Address by Mr Mason Smith, Regional Programme Coordinator
Oceania Region (Australia, NZ & The Pacific), The International
Union for Conservation of Nature, Suva

Excellency
Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Chairman of the PIDF Senior Officials Committee
Interim Secretary General of the PIDF
Regional delegates from Governments, private sector and civil society
PIDF Secretariat
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning and bula vinaka to each and every one of you and a special welcome to those of you who have travelled from overseas. I hope your journey to Fiji was a smooth one and I hope your stay with us over the next few days will be an enjoyable one.

I am indeed pleased to be here this morning to open this Second Regional Workshop of the PIDF Agreement.

As most of you are aware, the PIDF Agreement will operationalize the vision of creating a united and distinctive PSIDS voice on sustainable development. This second regional workshop is a step towards that vision and is intended to get feedback from you all on the precise language of the agreement that has been drafted based on your input from the first regional workshop which was held here in May of this year.

I agree with the sentiments expressed at the last regional workshop that the PIDF Agreement should be a living document that ensures that the Pacific set’s its own priorities instead of following an agenda set by other stakeholders that may not fully reflect Pacific principles and issues.

I have been following with keen interest over the past few months on the progress that has been made in the setting up of the PIDF and I note with much satisfaction the positive involvement of representatives from government, civil society and the private sector in the PIDF Agreement.

Indeed this PIDF Agreement is historical in that you are setting up the Pacific’s newest and only fully multi-stakeholder regional organization that is Pacific owned and operated.

It’s also historical in the sense that the preparation of the PIDF Agreement included wide community consultation which is a first in the Pacific in terms of organizational design. Nowhere else has the intended beneficiaries ever been consulted in the design of a regional organization.

I must also add here that in my view, the PIDF structure is both innovative and bold in that it will bring to our decision space the voice of our communities. This has never been done before and is historical to say the least. I’m also of the opinion that the PIDF structure is also compassionate in that it puts the interests of communities first. These are indeed historical facts that we can all be proud of.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I was informed this morning that for the first time, developmental partners, multilateral agencies and international organizations have been included in this talanoa session. I welcome their inclusion but request that everyone bring to these deliberations the region’s interest especially those of our communities. As I mentioned, this is an encouraging development and I look forward to their input in your deliberations over the next two days.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The PIDF has come a long way since its inception a few years ago. This has been made possible through the hard work and dedication of the PIDF Secretariat and more so the vision and leadership of the Interim Secretary General and I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge his passion and hard work in getting the PIDF to where it is today.

I am advised that the process of identifying a Secretary General is well under way. Having said that may I add that any organisation, whether national or regional will need a leader with vision, passion and dedication to continue the good work of the PIDF and to successfully carry out its mandate, and I call on all stakeholders in governments, in the private sector and civil society to rally behind the Secretary General whenever he or she may be chosen.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the next two days, you will discuss and deliberate on the precise language of the Agreement so that we can have a document that is acceptable to all.

I have no doubt that given the expertise and experience in the room today that you will, at the end of your deliberations; present a revised document that can be distributed for final agreement after the second regional stakeholder meeting.

I wish you well in your deliberations and look forward to the outcomes of this workshop

Vinaka vakalevu.