

**Hon. Minister Kaliopate Tavola**  
**Minister of Foreign Affairs & External Trade**  
**Fiji**

**Sustainable development: Locally Managed Marine Areas (LMMAs) and local communities**

I am pleased to be here today and to thank you for the invitation to this function to further articulate the positive actions in Fiji, with regard to safeguarding the biological and economic sustainability of Fiji's environment. We know that sound environmental management is critical for the sustainable development of Fiji's natural resource based economy.

As inhabitants of Small Island Developing States, we all face the challenge of nurturing the environment as one of the main pillars of sustainable development and as an insurance for our cultural and economic survival. Like other SIDS, Fiji does not have a choice. Whatever the resources within our means, we must commit today, if we have not already, to ensuring the sustainability of the productivity of our environment. It could be the one great gift we leave to the future unborn generation of SIDS.

I am happy, therefore, to announce that:

- The Government of Fiji declares its commitment to initiating the consolidation of its national networks of Marine Protected Areas, or **'Waitui Tabu'**, as the mainstay for national incomes, coastal livelihoods and traditional cultures, hand in hand, with the provision of alternative sources of livelihood. This is to replace those sources of livelihood that may be lost because of complete protection of sections of marine areas. Although I note that in some parts of the world, such lost income has proven only temporary, as once MPAs are established and fish and other living resources are able to more thoroughly produce new generations that disperse to non protected areas, catches and incomes of local people actually can increase.
- Further, by 2020, at least 30% of Fijis inshore & offshore marine areas, (**I qoliqoli's**) will have come under a "comprehensive, ecologically, representative networks of MPAs, which are effectively managed and financed". This will contribute to the South Pacific regional system and to the global target of 10% of world seas being managed under MPA, by 2020. This global target is articulated under the WSSD Johannesburg Plan Of Action (JPOA) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), both of which Fiji is a signatory to.

One such stakeholder is the Fiji Locally Managed Marine Area (FLMMA) network group, comprising at the moment, over 40 traditional fishing rights owning groups. FLMMA includes the University of the South Pacific; government through the Ministry of Fisheries and Forests; Ministry of Tourism; and Ministry of Fijian Affairs; conservation NGOs such as the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF); Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS); Wetlands International (WI); National Trust for Fiji (NTF); Mamanuca Environment Association (MEA); Resort Support; Peace Corp; Partners in Community Development Fiji (PCDF) and the Coral Cay Conservation Society.

FLMMA develops community based management plans for fishing areas by enabling local communities to analyse problems faced; decide on management actions and monitor the effectiveness of the management plan. The goal is to empower community members to have the drive and ownership of the management plan and the monitoring of its implementation. To date, of the 410 units of traditional fishing areas across our archipelago of over 800 islands, 29 coastal districts are in various stages of implementing management plans; and 9 are working at developing management plans. The next steps include the collection of data on coastal systems to inform decisions on the areas of representative systems. Government through the Ministry of

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Fisheries committed funding to this work for the inventory of marine resources as basis for community management plan in 20 areas between 2004 and 2005.

The Fiji Government decision to devolve power to local leaders and their communities has led to the drafting of legislative measures to facilitate the transfer of ownership of traditional fishing areas, presently held by government, to the traditional holders of the fishing rights, community based kinship groups.

Fiji declared a 10 ( ten) year prohibition in October 2004 the commercial harvest of the coral reef fish **humphead wrasse** and a 5 year ban on the commercial harvest of turtles and turtle eggs.

Fiji is thus looking to harness renewed commitment of support by its development partners, as declared at the WSSD in 2002, to supplement national efforts by leveraging further funding that will take SIDS closer into achieving their targets.

It heartens me to see that such support is manifesting itself in events such as this. Ways of working between governments and development partners must change if we as collective stakeholders of our environment leave for our children a living planet.