



SPEECHES

Response Address

40TH CONFERENCE OF THE SEACEN GOVERNORS AND 24TH MEETING OF THE SEACEN BOARD OF GOVERNORS

RESPONSE ADDRESS BY THE GOVERNOR OF THE CENTRAL BANK OF SRI LANKA AND CHAIRMAN OF THE SEACEN BOARD OF GOVERNORS, MR SUNIL MENDIS AT THE OPENING CEREMONY ON TUESDAY 31 MAY 2005, NADI, FIJI

Honourable Prime Minister and Mrs Qarase, Governor of the Reserve Bank of Fiji, Mr Savenaca Narube and Mrs Narube, Governors of SEACEN Central Banks and Observers, Your Excellencies, Honourable Ministers, Board of Directors of the Reserve Bank of Fiji, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to be here today, not only as the Chairman of the Board of Governors of the SEACEN and the Governor of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka but also personally as this happens to be my first visit to these beautiful islands of Fiji where the dawning of each new day occurs. I am deeply touched by the very warm hospitality extended to us by all those beautiful people whom we met from the time we arrived at the Nadi airport. I am looking forward to an enjoyable stay in Fiji in the next few days. I am sure all the other Governors, the members of delegations and observers and all those who have come here from abroad to attend this conference find their stay equally enjoyable. I must, therefore, on behalf of all the Governors of the SEACEN countries and their delegates of observer countries, take this opportunity to thank the Governor Narube for inviting us to attend this conference and, in particular, for making these exquisite arrangements for the conference.

As you know, the SEACEN is growing from strength to strength. The members are increasing in number, activities of the SEACEN are becoming more focussed and all central banks take the SEACEN conferences very seriously. In this connection, we are all happy to note the statement of Governor Narube in his welcome remarks that this is an important conference that the Reserve Bank has hosted on becoming the 13th member of the SEACEN.

Last year in Colombo, SEACEN Governors discussed "How Central Banks In Emerging Markets Can Respond To External Shocks". It was an appropriate and timely theme at the time with emerging markets trying to grapple with the problems of external shocks emanating mainly from external terms of trade due to fluctuations in oil and other commodity prices. While central banks have a less prominent role in dealing with such issues, the same cannot be said about this year's theme for the conference. The theme of this year's conference is a topical one and one of mutual interest. It touches upon one of the most important core objectives of most of our central banks, that is, financial system stability. It is also relevant and topical because most of us are already facing the challenges posed by the Basel II accord, that we will be discussing during most parts of tomorrow.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me now turn to a slightly different subject. We have come here to attend this conference at a time when some of our member countries are still trying to overcome the impact of the devastation caused by the tsunami that hit us on December 26th. I don't have to explain to you what it looked like and what it took with it. You have seen and heard about it over the media. Governor Narube, I am deeply touched by your kind gesture in joining the Hon. Primer Minister in extending your sympathies and condolences to the families that lost their loved ones by this disaster, and, on behalf of all those countries of the SEACEN who were affected by this tragedy, I thank you for your kindness.

In conclusion, let me, on behalf of all the Governors and delegates, express our deepest appreciation to Governor Narube and to the staff of the Reserve Bank of Fiji responsible for the excellent arrangements and to the Executive Director of the SEACEN and his staff for their part in arranging the conference and meeting. We very much look forward to a fruitful dialogue, discussion and exchange of views on the issues before us and to continue with the good spirit of cooperation and sharing knowledge and experience in all central banking matters in order to enhance quality of our work and foster good relations.

Thank you very much