



Hon. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, CF (Mil), OSt.J, MSD, jssc, psc

Prime Minister of Fiji and Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Sugar Industry

SPEECH AT THE CLOSURE OF THE 3rd PIDF SUMMIT

Grant Pacific Hotel
SUVA

Fri. 4th Sept, 2015
1300 Hours

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bula Vinaka and a very afternoon to you all,

Once again our deliberations are drawing to an end, and it is my task to formally close the 3rd Pacific Islands Development Forum Summit.

But before I do, I have an important announcement to make – the name of the new Secretary General of the PIDF.

The person we have chosen to take our organization forward is Mr Francois Martel of Samoa.

Mr Martel – who has been selected after an intensive process – has more than 35 years experience in natural resource management, bio-diversity conservation and climate change in the tropics. He also has extensive contacts in government, civil society and the private sector. So we welcome him to the PIDF and are confident that the Secretariat will be in good hands.

I also thank Amena Yauvoli for his contribution as Acting SG.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This has been an extraordinary gathering in which we found a collective voice to demand, in the strongest terms,

that the world finally face up to the challenge of climate change. And give us all a fighting chance to save our coastal communities and indeed, entire nations.

I have been deeply impressed by the resolve shown by my fellow Leaders and by every participant to get this issue placed firmly on the global agenda, 13 weeks out from the United Nations Conference on Climate Change.

We go from here to Paris with a clear signal - in our Suva Declaration on Climate Change - of our determination to finally get the world community to act.

As the declaration says, we are gravely distressed at the threat that climate change poses to our existence. We express profound concern that while the scientific evidence is overwhelming, not nearly enough is being done to prevent the world from warming further and increasing the danger to our way of life. And in some cases, our very existence.

Our disappointment and frustration at the world's failure to act runs through this entire document. We in the Pacific tend to speak softly. It is in our nature. But on this issue, we needed to cry out with one voice, enough is enough. And we have. And it is all the more powerful for that.

The Suva Declaration is destined to be an historic document of an historic moment in which the Pacific came together as one. And it caps a week in which successive speakers have warned of the extreme gravity of the challenge we face.

I actually wondered whether my opening speech might be a little strong. But I have been extremely gratified to find that my fellow Leaders agreed. It was good for Frank to be frank, as His Excellency my friend from Kiribati put it. It was time for us all to be frank.

It is time – high time – for the world to embrace deep and binding cuts in carbon emissions to arrest the current level of global warming. And we can now go to the world with one voice – the voice of those who have made the least contribution to the crisis we now face, but for whom it is having the biggest impact.

I want to thank Her Excellency Mary Robinson – the distinguished United Nations Special Envoy for Climate Change – for putting this as a human rights issue. Because it is definitely the right of every Pacific Islander not to have their way of life ruined by the selfish actions of the industrial nations in putting their own economies before our survival.

It is extremely worrying for us that much of the world already seems to regard our demise as inevitable – the notion that many of us will simply have to find homes elsewhere. As the Honourable Prime Minister of Tuvalu put it: It is very dangerous for anyone to think in this way. We

cannot tolerate a defeatist attitude that says being swamped by the rising seas is inevitable and we just have to get used to it. As the Prime Minister said: “It should not be about where we go, it should be about taking measures to allow us to stay.”

We passionately believe that if the international community shows enough resolve, the impact of climate change on our way of life should not include having to move anywhere. The industrialized world needs to reorganize its economies and its priorities. To stop pumping out the excessive carbon emissions that are warming the planet. And we in the Pacific implore them to make the deep and binding cuts in emissions that are needed to halt our slide into disaster.

We have 13 weeks before Paris to get the ordinary citizens of these nations to demand action from their governments to save us. So we call on ordinary people the world over to stand with us in the Pacific, to lobby their politicians, to

accept changes to their lifestyles so that our way of life can continue.

To let us sink beneath the waves is totally immoral. The world must not betray us.

As His Excellency Anote Tong so eloquently put it: *“it is not what we take to Paris that is important, but what we take away from Paris in the way of an outcome.”*

That is in the hands of the world as a whole. But with the Suva Declaration, we are taking the strongest possible message to Paris. And I thank you all for the resolve you have shown here in our capital this week. Our organization is strong. It is relevant to the lives of all Pacific Islanders. It is also no exaggeration to say that this week the PIDF really found its voice. And that voice will ring out across the world in the days and weeks ahead.

To all of you – whether from government, civil society or the private sector – thank you for being part of this grand coalition, this noble struggle. Not only are we sending a strong message to the world, but we have also laid a strong foundation for the future of our organization with the charter and governing principles that are being endorsed. We now have a new Secretary-General. And we are laying the foundation for our unique organization to grow in strength as the only generally independent voice of the Pacific Small Island Developing States free from the dominance of larger countries.

With each year, we are gaining strength with new members and new partnerships. And I especially want to thank Mrs. Robinson for coming to Suva to be with us, as well as our Chief Guest, the Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Minister of Thailand - General Thanasak - and the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Kamalesh Sharma. These global figures of influence have come to Suva to engage with us and

stand with us as we face these challenges and for that we are deeply grateful.

But I also want to thank each and every one of you in this room for your roles in making the 3rd PIDF Summit such a success. Where else can you listen to several of our island Leaders on the same podium swapping ideas and dispensing food for thought? Where else can there be such a free-flowing exchange between Leaders, civil society groups and business? Where else – informally and in the relative absence of security - can we still engage with each other in the Pacific way?

As you leave for your home countries, the Fijian people bid you farewell and hope you have enjoyed our unique hospitality.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The fight is not over. It will continue all the way to Paris and beyond. We have never been more united on any

issue or shown more resolve. So I have great pleasure in declaring the 3rd Pacific Island Development Forum Summit an unqualified success. And to formally close our deliberations until we meet again in two years' time.

Vinaka vakalevu - Thank you.