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PIDF HQ TAKES SHAPE

25th October 2013: Work on the Secretariat for the Pacific Island Development Forum (PIDF) gathers pace as the Fiji Government today granted diplomatic recognition to the Pacific's newest regional organization.

In two gazette notices (Gazette Notice 1289 and Legal Notice No 64) published today in the *Government of Fiji Gazette* the Fiji Government formally granted diplomatic status to the Pacific Island Development Forum as an international organization under the *Diplomatic Privileges and Immunities Act 1971*. The publication formalizes the international status of the PIDF as an international organization under Fiji laws and ensures the organization receives the same diplomatic privileges as other similar organizations operating in Fiji such as the United Nations, the SPC, the Pacific Island Forum etc.

Meanwhile work on the PIDF Secretariat building is well underway at 56 Domain Road. During the historical inaugural meeting of the PIDF which was held at the Sheraton Fiji Resort in Denarau from 5th-7th August this year the meeting approved the establishment of a Secretariat. The meeting also accepted an offer by Prime Minister Bainimarama for Fiji to host the Secretariat and to provide the initial funding for its establishment.

In his statement at the meeting in Nadi the Prime Minister said:

"I am equally delighted to say that Fiji offered to host the Secretariat and that offer has been accepted. On behalf of every Fijian, I want to thank our fellow Pacific Islanders for the confidence you have shown in us. We are deeply honored by the trust that you've placed on us, and pledge to make every effort to ensure that this important and new regional initiative is a success. Work will commence immediately in setting up the Secretariat, to maintain the momentum of this discussion. A working group comprising all the stakeholders, government, civil society groups and businesses will map out the way forward. Initially, we envisage that the new Secretariat will be housed in Suva in the former headquarters of the Fiji Film and Video Unit in Domain Road. It will be initially funded by Fiji and staffed by representatives of governments, civil society groups and business from the PIDF Region. Further details will be announced in due course but I can assure you that the PIDF Secretariat will be very different from the Forum Secretariat."

"We have no interest in establishing a competing bureaucracy. Indeed, my fellow Leaders and I have agreed that our guiding philosophy will be the antithesis of many bureaucracies – less is more and more for less. The Pacific does not need expensive facilities, we need results. The Pacific does not need an army of overpaid officials, we need committed, publicly minded individuals, utilizing scarce resources to maximum effect."

"The Pacific does not need any more top-down solutions, we need to harness the common sense of our people at the grassroots, listen to them as we identify their needs and work up. So, my fellow Leaders have agreed that we will start modestly, expand only when required and live within our means."

The Secretariat will be housed at the former offices of the Film and Television Unit of the Ministry of Information and Telecommunications which is currently undergoing refurbishment to bring it to a state befitting the headquarters of an international organization. The refurbishment is expected to be completed at the end of the year. This Project is being coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation. END

[Photos attached]



PIDF Secretariat at 56 Domain Road, Suva undergoing refurbishment



Proposed PIDF Secretariat Building at 56 Domain Road