



**RESOLUTIONS**  
**NATIONAL ECONOMIC SUMMIT**  
**HELD ON 20<sup>TH</sup> AND 21<sup>ST</sup> APRIL 2023, GRAND PACIFIC HOTEL**  
***"Reshaping Our Future through Genuine Dialogue and***  
***Collaboration"***

The National Economic Summit was convened at the Grand Pacific Hotel, Suva on 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> April 2023 after its official opening by the Prime Minister, Hon Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka. A wide cross section of the community and national stakeholders from Government, the private sector, civil society and academia were invited to collaborate with Government on a national policy dialogue and consultation process to be used in formulating Government's short, medium and long term policies and strategies. Five plenary sessions took place with twelve (12) breakout Thematic Working Groups deliberating on detailed outcomes.

The Prime Minister called for an end to division in our country and for the participants to help bring clarity to the challenges facing Fiji, to help set the pathway for long lasting, workable solutions to Fiji's future development. He

called for strategies to ease the cost of living and build confidence for the private sector.

In his keynote address the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Hon Biman Prasad, called on participants to help Government re-learn the process of collaboration with others. He said that the Summit was the beginning, not the end, of their work and called on the Thematic Works to continue beyond the Summit and continue to press for the matters they required. He said Government must move to a new mindset of openness with information.

### **Summit Commitments**

Reflecting on the Summit's opening statements and extensive discussions and consultations at the Plenary and Thematic Working Group sessions, the Summit made the following for Government to consider:

**To reshape, reset and transform Fiji's economy for the future it was:**

- acknowledged that the confidence, trust, and respect of the people of Fiji was the key building block on which the Government undertakes its role in nation building and recognized the need for national leaders, public officials, and all public institutions to perform their functions with the highest level of accountability, transparency, integrity, and good governance.

- acknowledged that Fiji as a nation must intensify its efforts to combat climate change, loss of biodiversity, and rising inequality, and build a sustainable and inclusive economy for the future, underscoring the need to mainstream climate change adaptation strategies across all development sectors in line with the 2050 Blue Pacific Strategy.
- endorsed the need to collaborate on opening the “bottlenecks” restricting Fiji’s future growth potential through policy, institutional and legal changes.

### **Macro-economic and Fiscal Framework**

- acknowledged Fiji’s current macro-economic and fiscal situation and concern that the current public debt levels has constrained the Government’s fiscal policy space.
- reinforced the need for sound fiscal management discipline and practice by reducing wastage in Government spending.
- called on Government to implement public revenue, expenditure, and debt management strategies to bring down debt to GDP to more manageable and fiscally responsible as a strategy to secure Fiji’s sustainable macroeconomic, fiscal, and financial stability in the medium term, and create the fiscal framework for Fiji’s economic transformation.
- underscored the importance of building trust-based development partner engagement to improve accessibility to development finance, technical support and building confidence in Fiji’s financial markets.

- underscored the importance of carefully managing the speed, quantum, and timing of fiscal consolidation.

### **Sustainable Private sector Participation**

- acknowledged the importance of the private sector to Fiji's economic transformation and the crucial role of investors.
- supported Government's vision for a sustainable and resilient private sector to deliver economic transformation.
- foster a culture that allows the private sector to flourish.
- called on the private sector and all sectors of the community to mobilize our domestic resources to diversify and reset the economy to achieve commercially-oriented levels of productivity and competitiveness.
- encouraged Government to work in genuine partnership with the private sector, civil society organizations and other stakeholders to create jobs and raise our people's income levels and living standards.
- urged Government to engage with the financial and banking system including the Fiji National Provident Fund to mobilize domestic savings and roll out financial literacy programs supportive of all categories of climate resilient investments.
- recognized the need for government to unleash the growth potential of Fiji's Business Processing Outsourcing (BPO) sector based on a supportive legal mechanisms and fiscal inducements.

- encouraged Fiji's universities to continue to strengthen their current partnership with BPO companies in preparing vocational BPO students for active engagement and employability in the sector.
- Endorsed that Universities to be part of a comprehensive innovation ecosystem.
- advocated the urgency of technological transformation as a stimulus to reset Fiji's shift towards achieving a modern private sector.

### **Key Growth Sectors**

- acknowledged the need for solutions to support Fiji's key growth sectors.
- acknowledged that Fiji's manufacturing and commercial sector has been able to modernize with significant investments in research, development, and innovation.
- called on Fiji's financial sector to mobilize domestic savings to increase debt, equity, and portfolio investment financing and take advantage of the current accommodative monetary policy stance of the Reserve Bank.
- supported the manufacturing sector as a catalyst for raising Fiji's productive capacity and called on Government to promote a major drive towards commercial agriculture by addressing supply chain constraints and linkages.
- recognised Fiji as the small, micro, and medium business hub of the Pacific, and called on Government to create the necessary business

friendly infrastructure and facilities, incentives, savings mechanisms, and supportive legal framework for the sector.

- urged Government to immediately remove bureaucratic impediments to investment and business establishment through focused system and institutional reforms across all investment approvals agencies.
- noted the resilience of the tourism sector in Fiji's immediate economic resurgence following the impact of the pandemic and slowing global economy and underlined the need for it to remain internationally competitive; and called on Government to undertake an in-depth analysis of factors constraining the growth of the sector.
- endorsed the creation of an enabling environment for growth in private sector through development and retention of skilled labour, review of existing legislation, improved infrastructure and accessibility of basic utilities.

## **Governance and Reforms**

- affirmed that political instability has negatively impacted the well-being and livelihoods of everyone in Fiji over the last four decades with serious effects on the morale and motivation of investors, public servants and our most productive skilled citizens, leading to a loss of skills and missed economic and social development opportunities.
- noted that good governance recruitment on merit and for corrupt wrong-doers to be brought to account for their actions.
- underscored the need for the legislature to work as intended and to use Parliamentary processes to build a national consensus on inter-

generational challenges such as health, education, the sugar industry and economic growth to improve predictability and unity of purpose.

- emphasised the need for the executive arm of Government to be accountable for its actions and not protected by anti-challenge laws.
- required that Government departments and entities become properly financially accountable by producing timely audited accounts and annual reports.
- recognised the role of an independent and competent judicial arm of government to ensure a just society and building investor confidence, called for increased efficiency and more timely outcomes from the judiciary and re-invigoration of Government efforts to promote alternative dispute resolution.
- called for Government to take clearer action on the reorganization and reform of Government entities, including statutory bodies and companies controlled by Government and to find solutions to the poor takeup of public private partnership (PPP) opportunities by the private sector.
- agreed that State Owned Enterprises (SOE) reforms must conform with periodic reviews of performance based indicators for board performance assessments.
- recognized the critical role of Government's diplomats in promoting Fiji's economic interests overseas including in respect of double tax agreements and other critical tax measures, trade measures and agricultural and other goods and services exports and the need for these to be better funded.

- expressed concern on the inclusion of Fiji in the European Union’s non-cooperative jurisdiction for tax evasion and avoidance and urged for necessary review.
- expressed urgency to build capacity in trade negotiations and re-negotiation of double tax agreements.

## **Human Development**

### *Health*

- acknowledged the emotional toll of the Covid-19 pandemic on the people of Fiji and its differential impact on women, children, and marginalized communities.
- noted the tremendous role played by Fiji’s health professionals in trying to improve the quality of life of the people of Fiji – but that despite such efforts, the increasing rate of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), deteriorating public health infrastructure facilities, and the impact of the exodus of experienced and senior health professionals overseas on the effective delivery of health services. This demands urgent action for regular and consistent maintenance of public health infrastructure facilities and the delivery of people-friendly health services at all levels.
- underlined the need to balance the risks and benefits of public/private partnerships in financing and delivering health care outcomes.
- reinforced the need to review the existing public health service delivery framework to enhance community representation as a public health care strategy, reinvigorating primary health care services, and the



delivery of this initiative by the relevant ministries, agencies including development partners.

- agreed to place primary health-care medical services a national priority given the increase in Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in Fiji.

### *Education and Training*

- acknowledged the quality of education which has been neglected over the years due to an over emphasis on student enrollment in schools with less emphasis on lifelong skills training which will enable students to deal with the existing and future challenges.
- acknowledged the urgent need to investigate the quality of Fiji's students advancing to higher and advanced education and the impact of Fiji's current primary and secondary education curriculum on these issues.
- called for a strong partnership between Government and the community in the delivery of cost-effective education at primary, secondary and higher education levels.

### *Housing and urban development*

- Noted that Fiji has a low home ownership rate and recognized the emergence of new informal settlements directly related to the inability of low-income families to afford decent housing.
- Tasked the Government to address informal settlements as a matter of urgent priority together with housing for low-income earners

through sustainable access, affordability and community-friendly housing and recreation designs.

### *Women, Youth and Children*

- acknowledged that almost half of Fiji's population comprise of women, with half residing in rural areas and noted that policies and programmes need to be evidence-based and tailored towards improving the economic security, health and well-being of women in society.
- highlighted the growing concern over the abuse of women, youth and children as a serious national issue.
- encouraged a national multi-pronged and cross-sectoral inclusive approach on the prevention of abuse against women and children, and the empowerment of women, children, youth, and persons with disability in all facets of nation building.
- youth engagement in shaping, designing and contributing to policy making.
- reminded government of Fiji's commitment to UN Conventions on women and children and the need to ensure that this needs a proactive cross sectoral development approach.
- noted Government's intention to convene a National Education Summit.

### *Poverty and Cost of Living*

- acknowledged with concern the increasing cost of living and the slow growth in real incomes.
- called on the private sector to share the burden and responsibility of easing the cost of living on society, especially in an environment of global economic and geo-strategic uncertainties.
- urged a review of the minimum wage considering commercial realities, the cost of living and welfare of Fiji's working poor.
- emphasized the need to review price regulation in order to effectively address the cost of living due to higher inflation.
- urged income support to households to address cost of living and the welfare of the low income households.
- emphasized the importance of the Fiji Consumer and Competition Commission (FCCC) to effectively monitor prices of food prices and regulate and enforce against instances of unfair trade practices and pricing.

### *Employment and the Labour Market*

- acknowledged the growing trend of outward migration of skilled labour in both the public and private sector.
- raised concerns about the direct impact of existing seasonal workers migration policy that is causing social dislocation.
- emphasized the serious lack of skilled labour arising from labour mobility and urged government to re-establish the apprenticeship

schemes training under the Fiji National Training Productivity Council (NTPC) as a strategy to address this skills gaps.

## **Rural and Outer Island Development**

- Noted the high incidence of poverty in rural and outer island communities despite various initiatives to lift their socio-economic status and the absence of a conducive environment (infrastructure, efficient supply chain, reliable transport).
- acknowledged the development of Fiji's rural and outer islands, and the enormous potential it offers to stimulate Fiji's economic transformation.
- underscored the importance of strengthening Government's rural and outer island planning and development machinery, review of supportive legislative frameworks and the decentralization of services to enhance people's livelihoods in rural and outer island communities and rural friendly business model.
- called for development of necessary rural and outer island infrastructure and facilities to support inclusive and resilient development.
- endorsed the rejuvenation and revamping of Fiji's rural agriculture sector as key strategy to addressing rural poverty and improvements in their livelihoods.
- urged the need to revisit the cooperative model by learning from its past failures and adapting it to suit Fiji's context by harnessing the traditional itaukei custom of 'solesolevaki'.

## **Land Based Activities**

- agreed that Fiji's land-based activities had the potential to unlock and unleash Fiji's future economic transformation.
- endorsed the urgency to review, strengthen and harmonize outdated legislations, regulations and guidelines governing the sustainable development of Fiji's agriculture, forestry, land, and mineral resources in the next 12 months.
- stressed the urgency to achieve an efficient turnaround times in the approvals of land development applications.
- called on government to facilitate efficient data management availability through a one stop agency and to avoid duplication of data.
- underlined the urgency for Government to finalize pest risk analysis and import risk analysis of fresh agricultural-based products currently under the prohibited entry list into Australia and New Zealand.
- called on Government to strengthen institutional capacity and coordination amongst all land-based development stakeholders.
- endorsed the increased involvement of women in land-based development activities and a risk-averse approach to based sector development.
- Stressed the need to mobilize the availability of financing to farmers and businesses by minimizing the reliance on Government and encouraging greater accessibility to financial institutions, access to markets with higher returns, make land-based activities more attractive for employment opportunities, strengthen capacity building

of farmers extension officers and key stakeholders and to address cross cutting issues such as climate change, environment, gender inclusion, food security and water security to minimize risks.

### **Marine Based Activities**

- considered the current development status of Fiji's marine-based activities and the many challenges impeding its growth.
- acknowledged the socio-economic contribution of the marine sector being the third largest export earner.
- noted that marine based activities contribute significantly to national food security, sustainable livelihood, provides employment and income opportunities, access to food sources and assists in maintaining balance in marine ecosystem biodiversity.
- recognized the need to control illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU) which is threatening Fiji's fishery stocks.
- urged Government to institute urgent measures to sustainably manage Fiji's fishery stocks and ensure compliance to regional and multilateral commitments on marine protected areas.
- emphasized the need for Government to facilitate the commercial processing of inshore and offshore fishery through community participation, establishment of necessary facilities, financing pathways, technological acquisition, and fishery supply value chain augmentation and market access.
- Called for Government through the Ministry of Fisheries to collaborate and work closely with NGOs, Civil Societies, fisheries industry and

development partners to capitalize the work that has been undertaken to enhance economic growth.

### **Technology and Information and Communication Technology (ICT)**

- noted that breadth of challenges confronting the development of Fiji's technology and ICT sectors, related to ICT policy, legislation and regulatory frameworks, ICT infrastructure and access, International connectivity., ICT human capacity building and Data/Cyber security and ICT applications.
- noted the call for a major economic reset and transformation, the Summit declared that Fiji must facilitate skills development and training at all levels of Fiji's educational system and provide the necessary infrastructure and support services to stimulate innovation and creativity in high end technological development.
- noted the need to review of the ICT based regulatory impediment to create level playing field for ICT operators in the area of licensed content.
- endorsed the need to establish a resilient ICT infrastructure and reliable connectivity access to connect all Fijians.
- agreed to identify best methods of connecting areas which have not been connected to Fiji's ICT infrastructure and the adoption of new technology (5G and satellite internet) to support Fiji's agriculture, education and health sectors.
- establish a National Computer Emergency Response Team 'CERT', enhance data security and sharing, combat cyber threats and enhance

ICT literacy to bridge the ICT skills gap including access to digital literacy at community level.

### **Indigenous Participation in Development**

- acknowledged Fiji's indigenous community in development and recognized the importance of increasing the engagement and empowerment of Fiji's indigenous population in commerce and business in partnership with other communities and stakeholders.
- stressed the need for Fiji's indigenous community to leverage their land and natural resources as an asset for direct equity ownership of businesses and commercial ventures in collaboration with key stakeholders, communities, and domestic and international financial institutions. It was noted that this may require fundamental land reforms.
- acknowledged that indigenous commercial participation should be predicated on the universal principle of inclusivity.

### **Water Resource Management**

- acknowledged the key challenges concerning our aged infrastructure, the multitude of water related legislations, water supply infrastructure financial sustainability, lack of solid waste management incentives and need for increased awareness on the importance of water, sewerage and waste management.



- recognized Fiji's unique geographic and physical characteristics and disposition as a contributing factor to the fragility of Fiji's water resources management challenges.
- acknowledged the intermittent disruptions in water supply due principally to the chronic lack of maintenance and upgrading of Fiji's water supply systems over the years.
- noted that this can cause serious health problems for our people and constrain the development of the private sector, if not immediately addressed.
- called on Government to immediately prioritize the upgrading and maintenance of Fiji's water, sewerage supply and waste management systems in urban centres throughout Fiji, with Suva-Nausori corridor requiring immediate concern and priority.
- noted that the area of 'Water & Wastewater and Waste Management' requires a holistic approach, and concerted efforts must be made across public and private sectors to achieve the overall goal of 100 percent access to safe water supply and sewerage services and a cleaner Fiji.
- underscored the need for research and development in innovative technologies for water and wastewater management
- urged government to consider strengthening the governance and administration aspects of water supply management, garbage collection fees, and accountability of the Water Authority of Fiji.
- acknowledged the importance of sustainable water catchment and conservation.

## **Transport**

- acknowledged that special consideration to the demands for sustainable transportation development, noting that an efficient and eco-friendly transportation system is critical to Fiji's sustainable development pathway.
- acknowledged that Fiji has a serious road congestion problem, particularly in relation to the increasing ratio of vehicles to total national and urban roads network.
- urged Government to consider short- and medium-term improvements in the road infrastructure network and management systems to support Fiji's economic transformation over the next 10 years and in the long term.
- underscored the urgency to improve the maintenance of Fiji's maritime infrastructure facilities to facilitate efficient maritime transportation and harness the commercial potential available in maritime zones.
- noted the importance of fuel-efficient air transportation as a key contributor to Fiji's competitiveness as a tourism and travel destination.

## **Energy**

- recognized the energy sector as a key driver to achieve Fiji's economic transformation agenda.
- recognized the intermittent electricity supply disruptions in urban centres as a major concern to the business community and households.

- called on the Government to address this national issue with urgency, and to investigate potential public private partnerships, renewable and climate resilient energy sources.
- called on the government to address this national issue with urgency, and to investigate potential public private partnerships, renewable and climate resilient energy sources.
- recommended the incentives (example, tariffs) and the efficient facilitation of land accessibility by the iTaukei Land Trust Board and Ministry of Lands to support renewable energy generation under profit sharing contractual agreements.

### **Strategic Policy and Planning Institution Strengthening and Capacity Enhancement**

- considered the importance of institutional policy and planning coordination within Government as key to delivering on its resolutions.
- agreed that the closure of the National Planning Office by the previous administration had weakened the decision-making machinery of Government.
- recognized the current limitations of Government's capacity to conduct policy-based research.
- agreed that Government develop robust and evidence-based research disciplines and capacities as the basis for effective policy making.

- called upon Government to reinvigorate the institutional and planning machinery of each Ministry and its coordination and linkage to national strategic development policy and planning machinery.
- agreed that a post-Summit consultative framework is critical to follow up on the commitments made at the Summit in the truest spirit of an inclusive and empowered national consultative public policy making process.
- called on the Government to immediately strengthen the institutional capacity of the National Planning Office within the Ministry of Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics.
- agreed to continue the twelve (12) Thematic Working Groups as the basis of continued consultation and dialogue.
- acknowledged the support of development partners in national development and reinforced the importance of development partners collaboration as a medium for achieving the Summit Communique decisions and future consultative engagements.

### **Plenary Sessions and Thematic Working Group Reports**

- endorsed the Plenary Session reports and the Thematic Working Group Reports and Presentations for consideration by Government in its formulation of the country's National Development Plan.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the Government expressed its deep appreciation to all Summit participants for investing two days of their valuable time in engaging in dialogue and contributing to discussions and commitment on policies that would lay the platform to reset Fiji's transformation towards a resilient and vibrant economy in the next decade and beyond.