join us in a gesture of solidarity with the vulnerable just before COP23 itself in Bonn the following month.

Excellencies, my message to all of you today - my kai vata as we say in Fiji, my Pacific brothers and sisters, is this: As incoming president of COP23, I want you by my side all year at the big events leading up to Bonn in November. This is not just about Frank or about Fiji but every Pacific leader, every Pacific nation, every civil society group, every private sector body, everyone who represents the ordinary men, women and children in the Pacific who look to us for leadership on this issue of critical importance to our collective future.

I want your input. I need your input. And I want every Pacific leader beside me as we demand decisive action to protect the security of our people and those in other vulnerable parts of the world.

I want to issue a warm personal invitation to you all to come to Suva next month – on July 3 and 4 – for our Climate Action Pacific Partnership event. This is where Pacific leaders will join members of civil society and the private sector to hammer out an agenda that we can collectively pursue as the year progresses. And that we can take to our Pre-COP in Nadi in October and to Bonn the following month.

We will also be discussing a number of legacy items - programs and projects that can be of lasting benefit to the Pacific after COP23 has ended. And we also seek your input on that. We have the funding to pay for the attendance of all PIDS leaders plus one other official and I appeal to you all to set aside those dates to be with us in Fiji.

I also invite every Pacific leader to again join me in Denarau for the Pre-COP 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. As I mentioned, 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. Again, we have the funding to bring every PSIDS leader plus one official to Nadi.

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.

We will not have the usual round of speeches from world leaders because they won’t be there. Yet right from the start, Fiji wanted Pacific leaders to be the exception. And we have secured the agreement of our German hosts for you to all to 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.

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. 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. Again, funding assistance is available through the UNFCCC to enable you to be in Bonn. And I appeal to all of you to come.

In the meantime, please use your influence to get your own climate-related stories told. Fiji has set up a dedicated website – cop23.com.fj – to promote our presidency and we are especially keen to get contributions from our Pacific neighbours. Just go to the contact page on our website to begin the process.

Excellencies, let me briefly explain how we intend to run the Bonn event from Fiji’s perspective. It will be very much a team effort – Fiji’s presidency, not just my own – and I will be relying heavily on the great team we have already assembled – our Chief Negotiator, Ambassador Nazhat Shameem Khan, our Climate Champion, Minister Inia Seruiratu and our Climate Ambassador, Ambassador Deo Saran. Plus a wider team of officials and advisors, most of them Fijian and others with globally acknowledged expertise in climate policy and experience of previous COPs.

The way I see the Fijian team operating in Bonn on a day-to-day basis throughout the proceedings is this: Our Climate Negotiator, Ambassador Shameem Khan, will do the detailed negotiations in the plenary sessions. And as President, I will have a roving brief, presiding over the main events and having the ability to intervene at other times. To give encouragement where needed and especially to use my authority and powers of persuasion to iron out any impasse. To keep people focused and hold the show together.

At the same time, I seek the assistance of all Pacific leaders to enable me to fulfill an important undertaking that I have made. To bring the two zones in Bonn closer together – the Bula Zone where the formal government-to-government negotiations take place. And the Bonn Zone some distance away, which will be the climate action zone for non-state actors. Whether they be representatives of state or local governments around the world, NGOs, other civil society organisations and interfaith groups, the private sector and ordinary citizens.

I want you to join me in spending a great deal of time in this climate action zone, interacting with the various players and ordinary people. We will have a pavilion in which you can base yourselves. And we can take our inclusive Pacific way of doing things – of listening to others and genuinely respecting their views - and transpose it onto the global scene to advance the cause of climate action.

In Fiji’s case, we intend to bring our Bula Spirit to Bonn – to showcase our unique culture and way of life. And we are also harnessing the Talanoa Spirit – a word we share with our Tongan and Samoan neighbours – to promote the concept of dialogue on climate change that is inclusive, respectful, non judgmental and achieves concrete results.

I was amazed at the recent Petersberg Climate Dialogue in Berlin how much other delegates reacted positively – even with excitement - to my explanation of the Talanoa Spirit. They began using the term in their own speeches. And I am convinced that the world is receptive to some of our Pacific ways of doing things – of genuine dialogue rather than being prescriptive. Of each nation, each person, gaining a genuine appreciation of the challenges faced by others. And working together in a genuine spirit of cooperation to find solutions to undoubtedly the greatest challenge the world has ever faced.

So Excellencies, please join me as we set out on this voyage together. I said in Berlin that we are all in the same canoe. We are all in this together. Climate change spares no-one, not even Donald Trump. We are all affected. We are all at risk. And as a symbol of the challenge we face together and the journey we all need to make, we will be placing a large Fijian ocean-going canoe – a Drua – in the main foyer in Bonn.

Amid all the talanoa, there will also be a great deal of Fijian singing and dancing, thanks to the generosity of our German hosts in paying for our cultural branding of COP23. And I would encourage all of you to also bring your own performers, if you can find the means, to give the entire event a wider Pacific stamp.

One word of caution. It’s going to be very cold in Bonn in November. As I told the European media the other day, don’t expect to photograph me without my shirt. But what we lack in terms of the weather, we intend to make up in terms of personal warmth.

So, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, let’s infuse COP23 with the spirit of Pacific friendliness and hospitality and make it the best COP ever. One that will live forever in the memories of those present and showcase our region and its people to the world.

We had a very successful initial session in Bonn last month. Working with the Moroccan Presidency of COP22, we made solid progress on the implementation guidelines and the Facilitative Dialogue. And we agreed that the process should be about confidence building, empowerment and encouragement, not about finger pointing and punishment.

But as I have said to my own people, teamwork is paramount if we are to make COP23 a success. Like our world champion, Olympic medal winning Rugby Sevens team, Fiji cannot afford to drop the ball on climate action. The Pacific cannot afford to drop the ball on climate action. We need to work together as a team to persuade the world to get points on the board if we are to ensure our own security and the security of generations of Pacific Islanders to come.

Now more than ever, given the Trump Administration’s decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, the whole world will be watching. And I look to my fellow Pacific leaders to get into the scrum with me, get that ball out and move it forward. With a team that includes governments, civil society, the private sector and billions of ordinary people around the world, all trying to win one for ourselves and for our planet.

Vinaka vakalevu. Thank you.