



Honourable J.V. Bainimarama, CF(Mil), OSt.J, MSD, jssc,  
psc

Prime Minister of Fiji and Minister for Foreign Affairs,  
iTaukei Affairs and Sugar Industry and Waterways

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## STATEMENT AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT AT COP23

Bonn Germany

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Heads of State and Government,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Bula vinaka, guten tag and a very good afternoon to  
you all.

I feel a great sense of history in this room today as  
the first leader of a Small Island Developing State to  
preside over a COP.

These proceedings were imagined in the late 1980s when scientists - working together and supported by the UN system - created the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, whose work we still turn to for guidance today.

The IPCC led to the World Climate Conferences which, in turn, led to the negotiation of the “mother agreement” – the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, adopted in Rio De Janeiro in 1992.

In 1997, we achieved a landmark agreement with the Kyoto Protocol, with its measurable reduction targets. It is the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that agreement next month and is something worth recognising today.

After several COPs with varying degrees of success, we had a historic breakthrough almost two years ago with the Paris Agreement – a universal accord

ratified in record time so that it came into force at COP22 in Marrakesh last year.

And now we are in Bonn at COP23 working on the implementation phase of the Paris Agreement. We all carry the responsibility of honouring the work that has gone before us. And to fulfill our duty to safeguard the interests of those we represent today and in the generations to come.

It is a grave responsibility and we must all live up to it. And with two days to go before we wind up our deliberations - and let's do so on time - I appeal to you all to remain focused on a successful outcome so COP23 can take its place in the proud history of this agreement.

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, the Fijian Presidency's commitment to advancing what we have called the Grand Coalition is, of course, built on the work of many others that went before. From

Lima to Paris to Marrakesh, the process has been opened up to a huge number of non-party stakeholders. And these thinkers and doers have become vital allies in the delivery of our mission.

We have a lot to be proud of already. We have made progress on many negotiating items, with key decisions ready to be adopted.

I am also pleased to report that we have come to an agreement on a decision relating to pre 2020 implementation and ambition. This provides a balance between the interests of states at different stages of development and keeps this process moving forward.

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, Fiji has been very proud to lead this process and bring our culture and values to Bonn and these negotiations. The Bula Spirit that has permeated the Bonn Zone; the idea of Talanoa that is now framing our dialogue; Our

performers – singers, dancers and musicians. Our people.

This is not just entertainment. It is to remind the world that we are not simply negotiating words on a page. We are representing the interests of our people and the places they call home.

We have followed those who have paved the way to focus on the most vulnerable people and the most vulnerable nations. We do this not to present our people as victims but to emphasise that their interests are your interests. We are all bound by our common interest in reducing concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. This is humanity's mission.

I've said all along that we are all in the same canoe and you've seen the *drua* outside. It's symbolic of the journey we must all make together. So, Excellencies, Distinguished delegates. With two days

to go, let's stay the course. Let's reach our destination.

Vinaka vakalevu. Thank you.