**HON PM VOREQE BAINIMARAMA REMARKS FORMALLY CLOSING CELEBRATIONS FOR WORLD OCEANS DAY**

**6/9/2017**

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bula vinaka and a very good afternoon to you all.

It falls to me to formally close the celebrations for World Oceans Day. And as I do so, I want to thank the organisers on behalf of all of us for a very instructive and entertaining three hours.

We still have great cause to celebrate our oceans and the role they play in all our lives even as we discuss the unprecedented threat that they are under. I want to pay particular tribute to Parley on Ocean – the NGO responsible for the presentation we have just witnessed. Thank you for reminding us again of the responsibility we all share to keep our seas and oceans healthy.

On World Oceans Day – June 8, 2017 – we send a special message to the world as delegates to the World Ocean Conference. And it is this:

The community of nations has gathered here in New York this week to try to find answers to the grave threat our seas and oceans are under from pollution, overfishing and climate change. We have worked hard to make this conference a success. Many of us have made commitments that will spearhead our effort to tackle this crisis. Many of us are embarking on courses of action within our own maritime borders to roll back the tide – to begin the long, slow process of reversing the degradation we have all witnessed.

The nations of the world are finally beginning to act. But we can only do so effectively if we can marshal every single one of our own citizens to fight for the quality of our oceans and seas.

So I want to close this celebration of World Oceans Day with a very simple message to men, woman and children everywhere. Make this fight personal. Make it your own fight. Band together with your families and friends and become warriors for change. Positive change in defence of our oceans and seas.

Do what you can personally to reduce the pollution that is choking our creeks, rivers and coastlines and is drifting out to sea to be carried by the currents elsewhere. If you see someone littering, tell them that what they are doing is wrong. If you see litter on or near a beach, pick it up and dispose of it properly.

Take a basket to the supermarket or shop and say “no” when someone offers you a plastic bag. Make a special effort to dispose of plastic bottles properly so they don’t end up at sea. And seek out products that are in containers that are biodegradable.

I began this week by making a special appeal to the young people of the world to lead this fight. Our schools, universities and youth groups of all kinds are powerful agents for change. And the notion of protecting our seas and oceans – protecting our environment – can even begin with very small children at home or in day care and our kindergartens.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, when we begin leaving here tomorrow, let us all rededicate ourselves to making a difference. Let’s return to our homes determine to persuade others to make a difference. Because with passion and commitment, the power of one can easily become the power of many.

We do not have the right in our own lifetimes to squander the earth’s resources. Just as we do not have the right to alter the ecological balance or have an adverse impact on climate. It doesn’t belong to us. It belongs to all time. And we are not owners but custodians.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, our aim should be to make all 7.5 billion people on earth defenders of our seas. Protectors of the great natural asset that we have inherited and merely hold in trust for future generations.

I close by again thanking my co-chair, the Deputy Prime Minister of Sweden, for the wonderful partnership our nations have formed this week to defend our common cause. Our Oceans are truly our future and we have gone to the world with a very strong message this week that they must be defended.

Again, thank you to Parley on Ocean for a wonderful event. Thank you to the UN Division for Ocean Affairs. And I now have the honour to formally close this formal celebration of World Oceans Day 2017.

Vinaka vakalevu. Thank you.