



# SPEECHES

## Welcome Address

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

#### WELCOME ADDRESS BY THE GOVERNOR OF THE RESERVE BANK OF FIJI, MR SAVENACA NARUBE AT THE OPENING CEREMONY ON TUESDAY 31 MAY 2005, NADI, FIJI

#### Introduction

The Honourable Prime Minister and Mrs. Qarase;  
 Chairman of the SEACEN Board of Governors and Governor of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, Mr. Sunil Mendis and Mrs. Mendis;  
 Governors of SEACEN Central Banks and Observers;  
 The Executive Directors of the International Monetary Fund and the Deputy Managing Director of the BIS;  
 Your Excellencies;  
 Honourable Ministers;  
 Ladies and Gentlemen;

Bula vinaka and welcome to Fiji.

Firstly, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to the Honourable Prime Minister and Mrs. Qarase to this conference and thank him for his excellent address.

To Fellow Governors, thank you for accepting our invitation to attend the 40th Conference of SEACEN Governors and Observers in Nadi. I extend a special welcome to Governors that are attending the SEACEN Conference for the first time.

I am sure that during the course of your stay in Fiji you will hear this greeting “Bula” many times. It is an over-encompassing word. It means many things. It means hello, welcome, good morning, good afternoon, good health – everything that is good. It encapsulates the warmth and the spirit of our Fijian hospitality.

#### SEACEN Conference

It is certainly an honour for the Reserve Bank of Fiji to host this important conference. Fiji became the 13th member of SEACEN on 1st April 2004. Our membership is barely one year old. We were thrilled when the Governors of SEACEN unanimously accepted our offer to host this important conference. I would like to especially thank Governor Perng of the Central Bank of China, Taipei, for graciously allowing the Reserve Bank of Fiji to jump the queue and bring this auspicious meeting to Nadi.

There were several reasons why we wanted to host this conference. I understand that this is the first visit to Fiji for most of the Governors and their delegations. Prior to this visit, you may have adopted different images of Fiji. Therefore, on being admitted to the SEACEN family, we wanted, at the first opportunity, to show Fellow Governors our country, our people and our culture. We have arranged a mix of activities during the conference to allow you to appreciate these things in your short stay with us. I hope that when you return home, you will not only have the real image of the country and its people but also a better appreciation of the economic challenges that we face.

The second reason was that we wanted to introduce the Reserve Bank of Fiji to fellow members of SEACEN. We have our Board of Directors here with us today and Governors will meet them at the end of this function. The Executive Management team is also here and you will have a chance to meet them during the course of the conference. Traditionally, I know that SEACEN conferences are held at the premises of the host central bank. Unfortunately, we could not take you to the capital Suva, which is a three-hour drive from here. We did not want to add to your long journey. Moreover, this venue is more convenient and is also a far superior setting than Suva, which tends to rain all the time. However, to give you some ideas, we will show you some slides of the Reserve Bank building and Suva throughout the conference.

Lastly, we wanted to host this meeting to say thank you to fellow members of SEACEN for the past assistance that we have received as observer. The Reserve Bank of Fiji was an observer to SEACEN since its establishment. We have hosted several courses during this time. The Reserve Bank of Fiji decided last year that it was now time for us to join as a full member and we are thankful for the Governors for accepting our membership. We fully support the objectives of SEACEN and the emphasis it puts on training and research on issues that is relevant to us in this region and in line with our priorities. We value our partnership and we look forward to building on our relationship in the future.

#### Tsunami

Let me at this time join the Honorable Prime Minister in conveying our deepest condolences to the many lives that were lost in the tsunami in Asia. This was one of the saddest and tragic moments in history. We wish those countries every success as they rebuild their livelihoods.

#### Theme of the Conference

The world is evolving at an extremely fast pace. We need to follow these global developments closely. These developments at some point manifest themselves in the financial markets. We central bankers need to manage the effects of these changes

on our financial system and the economy. Our country's expectations on the ability of the central bank to guide and steer the country through these challenging times can be extremely high. Financial stability has a very important place in our agenda.

It is therefore an opportune time for us to discuss the theme that we have selected for this conference which is "Towards Achieving Financial Stability" and the sub-theme "Basel II: Challenges and Readiness in SEACEN Central Banks". The adoption of the new Basel Capital Accord carries with it a host of challenges that we have to address. It is timely for us to discuss the appropriate response to the implementation of the new Accord. We need to assess our readiness. We have with us the Deputy General Manager of the Bank for International Settlements and our two Executive Directors from the International Monetary Fund to lead our discussions on the world scenario and the important issues of financial stability. I would like to thank our resource people for their assistance in this conference.

### **Program of the Conference**

Fellow Governors, we have arranged what we believe is an exciting program for this Conference. I understand that this is the first SECEN Governors Conference to be held in the Pacific. We have therefore tried to integrate the spirit of the Pacific into the entire conference. We are renowned for the relaxed way that we live. While time is essential we also believe that building relationships is also important. We propose that we adopt the Pacific Way in the next four days. We would like to keep the conference relaxed and informal. We know that this may be different from the way the SEACEN Governor's conferences are normally conducted in Asia, but we are certain that you will enjoy the Pacific flavour that we have introduced into the conference. It will feel like having a holiday while you work.

We would like to keep the dinners informal and the dress code for all dinners is "Bula" –yes, this greeting is also used as a dress code and refers to the colourful attire that we wear on many occasions. You may wish to acquire these smart casual bula wear and the Secretariat will be happy to assist you. After the official photographs tomorrow morning, I ask that we pack our jackets away as a tie is sufficient for our meetings.

### **Vote of Thanks**

In concluding, I would like to again thank the Honourable Prime Minister and Mrs. Qarase for gracing our ceremony today. Let me also extend my appreciation to the Tui Nadi for his presence and for the traditional ceremony that was performed to welcome our guests. I also thank the Honorable Ministers who have taken time off to join us at this very auspicious occasion. To the Heads of Foreign Missions that are here, thank you for accepting our invitation to be part of this conference.

### **Conclusion**

To Fellow Governors and all our visitors from abroad, I sincerely hope that you will enjoy the arrangements that we have put together for the conference. We are honored to be your host and thank you again for coming to visit us.

Vinaka Vakalevu and Thank You

1 June 2005