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President's Closing Speech at COP23

Bonn, Germany

November 18 2017

“We Must Put People First”

We should all be very pleased that COP23 has been a success.

We have done the job we were given to do, which is to advance the implementation guidelines of the Paris Agreement and prepare for more ambitious action through the Talanoa Dialogue of 2018.

There has been positive momentum in a number of areas. And Fiji is especially gratified by how much the global community has embraced our concept of a Grand Coalition for greater ambition linking national governments with states and cities, civil society, the

private sector and ordinary men and women around the world.

We all leave Bonn having notched up some notable achievements, including our Ocean Pathway, the historic agreement on agriculture, an action plan on gender and a decision that benefits local communities and indigenous peoples. We have also secured more funding for climate adaptation and I am pleased to note that we have taken the important next step to ensure that the Adaptation Fund shall serve the Paris Agreement. We have also launched a global partnership to provide millions of climate-vulnerable people the world over with affordable access to insurance.

Friends, COP23 has brought together power in many different forms. Power at all levels of government. Power in corporate boardrooms. Power in international institutions and civil society. Power in the hands of educators, investors and creative artists. The organisational power of our youth. And the power we derive as decision-makers from our people to fully implement the Paris Agreement. We need all this power to solve the greatest challenge of our age.

Right from the start, Fiji has endeavoured to use the power of the COP Presidency that you invested in us to put people first. We wanted to make a connection between these complex negotiations and the real, everyday concerns and aspirations of people the world over.

That is why we brought so many of our own people with us to Bonn who are not experts on climate change negotiations but live with climate change every day of their lives.

We also brought our Fijian Bula Spirit to COP and it's wonderful how people have responded. I especially want to warmly thank our hosts, the German Government and the UNFCCC, as well as the people of Bonn. And of course, all of you – the Parties. I draw my power from you and thank you sincerely for the opportunity to serve.

I also want to thank Morocco for leaving me with this process in good order. And I pledge to do everything in my power to do the same for our Polish friends next year. And last but by no means least, I thank all the members of the Fijian team, and especially our Chief Negotiator, our Climate Champion and our Climate Ambassador, who have been by my side.

Friends, we had a competition back home in Fiji to select a young person to represent our people and the winner was a boy by the name of Timoci Naulusala. I'm sure you'll all agree that he spoke beautifully.

I'm told that the Bonn Zone went quiet and people gathered around the screens. And he made such an impact that President Macron has invited him to Paris. Another young Fijian, Shalvi Shakshi, also struck a chord with visitors to the Bonn Zone.

Timoci and Shalvi reminded us of the human cost of climate change. And of our ultimate responsibility – the interests and welfare of our children. Every culture and faith has this as a first principle and it must be ours as well.

As I've said all along, the whole world is in the same canoe – and we put a Fijian Drua outside this hall to remind everyone of the fact. At this COP, we have put our canoe on an excellent course. So let's all leave Bonn rededicating ourselves to completing this journey together.

I asked you all to conclude the proceedings on time. I didn't mean Fiji time. But I guess that's all part of the Bula Spirit.

I thank you all once again and wish you a safe journey home. Vinaka vakalevu. Thank you.