

TUESDAY, 27TH SEPTEMBER, 2016

The Parliament resumed at 9.30 a.m. pursuant to adjournment.

HONOURABLE SPEAKER took the Chair and read the Prayer.

PRESENT

All Honourable Members were present, except the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister for Economy, Public Enterprises, Civil Service and Communications and the Honourable Minister for Forests.

MINUTES

HON. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PARLIAMENT.- Madam Speaker, I move:

That the Minutes of the sitting of Parliament held on Monday, 26th September, 2016 as previously circulated, be taken as read and be confirmed.

HON. A. SUDHAKAR.- Madam Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome

HON. SPEAKER.- I welcome all Honourable Members.

I also welcome students from the University of the South Pacific Political and Theology Course and members of the public joining us in the gallery, and those watching proceedings on television and the internet and listening to the radio. Thank you for taking interest in your Parliament.

Privileges Committee

For the information of our Honourable Members, the matter of privilege raised with me yesterday has been referred to the Privileges Committee for their consideration in accordance with Standing Order 127(2)(c). The necessary papers are already forwarded to those concerned.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND CERTAIN DOCUMENTS

HON. SPEAKER. - Honourable Members, although not in our Order Paper, we received the notification yesterday from the Minister for Education, Heritage and Arts that he would be tabling his Ministry's Report today. I will now call upon the Minister to table his Report

HON. DR. M. REDDY.- Madam Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 38(1), I present to Parliament the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts 2015 Annual Report.

HON. SPEAKER.- Please hand the Report to the Secretary-General

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. SPEAKER.- Pursuant to Standing Order 38(2), I refer the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts 2015 Annual Report to the Standing Committee on Social Affairs.

PRESENTATION OF REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

iTaukei Trust Fund Board 2014 Annual Report

HON. V. PILLAY.- Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present the Review Report of the Committee on *iTaukei* Trust Fund Board 2014 Annual Report.

Under the Standing Orders, the Social Affairs Standing Committee is mandated to examine matters related to health, education, social service, labour, culture, media and their administration.

The objective of the review was to scrutinise the *iTaukei* Trust Fund Board 2014 Annual Report, specifically on areas of the budget, administration, investment portfolios, organisation structure, functions, policies, projection achievements in 2014.

The CEO from the *iTaukei* Trust Fund Board was summoned on 10th June, 2016 to explain to the Committee on its 2014 activities and financial performance.

The Committee had assessed the *iTaukei* Trust Fund Board 2014 Annual Report for consultation with the CEO of the *iTaukei* Trust Fund Board (ITFB) and identified a few areas that the Board need to include for its future undertakings.

The outcome of the consultation was positive in which the Committee had noted the core responsibilities of the ITFB, which involves the promotion of initiatives that will strengthen the *vanua*, enhance its appropriate cultural traditions, values and well-being of the *iTaukei* and the Rotumans.

This Report was compiled and agreed to by the bi-partisan Standing Committee on Social Affairs after reviewing the *iTaukei* Trust Fund Board's 2014 Annual Report.

Finally, I wish to thank all the Honourable Members and the Secretariat Team who had been actively involved in the successful compilation of the bi-partisan Report. The Members of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs who were all involved included:

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| (1) Honourable Salote Radrodro | (Deputy Chairperson) |
| (2) Honourable Veena Bhatnagar | (Member) |
| (3) Honourable Anare T. Vadei | (Member) |
| (4) Honourable Mohammed Dean | (Member) |
| (5) Honourable Ruveni Nadalo | (Alternate Member). |

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, I also extend my appreciation to the CEO of the iTaukei Trust Fund Board for the presentation made to the Committee with regards to the 2014 Performance Annual Report.

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Affairs, I commend this Report to Parliament. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, please hand the Report to the Secretary-General.

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. V. PILLAY.- Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 121(5), I hereby move a motion without notice that a debate on the contents of the Report is initiated at a future sitting.

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Madam Speaker, I rise to second the motion.

Question put.

Motion agreed to.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call on the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs to have the floor.

Hague Convention on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Cooperation in respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children, 1996 Convention

HON. LT. COL. N. RIKA.- Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present this Report on the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, which was assigned to review and examine the Hague Convention on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Cooperation in respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children, 1996 Convention.

Madam Speaker, this Report provides a summary and examination of written and oral submissions received by the Committee meetings, commencing from 13th June, 2016.

The Report is divided into four chapters.

Chapter 1 covers the role and responsibility of the Standing Committee and the inquiry process in undertaking a review of the 1996 Convention.

Chapter 2 which provides a brief overview of the 1996 Convention.

Chapter 3 details the Standing Committee's observation and areas of concern and Chapter 4 provides a summary of the 1996 Convention.

The Constitution of the Republic of Fiji, 2013, Section 70 and Standing Order of Parliament of the Republic of Fiji, Chapter 10, Clause 109 (2) (c) and Clause 110 (1) (c), which

stipulates the role and functions of the Parliamentary Standing Committee in order to enhance transparency or/and accountability by public agencies and officials.

The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence received public submissions in Ovalau, Eastern Division, Nabouwalu in Bua, Seaqaqa, Macuata, Savusavu and Labasa in the Northern Division and the Committee had submissions in the Western Division from Sigatoka, Nadi, Lautoka, Ba, Tavua and Rakiraki.

On behalf of the Honourable Members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all the organisations, ministries and individuals who made submissions or attended public hearings.

I also wish to extend my appreciation to the Honourable Members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence and the Secretariat Staff for the commitment and worthy contributions towards the completion of this bi-partisan Report.

The Members who considered this Convention were:

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| (1) | Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca | (Deputy Chair); |
| (2) | Honourable Alexander O'Connor | (Member); |
| (3) | Honourable Mataiasi Niumataiwalu | (Member); |
| (4) | Honourable Moses Bulitavu | (Member); |
| (5) | Honourable Jilila Kumar | (Alternate Member for Honourable Alex O'Connor); |
| (6) | Honourable Ratu Sela Nanovo | (Alternate Member for Honourable Ratu Isoa Tikoca); and |
| (7) | Honourable Ro Kiniviliame Kiliraki | (Alternate Member for Honourable Moses Bulitavu). |

Madam Speaker, I commend this Committee's Report to Parliament for its consideration.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Please hand the Report to the Secretary-General.

(Report handed to the Secretary-General)

HON. LT. COL. N. RIKA.- Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 121 (5), I hereby move the motion without notice that the debates on the contents of the Report is initiated at a future date.

HON. SPEAKER.- Is there a seconder?

HON. M.A. NIUMATAIWALU.- Madam Speaker, I rise to second the motion.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. The question is that the debate on the contents of the Report is initiated at a future sitting. Does any Honourable Members oppose?

HON. MEMBERS.- (Chorus of Noes)

HON. SPEAKER.- There being no opposition, the motion is agreed to unanimously.

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON HIS EXCELLENCY'S ADDRESS

HON. SPEAKER.- We will now resume debate on His Excellency Speech with a few changes to the Batting Order.

Honourable Koya has requested a deferral to tomorrow and has hereby swapped places with Honourable Dr. Brij Lal. Honourable Vadei has also requested to be brought forward to today. Honourable Professor Biman Prasad will speak on Friday whilst Honourable Prem Singh will move to Thursday. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call on the Honourable Lorna Eden to have the floor.

HON. L. EDEN.- Thank you and good morning, Madam Speaker.

The Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Ministers, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Members of Parliament, ladies and gentlemen.

Two weeks ago our President opened Parliament with some very strong and challenging words of encouragement for us all. In line with his vision and with your indulgence, Madam Speaker, I would like to share with this House some interesting and important environmental information, related to the vulnerability of our oceans and climate change.

Let me begin with climate change. Madam Speaker, climate change is something that affects everyone on our planet and it is becoming clearer by the minute that the only way to deal with it is through a worldwide combined effort. It is everyone's business and we must all take it very seriously.

It has become abundantly clear that no one nation can battle this alone – rather it must be a universal effort where every country has a role to play in a unified and concerted manner to fight alongside each other for this common goal.

Climate change is not a myth and it is not simply about rising sea levels or the opposite extreme of drought.

It is an all-encompassing dilemma that involves famine, tsunamis, cyclones, extinction, hunger, homelessness, violence, gender balance, fear and education (or lack thereof). In fact, Madam Speaker, it encompasses every aspect of our daily lives in one form or another. And what we must recognise is that it is directly related to life as we know, and Madam Speaker, it is about balance and unity. Balance, Madam Speaker, is in our DNA, it is something that comes naturally to all of us and if we dig deep enough we will realise that it really is inside all of us, not just some new or contemporary concept.

Climate change is not just about weather and it is not just about money, however, money does play an integral part in the overall scheme of things, especially for small developing States like us who are at a continual risk of the effects of climate change. Through little or no fault of ours, we in Fiji are now faced with huge challenges of adaptation and mitigation and this, Madam Speaker, costs money.

Tropical Cyclone Winston is a stark reminder of this and the effects of that Category 5 Disaster will be felt by all of us for a long time to come.

Another example, Madam Speaker, is rising sea levels. Due to rising sea levels we are faced with the social responsibility of relocating entire villages to higher ground - this costs money and it does not stop there.

We cannot just uproot an entire community who have lived and survived by the ocean for generations to now live in the hills. These are two totally different lifestyles and these people will have to adjust accordingly and to do this they will need support.

On a regional scale, Madam Speaker, some of our brothers and sisters in other Pacific Islands face even graver situations, where their entire countries are at imminent risk of disappearing all together. This too will not come cheap. And will neighbouring countries open their doors to these soon to be displaced people like Fiji has? I certainly hope so.

Madam Speaker, a major part of climate change is our oceans. They provide essential ecosystem services that we more than often take for granted and if I may, I would like to share some data with you.

By volume, oceans cover three quarters of the earth surface, contain 97 percent of the earth's water and represent 99 percent of living space on the planet.

Oceans serve as the world's largest source of protein, with more than 3 billion people depending on oceans as their primary source of protein. Ocean and marine coastal resources provide millions of impoverished people across the world with livelihoods and more than 300 million people are directly or indirectly employed by the Fisheries Sector.

Oceans are also the primary regulator of global climate and an important sink for greenhouse gasses, absorbing about 30 percent of carbon dioxide produced by humans and buffering the impacts of global warming. In addition, oceans host huge reservoirs of biodiversity with nearly 200,000 identified species that we know of but actual numbers, Madam Speaker, are probably in the millions.

Oceans also provide key natural resources including food, medicines, biofuels and other products. They help with the breakdown and removal of waste and pollution and their coastal ecosystems act as buffers to reduce damage from storms. And for many Pacific Island countries like Fiji, it also supports a key economic sector, which is Tourism.

Madam Speaker, even the supply of our rainwater, drinking water, weather, climate, coastlines, much of our food and even the oxygen in the air that we breathe are all ultimately provided for and regulated by our oceans, which is a very good reason why they must be protected at all costs and why our Department of Environment is working so hard at doing exactly this.

Madam Speaker, oceans, seas and marine resources are increasingly threatened, degraded or destroyed by human activities, reducing their ability to provide crucial ecosystem services. Major categories of threats to oceans are climate change, marine pollution, unsustainable fishing activities and physical alterations.

For example, Madam Speaker, illegal fishing activities result in an estimated \$400 million worth of revenue loss in the Pacific region each year and for Fiji alone that figure is \$103 million annually. The inability of Pacific Island countries to adequately patrol our waters leaves us vulnerable to external non-state actors and other non-traditional threats.

Madam Speaker, I have recently returned from an International Conference on Oceans and I would like to share with you Fiji's position on the protection of Mobular Rays or Manta Rays as they are commonly known, and two particular species of sharks - the Silky and the Thresher.

Manta rays and sharks are what we call top predators in our ecosystem. In layman's terms, there are basically 3 layers in the ocean ecosystem - top, middle and bottom. If we remove or diminish the top layer, this will in turn increase the middle layer as they would have no natural predator to control them. And what will eventually happen is that the middle layer will far outnumber the bottom layer and we will no longer have any good eating fish for human consumption. There will be no more *Kabatia*, no more Coral Trout and no more *Salala*.

Madam Speaker, at this year's CITES Conference, which is the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species and which is happening as we speak. Fiji has proposed that 9 Mobular Ray Species (top predators) be added to the CITES Appendix II.

Maldives and Sri Lanka are proposing the inclusion of 2 species of shark, namely the Thresher and the Silky and we in turn are co-sponsoring each other's proposals with ever growing support from many other nations. Fiji was, a couple days ago in Niue, named a World Champion of the Oceans for these efforts and we have also been commended for taking the lead in co-hosting next year's World Oceans Conference along with Sweden in New York.

This, Madam Speaker, along with numerous other initiatives are some of the projects that our Department of Environment participates with at regional and international levels playing our part in balance and unity.

On a national level, we strongly believe that engaging with the private sector will realise economic growth. Our engagement with the private sector will enhance our efforts and implementing the green growth framework and of course our commitment to international obligations. We are actively working with organisations to install a supportive model that will enable our oceans and terrestrial masses to be resilient and sustainable.

And now to the Department of Local Government, Madam Speaker. Following the change in the fiscal year and the announcement of the National Budget, the Municipal Local Government Administrators met with our Ministry to map out an Action Plan on the implementation of National Fiscal Policies at Local Government level.

The municipal platform closely follows His Excellency's comments made during his Opening Address and our Ministry fully acknowledges his comments on the promotion of small and medium size enterprises.

Our municipal councils actively promote small and medium businesses and I am pleased to report that during the second quarter of this year, on average, a total of 8,289 market stalls have been occupied by market vendors on Fridays and Saturdays across the country.

Our ministry strongly believes in the fact that small and medium enterprises form the backbone to a strong economic and resilient nation.

To this extent, our Ministry sees the contribution of Market Vendors as very significant to shaping the overall economy of a township. Our real-time efforts will consistently evidence critical outcomes such as the upgrading of markets places, which will offer better Trading Facilities and make them more Gender Friendly. Overall, by the end of the Second Quarter, our Municipal processed and issued 17,056 Business Licenses.

Comparative analysis shows that Nadi Town recorded the highest level of economic activity and growth, with a 15 percent increase, followed by Nausori with an increase of 13 percent. Madam Speaker, all municipal authorities will continue to work closely with our office in ensuring that goals and targets set for small and medium businesses are well supported and realized within township administrations and their overall economic growth and resilience is strongly promoted.

Madam Speaker, all municipal authority will continue closely with our office in ensuring that goals and target set for medium and small businesses are well supported and realised for the internship administrations and that the overall economic growth and resilient is strongly promoted.

Madam Speaker, municipal authorities will implement His Excellency's observation on the need to continue to reform, modernising and open up new avenues of investment and opportunities. Our ministry believes that investments from both abroad and from within Fiji are key drivers to this. To this extent, our ministry strongly encourages that we see an increased number of private public partnerships through all municipal councils.

Every council in the country has been tasked with this approach to bring in on board such partnerships. This business model has now been added as a KPI for every council in the country. This measure, Madam Speaker, is targeted to attract fresh investments and install Fiji as a robust economy.

Over the last year the, municipal authorities have established suitable framework to be followed for the purpose of processing and assessing. With this PPP arrangement framework now established, the same shall be used by all councils to attract private public investment in towns and cities.

Madam Speaker, building registers for the municipal councils show that a total of 1,399 new building applications have been received for the year to-date, valued at \$200.22 million. During our municipal forum held in August, it was noted that the level of investment confidence in townships and cities is high, and Government's infrastructure investment programe is witnessing the desired outcomes in terms of driving investor confidence.

Additionally, our ministry will continue to support and provide directions to the councils through:

- (i) Actively engaging with the councils and providing institutional best practice support, review work carried on to date and support and install correctional measures where needed. This will put all councils on track towards targeted growth and search delivery.

- (ii) To ensure services delivery enhancement and consistency across all councils, the Ministry is currently working with the councils in establishing a uniform service delivery platform, though a shared services model. This will focus on especially, areas (like Finance Management and Technical expertise) where resources are hard to come by, for smaller and remote councils.
- (iii) Our ministry also leads a Bi-annual Municipal Council Forum where area of challenges in municipal performances, are deliberated on and resolved. All these support measures, Madam Speaker, will ensure that municipal councils in Fiji will continue to raise the bar in their service performance, to all Fijians residing in our towns and cities. This will also ensure that the economic growth and resilience targets for Fiji are met.

In closing, Madam Speaker I wish to highlight another big component of Local Governance, which is a key priority directly related to a clean, healthy, and resilient environment and that is- Waste Management.

Our councils in the Central Division are faced with huge challenges in waste management and an initiative that our ministry is currently working on, which is the construction of Waste Transfer Station in Laqere, will be of a great benefit in reducing overall costs of waste management significantly.

What this waste transfer station will do is accept, sort and compact garbage on a Daily basis before trans-shipment to the Naboro Landfill. While I am speaking of Naboro Landfill Madam Speaker, I would like to clear up a few misunderstandings or misconceptions of what Naboro Landfill is all about.

It is, as I said, a landfill- it is not a dump like the old Lami Dump. It is a sophisticated operation and it is the only one of its kind in the South Pacific. It has leaching ponds similar to what you would see at the sewerage treatment plant and it has enormous cells or pits that are lined with a very expensive high tech fabric to ensure that unwanted and dangerous leeches are contained and treated properly.

A specialized Compactor Bulldozer, for example, which is essential for a landfill costs \$1.2 million, so you can imagine Madam Speaker, what an expensive operation this all adds up to.

On average 150 trucks per day drop off their garbage at Naboro. This Madam Speaker, amounts to approximately 80,000 Tonnes of rubbish each year.

Our proposed Waste Transfer Station will significantly reduce both the number of trucks per day on our way to Naboro, from as far away as Nausori and Nasinu including Suva and Lami, and reduce the lifespan of Naboro as I mentioned earlier. All this as well as maintaining a clean, resilient, and healthy environment for many years to come.

As I wrap up, Madam Speaker, I wish to leave everyone with a thoughts in mind. 'It has been said that we do not inherit the earth from our parents so much as we borrow it from our Children. Let us not be the generation that takes more than we leave behind'. Thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now give the floor to the Honourable Viliame Gavoka.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Honourable Speaker, Honourable Prime Minister, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Ministers and the Honourable Members of the House: I rise to contribute to the debate on the President's speech, delivered to this House some two weeks ago.

Honourable Speaker last year, I was part of a delegation to visit the Eastern provinces of Canada and we spent a few days at the Parliament in Nova Scotia in Halifax. And in there, I read some of the observations by Charles Dickens back in the 1800 on how he saw the opening of Parliament by the Governor-General at the time and how the parliamentarians reacted to it and it was interesting that he said that the Government spoke glowingly (and I paraphrase) that this was a very illuminating speech and very gracious, while the Opposition said "No speech has been so poor such as this."

I realised then as a new parliamentarian that this is part of politics and it brought home to me that the parliamentary system is quite old and that we are just following tradition, tradition to me that have been the bedrock of civilisation for quite some time.

Having said that, Madam Speaker, I must say with all sincerity that the speech by the President as very disappointing. It was very limited in scope and very light on content and I think FijiFirst Government should be held responsible for this.

All that being said, Madam Speaker, I would like to address a point that keeps coming up with the FijiFirst Government and that is the subject of parochialism. In his speech, the President asks us to think beyond parochial interests of ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status or where we come from.

Parochialism, Madam Speaker, from all indications is anathema to FijiFirst, a position that they have taken so strongly that it has become the bedrock of how the Party governs Fiji.

If you look at the definition of "parochialism" from the Webster Dictionary, it says "to be restricted to a small area or space; to be narrow; to be limited; and to be provincial.

In the eyes of FijiFirst, we the *iTaukei* are driven by parochialism and hence are divisive. This is tragic on the part of FijiFirst as they mistakenly regard how our community is structured, the systems we follow, determine our way of life as parochial and divisive. The abolition of the GCC and the weakening of the Fijian institutions are some of the unfortunate outcome of this grossly misguided views by FijiFirst

We cannot fault people for wanting to live the way they want to live as per their custom. The challenge is to respect, to accept, the way they are and make them an integral part of the nation in unity with everyone else. This was best articulated by our founding fathers who laid a structure for a multiracial Fiji, whose strength is its diversity.

There are elements of parochialism in each community in Fiji, Madam Speaker, especially those that are ethnic and religious, which are sacred and form the very basis of the diversity we celebrate with pride. But sadly for us *iTaukei*, our form of parochialism is viewed with deep suspicion, especially as we own most of the land and resources which some fear wrongly, we would leverage selfishly to gain advantage over everyone else.

History has proven this wrong as we have made available just about everything that is available to us for the development of this country.

Some two weeks ago, Honourable Speaker, most of us were there in my village Cuvu at the funeral of the *Turaga Na Ka Levu*, my paramount chief and when you read a synopsis of his life, we found out that he was part of the chiefs who helped negotiate the landowners about Monasavu. The leader for that was Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau. Monasavu was a gigantic project and benefited Fiji by providing the bulk of the electricity in this country.

Many afterwards would take issues with the fact that the people of Monasavu and those people whose land on which electricity was transmitted did not benefit from the electricity. But instead, Suva benefitted, Nausori, Navua, Sigatoka, Nadi, Lautoka, Ba, Tavua and Rakiraki, that bulk where the people are. Now some would scoff at this and use it to score political points but those who understood this, like the Honourable Jai Ram Reddy recognized it as the zenith of generosity for which the chiefs and *iTaukei* are renowned which we should remind ourselves with.

Much has been said about the chiefs of late in a manner that is very derogatory and very sad. For the chiefs of Fiji, the guiding light is, "I came to serve and not to be served" or "others first". This was exemplified by the leader of that Monasavu Team, Ratu Penaia Ganilau. His island is now just getting its hydro power commissioned, many years after his passing. If that was a chief anywhere else, it would have been Taveuni first and everyone else last.

It is scurrilous the way they describe our chiefs and many would suggest that they live in mansions in Suva. No, they live very modestly in their villages with their people and everything that is said about them is vastly demeaning to them and to the *iTaukei*.

Madam Speaker, each community has contributed with the strength unique to it to make Fiji what it is today. For the *iTaukei*, it is our generosity but for others, it is entrepreneurship, hard work. These are what we bring to the table to make Fiji what we are today.

We are the envy of most developing countries. In 1986, the Holy Father the Pope had characterized Fiji as "the way the world should be", way back in the 1986. Yes, we have had some hiccups along the way but as a young nation, traveling towards maturity we have done very well.

Two weeks ago, groups of Central Bankers from developing countries were conferencing at Denarau and they were amazed at how a small country in this corner of the Pacific can hold it together so well. That is Fiji, we are punching beyond our weights and the Gold medal in Rio exemplified that.

All that being said, the *iTaukei* by some estimate today now make up 63 percent of the population and we lag badly in business and education. The chiefs' generosity was such that they expected Government to help their people through the affirmative action to help them in business and to improve education through the Fijian Affairs scholarship. These of course are no longer available as outlined through the 2013 Constitution, but if you are really interested in removing the parochialism, we must mainstream the *iTaukei* into business.

This is the community that engages in commerce, controlling and managing the wealth of Fiji and has to be arguably the most parochial community in Fiji.

If the Webster Dictionary defines parochial as narrow, it is true that the pathway for the *iTaukei* into the business is very narrow. If Webster defines parochial as restricted, it is true that there are many restrictions that the *iTaukei* has to overcome to get into business. If we define parochial as limited, it is true the opportunities for the *iTaukei* in commerce is very limited. If we define parochial as provincialism, it is true that from the *iTaukei*'s perspective, the business community is an impregnable province. This is socio-economic parochialism, the type of which we must combat.

We should remind ourselves of the wise words of Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew back in 1988 after the *coup*. Leaders of the Commonwealth were shocked about the *coup* in Fiji, they tried to help. They wanted to change the Constitution but Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew said "changing the Constitution of Fiji would not resolve anything. The problem in Fiji is the disparity in earning power between the *iTaukei* and everyone else. You address that, the problem in Fiji will go away." Do not change the Constitution. We did not listen to that and we are now into the fourth Constitution in Fiji and the *iTaukei* is further behind economically.

The disparity in earning power will not go away. I characterize it often as the "elephant in the room", a metaphor which relates to a problem or a risk that is so obvious that we all try to ignore. It will not go away, it looms large every day and it beholds us as leaders to face up to it with determination and good will to address it.

I have some specifics on how to do it. Firstly, we need to inject capital into Fijian companies that are already in existence and these are the provincial companies, there are 14. They can be like Fijian Holdings Limited; by injecting capital into them through a *Qoliqoli* Tax.

Today, tourism makes billions of dollars and we have a levy called the Environmental Levy. We convert that, instead of an environmental levy make it a *Qoliqoli* Tax, give it to the 14 provinces and let them inject that into their companies. Companies like Namosi Development Company, Lomaiviti Holdings, Kadavu Holdings, Nadroga/Navosa Corporation, Rewa Provincial Holdings, Yatu Lau and Company. These are companies that are already in operation, and all they need is an injection of capital to grow them to the size of Fijian Holdings.

Qoliqoli is a contentious issue, we understand that, but it was something promised to us after the Deed of Cession in 1874. The *iTaukei* of New Zealand also had the same promise through the Treaty of Waitangi and they managed to find the resolutions to it.. The resolution now is that their *qoliqoli* is reaping hundreds of millions of dollars and going into Maori companies. The same can be done for the *iTaukei* without harming any relationship that we have in this country.

Resources that are owned by the *iTaukei* and that are being used by the Government should now be returned, namely pine and mahogany. Give it back, give it back to the owners. Let them grow, let them harvest, under the management of the Mahogany Trust and the Pine Trust. Let them harvest it, sell it to the miller in the same way we look after our cane plantation. Madam Speaker, these are mostly in the hilly countries, in the mountains,. Not much in terms of economic terms, but a huge source of wealth for the *iTaukei*.

Madam Speaker, the arable land available to the *iTaukei* should be turned into thriving farms. We must all feel something when we drive through areas of Fiji with para grass, overgrown with nothing on it. We must do something.

Why is agriculture only 12 percent of GDP? Because we are still expecting the *iTaukei* to do all that with his knife and fork. We must mechanise on a colossal scale - we must. There are 189 *tikina* in this country, we must provide machinery in cluster in every *tikina* and make them productive. We need to grow, we need to plant.

The problem in Fiji today, Madam Chair, is that we are over harvesting. Dalo is now very scarce and talking to the farmers, to the buyers, it is basically because we are pulling 300,000 a week and are only planting 100,000 back. So there is a huge gap in there, Madam Speaker, which we need to address and it should be done by the *iTaukei*, by fully mechanising their farming. How to do it, Madam Speaker? We can consider a resource tax.

The corporate sector today, Madam Speaker, only pays 20 percent. In New Zealand, it is 28, in Papua New Guinea, 30 percent, in Australia, 30 percent, add it by two, or two and a half percent and collect this tax up to 2030 to help mechanise farming. FSC today is looking at almost doubling production by 2020. I know people are scoffing at this, but FSC is saying it can be done, with mechanisation.

Mauritius, a country much, much smaller than Fiji. I believe the land area is similar to Taveuni. But they are producing 6 million tonnes of cane - 6 million tonnes of cane and it is all through mechanisation. We have to look at it in this manner, if we talk about agricultural revolution, Madam Speaker, this is the way to go. We can no longer think of knives and forks.

Madam Speaker, Tourism is a behemoth. It is now the biggest in the country by far, and it keeps growing, keeps getting better and bigger. The *iTaukei*, Madam Speaker, has given so much into this industry, but it is time we review some of these agreements, some of these leases, as some of them have been pushed by the wayside while the investor is accumulating wealth. We must setup a team, to look at this. I am getting a lot of this from people, and I am horrified, but what I see written what is not happening, we must do this.

An example, Madam Speaker, Tau. The people of Tau have these caves, three or five caves that are now a major source of attraction. An operator is now operating in there, but recently he has pushed aside the landowners saying "you are a nuisance" and they have had to go to the Museum to appeal to them through the Heritage Law, to allow them to go back to the sacred caves and relook at things which they believe has been damaged by this investor. These are the kinds of things that are happening in this country and we should setup commissions to look into these and help our people who have willingly given their resources but are now being short changed by the investors.

Resource owners who own reefs the *qoliqoli*, who used to collect revenue; willingly paid for by the operators are now not allowed to collect that under the 2013 Constitution. This is a tragedy as I said, the operators are willing to pay, but the Government has put in place a Bill saying, that it is unlawful for any operator to pay a *qoliqoli* owner, to scuba-dive, to snorkel to water ski, to surf, or whatever in the waters owned by the villagers.

Madam Speaker, our Tourism workers should also be given a Service Tax. And Education, TELS, Toppers and other scholarships now amounts to about \$57 million.. The cost of tuition in Technical Colleges in this country is a \$110 million. Another \$53 million will enable our people to study tuition free at USP, FNU, University of Fiji and Technical Colleges. We have to do this, because otherwise, it is the *iTaukei* who are being left out and not getting the education. That to me, Madam Speaker, is the future for our people. And Madam Chair, for our youths, we must create a Fiji, which they can be proud of.

I was shocked yesterday, Madam Speaker, when the Honourable Prime Minister, attacked the Honourable Biman Prasad for his absence in Parliament on that day. Have you forgotten that Honourable Biman Prasad, the Leader of the NFP, was in jail that day? Have you forgotten that? Have you forgotten that he was incarcerated? Over what? Because he went to a meeting, over a meeting, that had its dialogue on the Constitution, even if he was not in jail, he had just come out of jail. How can he, leave jail on that day and be in the office in the morning. Madam, we need a better Fiji for our people, no one should be incarcerated.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Point of Order.

HON. SPEAKER.- Point of Order.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- Madam Speaker, the reference of "lie" should not be used in this Parliament, and is being said by the Prime Minister. You have to correct it yourself or you will be disciplined by the Speaker. Honourable Madam Speaker, this word "lie" should not be used in Parliament. Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER.- We had made reference to the use of the word "lie" in Parliament and I would like to request those that said "lie" which is more than one, to withdraw the word.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Madam Speaker, he of course lied, he lied. He said that he was in jail, he was not in jail on that day, so he lied. What is wrong about that? Thank you Madam Speaker.

HON. RATU I.D. TIKOCA.- He continued to use "lie" in this august House.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, I would kindly beg your indulgence, Honourable Prime Minister, I would like to ask you to withdraw the word. I think according to rules and procedures of Parliament, we can use another word instead of "lie", but we had made that ruling previously.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Thank you Madam Speaker, as I have made my point, I withdraw.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you.

HON. V.R. GAVOKA.- Thank you Madam Chair, but the point is, you cannot incarcerate someone and then ask him to turn up in Parliament the next day.

In closing, let me say something about *TC Winston*, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank everyone for the assistance for *Winston*, from abroad and from Fiji, but I need us to be careful about something. We are saying, we are stronger than *Winston*, we are not. The God we serve is stronger than *Winston*. We need to be careful of that and we are very grateful that we pray to Him, and if you remember the course that *Winston* was taking - hitting the huge population areas, the heartbeat of Fiji could have stopped, but we prayed and He listened,. Glory to his name. Thank you Madam Speaker.

(Applause)

HON. SPEAKER.- I know give the floor to the Honourable Semesa Karavaki.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Cabinet Ministers and fellow Members of Parliament. I rise Madam Speaker, to respond to His Excellency, the President's most gracious speech, when he opened the 2016 Parliament session on the 12th of September, 2016.

I paused for a while to think about the words "most gracious speech".

Madam Speaker, the word "gracious" comes to mind and that it means, according to the Scripture "unmerited favour". Unmerited favour means that we were given a favour that we do not deserve and I will be looking at this speech from that angle.

His Excellency the President's speech was delivered under Section 31 of the 2013 Constitution of the Republic of Fiji.

His purpose, Madam Speaker, was to outline the policies and programmes of the Government. In doing so, he gave us one of this shortest Government policies and programmes. I could deduce from these policies and programmes how His Excellency the President was concerned with the standard of service we give to the people of Fiji.

His Excellency the Presidents stated as follows:

"At this halfway mark - the equivalent of half time in a rugby or football match - it is appropriate for me as your Head of State not to only outline the Government's legislative programme for the coming year but for all of us to take stock of our performances so far; to review the progress we have made as a Parliament and as a nation over the past two years; and to reflect on ways in which we can improve our quality of service to the Fijian people because it is to them that we owe our allegiance as Members of Parliament, and in my case, as President and whose interest we had solemnly sworn to uphold."

Madam Speaker, I pause to think about the shortest policies and programmes and I could find as I assessed the content that is indeed full of wisdom. It is indeed full of wisdom. This statement, and we as Members of Parliament need to align ourselves with the words of wisdom given by His Excellency the President.

He said that it is not the interest of the party that we must uphold. It is not the interest of the Party that we belong to. It is not our own interest that should be paramount. but the interest of the people. That is a lot of wisdom, Madam Speaker, in that statement.

If we are to observe the advice of His Excellency the President that Members of Parliament should be allowed to perform on that very same platform by putting the interests of the people first and not the party we belong to. Members of Parliament must be allowed to vote in this House according to our own conscience.

In order to do this, Madam Speaker, Section 63(1)(g) of our very Constitution should be deleted, in my view. In order to allow for liberal and informed debates and decision to take place in this House that provision, Madam Speaker, refers to that the expulsion of a Member who would vote contrary to the standing of the party in the House.

Madam Speaker, this would be true democracy and true interest of the people would be served in accordance with the wish of His Excellency the President. When we look back at our performance as Members of Parliament, we can see that we have failed miserably when Parliament passed a resolution to amend Section 37 of the Standing Order, regarding the representation of petitions in this House. Instead of encouraging the people to bring their concern to this House we as representatives have slammed the door on them by allowing the amendments to carry in this House. I have been asked the question, who are we? What kind of modern state referred to in His Excellency the President's most gracious speech?

The modern state 'we', that is SODELPA, Madam Speaker. The SODELPA Government would put in place is one that allows the peoples interest, the House of the people, their interests to be brought into this House. Where would the people go if we slammed the door on them or when we turned our backs on them? I would like to thank the Honourable Prime Minister. Thank you, Honourable Prime Minister ...

(Applause)

... for having time to visit the people and listen to their problems and struggles but there are some who would not be satisfied with the solutions and would like to come to Parliament and I would expect Madam Speaker, in the very same spirit that the Honourable Prime Minister has gone out to the people to visit them and to console them, would also exist by allowing the people to come into this House.

These are the people who had been denied the right to present their petitions to Parliament. With that same spirit, Madam Speaker, I believe the Honourable Prime Minister will also extend his arms open to these people see and to ensure that these people are given the liberty, freedom and access to bring their problems into this House.

This House under the FijiFirst Government, Madam Speaker, had denied the people of this nation their basic Human Rights to come into this Honourable House with their petition but I believe that will change.

Instead of being the House of the People, Madam Speaker, it has become the House of the FijiFirst Government.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- I can see very few options available for any adjustment to be made to this so called 'modern state' been built by the FijiFirst Party. The people will have

to wait until 2018, Madam Speaker, when they can reclaim the nation again for the people of Fiji.

The words of His Excellency the President is also prophetic, Madam Speaker, when he said; “it has been truly a bitter sweet year, the bitter impact and legacy of *TC Winston* coupled with one of the sweetest moments in Fijian history that none of us who witnessed it will ever forget.” He was referring to the devastation of *TC Winston*. The above expression, Madam Speaker, is the opposite of the experience expressed in the Book of Revelation of the *Holy Scripture*. His Excellency the President is a person of the Word and is fully aware of the content of Chapter 10 of Revelation. And it states in verse 7, Madam Speaker, which I will quote:

“But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

And the voice which I heard from heaven spoke unto me again and said, ‘Go [and] take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.’”

In verse 9, Madam Speaker, “And I went unto to the angel, and said unto him, ‘Give me the little book. And he said unto me, ‘Take [it], and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.’ And I took the little book out of the angel’s hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.”

The statement Madam Speaker, by His Excellency the President and the prophecy of Revelation Chapter 10 refers to experiences that makes him must go through.

The people of Fiji were already talking about Fiji bringing the rugby seven Gold home even before the team was being put together. It was prophesied by a profit of God many many years before that. Even the Captain of the winning Fiji team alluded to this during the celebration when he said something like this and I will paraphrase: “Mr. Prime Minister it was for foretold that this win is going to take place during the time of your Government” but he did not say, Madam Speaker, was that when this happens it also means the end of your Government.

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, this means that the moral of the modern state the FijiFirst is advocating is not the one that is to be used by Fiji for the future of the beloved Nation. We have the model and we are the Government in waiting. The FijiFirst Government has done its part. It has done its part Madam Speaker and I thank the Honourable Prime Minister for being a man of the people.

HON. J.V. BAINIMARAMA.- Thank you.

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- But it is time for the people to provide for the Government to come in for the purpose of governing the people with God the Creator, reigning as the true head of this nation.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. S.D. KARAVAKI.- Madam Speaker, even Paul, he wrote about this. 'How one will come and end and another one will continue from there. It is the same kind of preaching, what he says "I have planted, Apollo's watered but God gave the increase". It is time for FijiFirst to do its part and at the end comes and SODELPA continues.

His Excellency the President, Madam Speaker, also said and I quote:

"The nation calls on you to do all you can to harness the spirit of our Olympic win. To tap the wonderful sense of unity that has descended on our beloved Fiji. To leave aside petty squabbles, rivalries, divisions and grand standing for the personal and political gain."

I believe His Excellency the President, Madam Speaker, had missed the opportunity to point the nation and its people to the foundation of two unity. The unity referred to is artificial because it is based on the glory of men. This Madam Speaker, I refer the *Holy Word* of the Script in the Book of Isaiah, chapter 40, verse 6 says:

"A voice says 'cry!' And I said, 'What shall I cry?' All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the Lord blows on it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God will stand forever."

That is the basis and the foundations of true unity, Madam Speaker.

The nation have celebrated without using the opportunity to bring true revival to this nation. Some have spoken before me have referred to the opportunity for revival to have taken place on this land.

We must guard against false revival because it will not bring to true reformation. His Excellency the President, Madam Speaker, refers to revival and modernisation. Reformation reform that it wants to bring into services of the Government. Even His Excellency states it is also my duty today as Head of State as obliged by the Government Legislative programme for the coming session.

Once again it continues its programme of modernisation and reform and opens up new avenues of investment and opportunity. When we are talking about continuing reform, Madam Speaker, does it mean making workers redundant without any regard to their humanity and dignity?

If it is so then the Government must pause to reconsider its reform. It must ask, what is the right the way of bringing reform? Let me share with you, Madam Speaker, a recipe of reform. And I quote from the writing of a well-known writer, Allan G. White. This is what he said Madam Speaker:

"A revival and reformation must take place under the administration of the Holy spirit. The revival and reformation are two different things. The revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart. A resurrection from the spiritual death and on the same token refers to reformation. Reformation signifies a

reorganisation, a change in ideas and theorists, habits and practises. Reformation will not bring forth good fruit of righteousness unless it is connected with the revival of the spirit.”

Revival and reformation are to do their appointed work and in doing this work, they must blend the Review and Herald February 25, 1902. The danger, Madam Speaker, of introducing legislation under the pretext of reform and modernisation without revival is that, it would be done in an unrighteous way. Meaning, Madam Speaker, that legislation will be done to target section, certain sections of the community, to disadvantage certain members of the community. Legislation would be introduced in the platform of unrighteous intentions.

Madam Speaker, that is the problem this nation will face when there is no spiritual revival. We can have wisdom, all the wisdom of this world, all the degrees probably university we can obtain, but if we do not have the spiritual revival, we cannot bring proper reformation into the services that this land and the people of Fiji requires.

Madam Speaker, I hope that we will acknowledge and accept that anyone can bring reform, that anyone can bring changes, but it must be accepted, Madam Speaker. This is what I can see that the FijiFirst Government does not have. We on this side are prepared to help. We are prepared to advise them on how to do or go about this so that righteous reform reformation can come to this nation and God will bless us all. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(Applause)

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you. Before I call on the next Honourable Member to have the floor, I would like to welcome all the members of the public who continue to come in and filling the gallery. A special welcome to the USP Political Theologies students who are here with us this morning. Thank you for your interest in Parliament.

I now give the floor to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

HON. RO T.V. KEPA.- Madam Speaker, Honourable Prime Minister and Honourable Members, I rise to respond to the President’s gracious speech on the occasion of the opening of Parliament on 12th September, 2016.

His Excellency had outlined Government’s legislative programme for the coming year as well as reflecting on the past performance of Parliament and how it can improve on that.

I will speak Madam Speaker to some of the issues as highlighted by His Excellency.

Madam Speaker, *TC Winston* has exposed the extreme vulnerability as a small island state to the impact of Climate Change and to the threats of rising sea levels.

More importantly was the realisation that all homes constructed in urban, rural and maritime areas must be built with quality building materials and to erect structures that will withstand strong winds and in this instance, a Category 5 cyclone.

Madam Speaker, whilst I acknowledge the concerted effort by Government to champion climate change internationally, I strongly urge Government to walk the talk and pay attention

to the unsustainable logging and mining practices which will no doubt be further aggravated by Government's future plans to engage in seabed mining.

I also note with concern the differential impacts of unsustainable development practices on food security, reduction of potable drinking water and loss of eco-systems and livelihood which are just some of the adverse impact experienced by our Fijian communities, and the situation has been further aggravated by the onslaught of *TC Winston*.

Madam Speaker, rehabilitation assistance had been provided by foreign governments, NGOs, families and friends living abroad and ordinary people in Fiji.

Opposition MPs also have made contributions and all of these should be of great assistance in the rebuilding exercise.

Whilst we acknowledge all the challenges faced by Government in rehabilitation, reconstruction and bringing normalcy to those severely affected, we must stop and ponder, reflect and identify what lessons we can learn so that we can better manage our situation when another disaster comes our way as it surely will.

I wish to make some observations to this end.

Government could invest in building its own evacuation centres, beginning with the red zone areas that can withstand Category 5 cyclones, located on high ground in which evacuees can be safe if there is flooding or a tsunami threat.

Apart from the army engineers, a reserve list of rapid response teams of multi-skilled trade personnel that have graduated from technical colleges and in this regard, these colleges should have a curriculum review to offer a more relevant education.

With the appropriate tools, these personnel can be mobilised immediately after a disaster strikes, for example, plumbers, carpenters, electricians which right now are in short supply.

When building materials are provided by hardware companies or by Government, transport costs should also be factored in and safe storage must be ensured to prevent deterioration of materials and pilferage.

Quality tents with a 12-month lifespan to be provided that can withstand heavy rains and winds as six months after *TC Winston*, we are witnessing deterioration of some donated tents and complaints from stakeholders on the weathering encountered.

I do not want to sound ungrateful, Madam Speaker, for the assistance on tents from donors but the reality is that we do not have the ability to provide the rapid response given the bottlenecks that currently exist. Therefore, longer periods for families and schooling in tents must be anticipated, hence my call for heavy-duty tents that would adequately provide the necessary shelter given the changing weather patterns within the 12-months period.

In this regard, Madam Speaker, we thank United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) for the latest donation in tents for schools.

Timely issuance of quarterly financial reports to Parliament, particularly the first and second quarter of 2016 as that would provide a true picture of Government's financial situation after *TC Winston*.

Timely reporting on total funds received, both cash and in-kind contribution for support to TC Winston and the total amount utilised to ensure transparency and accountability for assistance received.

Capacity of hardware shops to provide the needed quality materials for rehabilitation should be properly assessed.

Madam Speaker, I have highlighted only seven areas. I am certain there are other areas that we could improve on in the future when dealing with other cyclones on natural disasters.

Madam Speaker, on our Sevens Team Olympic Gold: I wish to pay tribute to Ratu Peni Raiyani Latianara from Serua and his team for a sterling performance as we all know that sports and in particular Rugby Sevens is a unifying force for Fijians living in Fiji just as much as for those living abroad.

The mothers and fathers and families of the Sevens Team and support staff, spouses of rugby players and in particular Mrs. Natalie Raiyani Latianara. Without all the moral support and encouragement, a gold medal would not have been possible.

For all the supporters, Madam Speaker, here at home and abroad and those that accompanied the team to Rio, including the Honourable Prime Minister and other athletes, sportsmen and women, sports administrators and in particular the Team Fiji Chef de Mission, Cathy Wong - thank you for your leadership.

Last but not the least, on the Sevens Team, looking back at Honourable Iliesa Delana, a Paralympic gold medalist, where after his gold medal win in 2012, he was awarded amongst other things, a \$100,000-house by the Honourable Prime Minister in which he deservedly enjoys the fruits of his labour.

All the hype accorded our sevens gold medalists after Rio therefore, would be best capped with a \$100,000 housing project, which includes land and house for which a precedent has already been set.

This will not only aptly and appropriately reward them but also send the right message to our future champions, from *Kaji* Rugby level upwards, including other sports that winning a gold medal for yourself and your country will reap you a just reward, for after all, the limelight has been taken off our sevens heroes and the limelight has moved on. Their money has run out, old age descends on them, the least our country can do for them is to give them a proper house to enjoy their golden years.

In addition, Madam Speaker, we will often overlook the contribution of support staff who work behind the scenes that provide the critical services, so rewarding the thirteen Sevens players including Ratu Peni Raiyani Latianara from Serua – Head Coach; Ropate Kauvesi – Section Manager; Nacanieli Cawanibuka – Strength and Conditioning Coach; and William Koong – Physiotherapist, 17 in all at \$100,000 each would be \$1.7 million – still much less than the \$9 million budget allocation for the Natadola Golf Tournament.

Only \$1.7 million, Madam Speaker, where the whole of Fiji and beyond, followed so closely over the past few years, set against the \$9 million that hardly any local knows about or will participate in. Where is the justification for spending that amount on a golf tournament versus a gold medal?

Empowerment of young people through education, Madam Speaker, is the most important investment any government can make and has far-reaching implications that will assist in defying socio-economic norms and realities as well as helping grow Fiji economically. I believe educational reform is also worth any cost and should not be bound by political point-scoring.

As a former educator, I understand too well the complaints and challenges of the education system. It is not a problem that can be solved overnight but it is a problem that can be solved by deep rational engagement with all stakeholders and the citizens of Fiji including our current consumers of the education sector.

As it stands, poor educational outcomes and inefficient education systems are of deep concern and Fiji does not stand alone in this.

In many countries including Fiji, primary schools fail to provide students with appropriate cognitive skills like numeracy, literacy, problem-solving ability and general scientific knowledge.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, inadequate education at the secondary and tertiary levels, including technical and vocational education and training, is leaving students ill-equipped to meet the job market's changing demands.

As a result, Fiji is still struggling with the mismatch between the skills that employer seek and those that workers have. Whilst looking at the education initiatives introduced by the Government, I must emphasise that quality and affordable free education will only be a reality if there is a comprehensive review of the education system by an Independent Education Commission. In that regard, I still strongly recommend that an Independent Education Commission with the real desire to implement fair and effective educational change is needed now more than ever to reform our education standards and push Fiji into the 21st Century.

Madam Speaker, then and only then we will really know whether text books are still needed or whether investment in tablets, computers and other IT products is the way to go. The Honourable Minister for Education an Independent Education Commission is still urgently required to avoid major blunders, which is becoming very costly for taxpayers.

Madam Speaker, Chapter 2 of the 2013 Constitution on the Bill Rights lists the various rights that the State is obligated to provide. May I urge Government, Madam Speaker, to expedite the provision of affordable quality health care.

Whilst I congratulate Honourable Rosy Akbar and Honourable Alexander O'Connor on their new appointments, I sincerely hope and pray that they are able amongst other 20 medical issue, Madam Speaker, to strengthen workforce capacity and capability and meet the health needs of the people of Fiji. The current ratio of one doctor to 3,000 people which her

predecessor announced in June that the numbers in 2018 would be increased to one doctor to every 1,000 head of population is a big ask.

One doctor to 3,000 per head of population is mind boggling but that is the reality so many people face on a daily basis when they go to the hospitals and health centres. It is not only doctors' salaries, Madam Speaker, which was announced an increase of \$40.4 million in the 2016-2017 Budget but also working conditions that needs to be addressed. Lack of basic equipment, lack of resources to develop medical personnel professionally, particularly in specialist areas, requires urgent attention. If nothing is done to address these problems, Madam Speaker, the exodus of health professionals for greener pastures will continue.

Madam Speaker, whilst I recognise the need to introduce new laws to address the new challenges that we face as a nation. I am mindful of the importance of public consultations for those that would be affected by the proposed legislation or the revised legislation.

However, the dangerous practice of fast tracking of Bills under Standing Order 51 had facilitated the fast tracking of 59 Bills in 2015 and 14 Bills so far in 2016 with one just yesterday. Some of those fast tracked Bills in 2016 which were very important Bills and warranted public consultation included the following:

1. Companies (Amendment) Bill 2016;
2. Employment Relations (Amendment) Bill 2016;
3. Fair Reporting of Credit Bill 2016;
4. Passport (Amendment) Bill 2016
5. Prevention of Bribery (Amendment) Bill 2016; and
6. Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption (Amendment) Bill 2016

All new legislations, Madam Speaker, to be introduced are very important legislations that absolutely calls for public consultations and I wish to name a few that will affect the *iTaukei* community especially.

These are the:

1. Patents Bill (which will come through);
2. Industrial Design;
3. Trademarks Bill;
4. Traditional Knowledge and Cultural Expressions; and
5. Transplantation of Human Organs Bill

Other new legislations would definitely call for wider community consultations so that we do not have to have regular revisions and amendments. I see no reasons for the fast tracking of some of those Bills unless it is a matter of life and death.

Madam Speaker, the Honourable Opposition MPs cannot make any informed decision on all the Bills as we do not have access to an Independent Parliamentary Counsel and in that regard, Madam Speaker, I call on Government to establish the Office of an Independent Parliamentary Counsel.

Madam Speaker, in our beautiful country of Fiji where we have experienced difficulties through the various *coups* and related constitutional issues. I felt that the outgoing UN

Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon after 10 years in office, in his address to the UN General Assembly on the 20th September, 2016, was specifically addressing the people of Fiji when he said and I quote:

“Indeed in too many places, we see leaders rewriting Constitutions, manipulating Elections and taking other desperate steps to cling to power. Leaders must understand that holding office is a trust, granted by the people not personal property. My message to all is clear, serve your people, do not subvert democracy, do not pilfer your country's resources, do not imprison and torture your critics.”

Those parting words from the outgoing UN Secretary General are act, appropriate and relevant for us to take note of and pay serious attention to.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I wish to register my grave concern on the utterances made by the Honourable Prime Minister yesterday in regards to the National Federation Party and in particular comments that were directed to the President of the NFP who is not in the House to defend herself.

Madam Speaker, through you, may I request the Honourable Prime Minister to take his concern to Court as we were advised by the Government's Chief Legal Adviser in this Honourable House to take any matters into the Court if we had any issues of concern.

Madam Speaker, with those few words I thank His Excellency for his gracious speech.

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Members, we will now suspend the sitting as we break for refreshment and we will return at 11.30 am.

The Parliament adjourned at 10.57 a.m.

The Parliament resumed at 11.30 a.m.

HON. SPEAKER.- We will resume from where we left of in the Order Paper and I will now give the floor to the Honourable Ratu Kiniviliame Kiliraki.

HON. RATU K. KILIRAKI.- Madam Speaker, Honourable Prime Minister, Honourable Attorney-General, Honourable Cabinet Ministers, Honourable Leader of Opposition and Honourable Members of Parliament, I join the Honourable Members who have preceded me in in thanking His Excellency the President for his inaugural most gracious speech in the opening Parliament on 12th September, 2016.

Appropriately, I must also take this opportunity to congratulate our Sevens Rugby team for bringing home the first ever gold medal to Fiji from the Rio Olympics. You have made us all proud, I must also acknowledge Ratu Peni Raiyani and the technical support team of specialist for your efforts which undoubtedly has brought much personal satisfaction of a milestone achievement. Celebrations still continue as the players share their moment of success with their relatives and the *vanua*. *Vinaka vakalevu*.

Madam Speaker, I will lapse on my part to bring the attention of this Honourable House that immediately after victory in Rio, the Secondary Schools Deans Final which brought the nation to a standstill as the Under 18 for Queen Victoria School (QVS) and Marist Brothers High School played to a draw at the final whistle.

Congratulations to the QVS Under 18 for winning by scoring the first point through a penalty on its sudden death situation. Going forward these players if groomed and nurtured properly in years following will be the future National 7s and 15s reps.

Congratulations also to QVS for the sterling performance having won the trophies in the Grades under 14, 15 and 17 despite the diaspora situation the students are placed in because of *Tropical Cyclone Winston*. Perhaps we can learn a lesson or two as a nation from the efforts and determination of stakeholders and students to make it happen despite the destruction of the school.

Commendation to the Ministry of Education in allowing this provision as student amongst themselves maintain their connection identities, spirit and pride of their school as awake the beginning of the school at Matavatuou next year.

I will also fail in my duty to acknowledge in this House the great contribution of Indonesian Government in rebuilding the school. It is indeed a pleasant site to see what they have done to the school. It was of no surprise that the Indonesian Government chose to begin from the Chapel, the House of Worship in their programme of repairs in spite of the bad that this chapel was built by the old boys which was opened in 1964.

To digress further, given the limited financial support from Government through the Fiji Sports Commission, the National Sevens the exposure of our country to hundreds of millions of viewers around the world definitely surpasses the exposure of Fiji through the \$9 million Golf Tournament.

Madam Speaker, after Rio, this side of the House still cannot comprehend the rationale in the allocation of \$9 million to the Golf Tournament yet again this year. I fail to see any justification and tangible outcome as for the \$9 million allocation. Golf is the rich man's game and to use the taxpayers money for such purposes is injustice.

Poor kids settlements and villages around the country who play with plastic balls, coconuts or practically anything they can pass on any space, roads or road sides, on the beach anywhere at all. Madam Speaker, these boys play and practice in fields that are unsuitable for rugby. We see the advertisements in the TV almost every day and we boast about it, our boys developed their raw talent from playing with the coconuts and plastic bottles any space at all.

Madam Speaker, it is a shame because as our youths dream of proper and decent playgrounds, yet we see \$9 million goes to golf so that Fiji is exposed to the world as a tourist destination. Sevens rugby is diminished and rendered this reasoning as relevant anymore. Hundreds of millions of people will always see and identify Fiji as Sevens World and also Olympic champion.

Madam Speaker, take this \$9 million and invest in 100 decent rugby fields at villages and settlements around the country every year to develop talent and skills amongst our youths. Rural youths are denied the opportunity to develop their talents because they are denied this basic facility, classical example are Rupeni Caucau and Seremaia Tuwai and many others.

The tsunami effect on the Gold Medal winning from Rio has generated enormous interest from overseas clubs and tournament sponsors to invite Fiji teams to compete and play in their clubs. The presence of Fiji players lifts the profile of the tournament.

Nonetheless, Madam Speaker, our clubs are going to tournaments in Samoa, Australia, Sri Lanka, Singapore, South Africa, Kenya, Europe and Argentina. Apart from those that make their own individual arrangements or secure contracts to play in clubs in both codes as well as Rugby League for periods of six months or even one year or more.

I must mention and give credit for their efforts for these youths have developed their skills and with confidence they have chosen to pursue rugby as an opportunity and earn some money. Teams like Rosi, Newtown, Uluinakau, Kabadamu, Red Rock, Rosi, Daveta, Yamacia, Nabua, Waibasaga in Waimala, to name a few. All these teams pay for all their expenses.

Samurai Rugby Club managed and coached by Ratu Sailosi Naitoge SNR has consistently sent his Sevens Team to Kenya for a number of years and they played there on contract for six months or more. These are youths who otherwise who waste away their prime years in the villages because there is no opportunity on offer for them. Fiji has become a goldmine for talent in rugby sevens and fifteen's world over.

It is my due to mention in this Honourable House the donation by Clermont Rugby Club, a top 14 club in France of donating FJ\$28,000 to build a teachers quarter through Ratu Sailosi's rugby connection. This is a first rehabilitation to take place in Ra High School, *vinaka* Clermont.

Remittances to the nation is next to tourism in foreign exchange earnings and rugby players contribute substantially.

Madam Speaker, allow me to express my deep concern in the perceived manner this Government portrays the image that it is representative of all Fijians of Fiji. It desires it is the indigenous Fijians develop their natural resources which lies idle and in abundance throughout the country of specific concern is the ongoing infrastructural road works of new roads and maintenance of existing ones through the province of Naitasiri. As we are aware the arrangements undertaken by previous Governments where road works and general maintenance were directly supervised and co-ordinated by divisional engineers based in the four divisions and all the road works and general maintenance were undertaken under the various phases of Fiji Road upgrading projects 1 to 5 with professional staffs seconded to Fiji, under the auspicious of the Australian Government through its Australian International Development Assistance Budget (AIDAB) programme.

Madam Speaker, however, the FijiFirst Government under its reform initiative did away with this arrangement and instead introduced the Fiji Roads Authority and awarded the biggest chunk of the National Budget to this autonomous authoritative creature which decides his own budget outline, ranging from the payment of personal emoluments to mainly expatriate staff, costs of various operations and it is capital infrastructural expenditures.

In the process, the FijiFirst Government had laid off employees who are breadwinners even some are sole wage earners in their families. Some have lost their homes, items under credit facilities were lost because of their inability to meet the payments. Multiplying negative effects on their livelihood, their self-respect, self-esteem and social standing in their communities were severely impacted.

Madam Speaker, this brings into attention the recent deportation of the MWH expatriates resulting in the severing of engagement with FRA and subsequently the loss of employment for 120 wage earners for their families.

Madam Speaker, I need to put in this House the highly questionable practice by Fulton Hogan Highways in awarding a sole right to an individual Chinese Company to supply gravel to all the new roads as well as the gravel for the maintenance of existing gravel roads throughout the Province of Naitasiri. This company extracts gravel from the upper Waimanu River at the Vatudavila Pit.

While carting gravel to Nasiriti, Naitasiri, a distance of 92 kilometers, with the cost to the taxpayer of \$340.40 for a 5 cubic meter load at 74 cents per kilometre cartage rate only. This cost is variable according to the distance. The longer the distance the more the charges of cartage. Additionally, royalty payment to TLTB gazetted rate of \$1.61 per cubic meter. The company then charges its own mark-up rate on the amount of gravel supplied. The contention in this issue is why a cart gravel for much longer distance and pay when gravel is readily available at much closer sites.

Abundance of gravel deposit, Madam Speaker, are located all along the rivers of Waidina, Wainimala and Wainibuka. Resource owners are denied the opportunity to have a fair share in the distribution of wealth in this extractive industry. It is common sense that to cart gravel to as far away as Nasiriti, there are closer gravel pits at Naluwai, Waidracia, Serea, Naikasaga, Naivucini, Waiga, Nadovu, Lutu, Wainimala, Matainasau and Udu that are accessible at a cheaper cartage cost and therefore lesser burden to the taxpayers and most importantly for the resource owners to have a share of the income through the royalty payment and other arrangements with the extractor.

Madam Speaker, this is also relevant to Vunidawa, Nawaisomo Road works for gravel deposits are abundant along the Wainimala River and Nakorovatu, Maatailobau, Nairukuruku, Navuniyasi and Nakorosule. For the Naqali Namosi Road, gravel deposits are very much abundant along the Waidina and Sovi rivers. Villages including Naqali, Vatulili, Vanuakula, Lomai, Nauluvatu, Nabukaluka, Nadakuni, Wainawaqa, Nasele, Nasirotu, Nasevou and Delailasakau could very well benefit economically from the extraction of the gravel resource.

Madam Speaker, equal distribution of meagre lease money is inflated misinformation that will make Fijians richer. Equal distribution regulation is morally wrong and will make landowners more poorer, 90 percent of the money distributed is used for consumption and we are led to believe by this propaganda that we need to educate on how to save and invest their money. This is an insult to our intelligence as people because families are finding it hard to put food on the table.

Madam Speaker, when the equal distribution regulation was enforced by Regulation in 2010, iTLTB was not in a position to enforce the implementation in this process because it was not technically ready. Landowning units were then advised by the iTLTB to form Trust Account where lease money was to be deposited in.

Madam Speaker, Trust Deeds were very specific in terms of the operation of the account by the trustees. This arrangement had enabled Land Owning Units through the Trust to implement development programmes and investments. Committees and regular meetings are part of the Trust responsibility. Budgetary allocation endorsed during the AGM of the Land Owning Unit to implement Programs to address investment, social development in housing, education, scholarship, *vanua* allocation and administration work.

Madam Speaker, I can relate to two Land Owning units that I have close association with, which have successfully progressed through the Trust in provision and implementation of their programs before the enforcement of equal distribution of lease money policy.

Since 2011, one of the trust that invested in Fijian Holdings, Vision Group Investment in shares and fixed deposits to the tune of \$110,000 and that also bought a three tonne truck under Rural Service License transporting school children to schools.

Madam Speaker, when the equal distribution was effected, it was difficult to convince the members to agree to diverting lease money to the Trust.

Madam Speaker, another very good example is the *Mataqali* Lomanikoro of Colo-i-Suva.

Madam Speaker, through the Trust 14 houses have been built for each unit family and is still continuing. Standard house, three bedroom, one kitchen, veranda and ablution block. Equal to or more than Grade 5 Government Quarters. They have spent \$600,000 so far.

Madam Speaker, *Mataqali* Lomanikoro has plans to extend the boundary of their housing project because the current housing space in the village is congested. Part of their land adjacent to the village is leased for agriculture with a remaining tenure life of 14 years. They have made plans to pay off the remaining term in compensation to the lessee and reclaim the land for their housing project.

Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, without consultation, the iTLTB breached its role as a trustee on behalf of the landowners and allowed the sale of this 20 acres agriculture lease to a Chinese company called Sun Red Limited for \$200,000 and extended the lease to the term of 30 years.

Madam Speaker, Sun Red Limited had plans to develop and subdivide this land into 51 lots and sell to Chinese retirees who want to come to Fiji as a second home.

Madam Speaker, this development cannot proceed because this land is an agriculture lease and for this to happen the landowners have to be consulted to agree to a development lease. This mean 99 year lease they can kiss their land goodbye if they agree.

Various consultations and meetings with *mataqali* had taken place but unfortunately the Trust and the *mataqali* members had made and stuck their earlier decision in regards to their housing plans and the return of that land.

Madam Speaker, you will be surprised to hear the offers from this company to the landowners. It brings back memories of the injustice of buying land from our forefathers by a musket without the gun powder, pipe, mirror, or an axe and so on.

Madam Speaker, Sun Red increased his offer to the *mataqali* progressively. First a carrot offer of \$10,000 as a Christmas money then the offer increased to \$20,000. Then Sun Red Limited offered to build ten houses, a *mataqali* hall plus other benefits.

Madam Speaker, What do you call this? This is a daylight robbery and corruption at the high end. Thorough investigation is demanded and those implicated must be taken to task.

Madam Speaker, I sincerely sympathised with the landowners who have lost their land because TLTB does not consider to consult them. You can confidently say that *iTaukei* Land is protected under the Constitution. Of course not, this is a classic example of what SODELPA has been preaching all the time.

Madam Speaker, in hindsight, I should mentioned that this land is called "*Naivuivui Ni Mana*", in short *Naivuivui*. A place of refuge for the Turaga Bale na *Roko Tui* Dreketi, Ro Qaraniqio amongst the *Turaga ni Vuna*. "*Mana*" used to be brought from Rewa for the *Turaga* thus the name was coined as *Naivuivui ni Mana*.

Agriculture and Fisheries: Budgetary allocation for agriculture to address the shortage of *yaqona* and *dalo* should increase three-fold. *Yaqona* price has not dropped and *dalo* has gone up to \$30/bundle, *tausala* at \$5.00 per kilogramme and cassava.

Climate Change: Madam Speaker, so far about 60 countries have ratified the Paris Agreement. A total of 46 per cent whereas another 12 per cent from other countries have pledged to ratify by the end of the year.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to share biblical truths in regards to the climate change phenomenon. God will cause to happen climatic phenomenon because of our sinful nature and disobedience for the purpose of repentance.

Madam Speaker, the first murder, Cain murdered Abel. The blood of Abel was crying out from the ground. Cain was banished and drought followed, the land did not yield – the first drought.

God looked at the world and saw that it was evil, for the people were all living evil lives. God said to Noah, “I have decided to put an end to all people, I will destroy them completely because the world is full of their violent deeds.” The floodgates of the sky was opened and rain fell for 40 days and 40 nights. After 150 days, the water then receded. The first flood – climate change.

Madam Speaker, *TC Winston* demolished practically everything in its path as it went through Fiji in February this year. This climate change phenomenon has destroyed 10 years of our development. Only God knows why some commented in passing that *TC Winston* had eyes. Of course, the cyclone has an eye. The eye of a cyclone is always calm, severe damages occur when the eye approaches and gradually decreases when it passes.

I sincerely hope, Madam Speaker, that we as a nation and God-fearing people must take heed of this Biblical examples. I conclude, Madam Speaker, with this *Bible* verse, the Lord said:

“Whenever I hold back the rain or send locusts to eat up the crops or send an epidemic on my people, if they pray to me and repent and turn away from the evil they have been doing, then I will hear them in Heaven, forgive their sins and their land will be prosperous again.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and may God bless Fiji.

(Applause)

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Madam Speaker, Honourable Prime Minister, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Members of Parliament: it is a privilege for me to comment on His Excellency the President for his most gracious speech at the opening of this session of Parliament and also provide a summary of the progress made by the Ministry of Fisheries in the last 12 months.

His Excellency the President made specific reference to the FijiFirst Government's great achievements reaching the first half of the four year-term.

Madam Speaker, His Excellency also highlighted the need to take stock of our performance, review progress that has been made and reflect on ways which we can improve the quality of service to the people of Fiji.

In light of this, it would be appropriate to thank the Honourable Prime Minister for his vision to reshuffle ministerial responsibilities with the aim to enhance the ability of Government to continue to provide the highest level of service that the Fijian people have come to expect.

Madam Speaker, on this note, this vision has come to fruition through the establishment of the new independent Ministry of Fisheries. This initiative will provide for a more focussed and streamlined provision of services to the key stakeholders of this sector.

I must at this juncture thank Honourable Osea Naiqamu for his dedication and efforts in looking after the Ministry of Fisheries in the last two years. I am indebted to him for the

development that has been carried out; I will attempt to continue with the work that he has started.

Madam Speaker, the fisheries sector bore the full brunt and the impacts of the devastation of *TC Winston*, leaving a trail of destruction that impacted coastal and maritime communities and affect their ability to support our marine ecosystems.

The Ministry's infrastructure and assets also felt the brunt of this devastation. Total damages sustained by the fisheries sector, as reported through the Post Disaster Needs Assessment Report, totalled \$40.66 million. Production losses were estimated at \$131.47 million, bringing the total loss to \$172.13 million. The report also noted the recovery, reconstruction and resilience costs to revive the fisheries sector was estimated at \$65.13 million.

Madam Speaker, in support of immediate relief efforts to the fisheries sector, the Ministry is grateful to the international community, our development partners and individual's generosity and kindness in our time of need.

Madam Speaker, despite the destruction and losses to the sector, we are positive that these losses will recover through complimentary programmes which the Ministry has already undertaken coupled with our natural environmental recovery capabilities, the cooperation and relationship with our international partners through our standing agreements. More so, we have undertaken these measures to ensure that we elevate our sector from the current 6th ranked foreign exchange earner

Madam Speaker, winning the Seven's Gold in Rio had not only been a motivational factor but also resounded the need to champion robust leadership and teamwork, we believe that these are the underlining elements of productivity.

Madam Speaker, the impacts on climate change on the fisheries sector is very expensive. However, the Ministry has endeavoured to counter these impacts through adaptation strategies, such as ensuring food security and protection of our ocean and reef systems.

Madam Speaker, to protect our ocean and its reef systems, we need to seriously look at pollution on land. Rubbish and other pollutants fill our drains and will unfortunately end up in our rivers and oceans. When sediments and other pollutants enter the water, they smother coral reefs and kill them, speed the growth of damaging algae, and lower water quality. This will eventually cause changes in fish food structure, then impact our important food source of fish. We will need to urgently work with our line ministries to educate our people.

The Ministry intends to work closely with the Ministry of Education in educating our young children based on the "Ridge to Reef Concept". We want our young children to be champions of this initiative. In these context, preliminary discussions have been made with the Honourable Minister of Education to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding between the two Ministries.

Madam Speaker, at this juncture, the Ministry would like to acknowledge the enactment of the Offshore Management Decree passed in December, 2012 and the process to

which the Aquaculture Bill has achieved so far. The Ministry also realises the importance of doing the same for the in-shore management legislation to holistically manage the sub-sector.

Madam Speaker, the new independent Ministry is supporting the Green Growth Framework. By undertaking programmes that contribute towards building environment resilience, social improvements, economic growth and poverty reduction, we are helping Fiji preserve its valuable natural resources.

The Ministry is working together with other line ministries and agencies in a more integrated and inclusive way to improve the delivery of our services and empower our communities for the sustainable development of our fisheries resources.

Madam Speaker, Fiji is blessed with a multicultural, multiracial but united society. In our journey to this day, we have laid the building blocks for the new Fiji where we envisaged that every citizen of this nation will enjoy equal opportunities in a spirit of love, tolerance and peace. In our efforts to uphold this unified nation and continue to lay these building blocks, the Ministry is committed to promoting this sense of unity through maintaining professionalism in the workplace, providing equal opportunities through the application of assistance through our projects and upholding our code of conduct in ensuring that team fisheries will provide the best level of service delivery to the public.

Madam Speaker, His Excellency the President has outlined the acknowledgements by Fiji's development partners and global financial institutions on Government's prudent economic management and more significantly the Government's longest seven straight years of economic expansion, a historical milestone indeed.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Fisheries in expanding its contribution to this milestone achievement will, through the allocated financial resources it receives from Government, continue to explore the establishment of new Fisheries stations and ice plants in the rural maritime areas to ensure economic gains flow down to our rural maritime communities through the marketing of their fisheries commodities.

Madam Speaker, such infrastructural developments are indeed part of the building blocks of economic resilience and growth that His Excellency had alluded to in his opening remarks.

Madam Speaker, in our determination to provide young Fijians with opportunity to have prosperous and satisfying future, the Ministry will continue to explore avenues through which youths of Fiji are empowered. Such opportunities included a capacity building programme that was introduced and executed in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Sports in Kadavu last year. This packaged programme included training on Fish Aggregating Device Deployment, net making, post-harvest and handling of fish, deep water snapper fishing, fish farming and small business skills training. Such programme is planned to be executed across the three Divisions in the North, West and Central.

Madam Speaker, such programme guarantee alternative income sources for individuals and communities bringing about prosperity to all.

Madam Speaker, modernisation and reform alluded to by His Excellency opens up new avenues of investment, opportunity and support the Government's overall mission taking a prominent role in our region and strengthen Fiji's voice and presence in the world.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry is supporting this vision by Government. We are also embarking on review of the Fisheries Act with the aim to bring them to par with the international community to meet the challenging dynamic nature of our nation's fisheries in ensuring the sustainable management and conservation of our nation's vast fisheries resources.

Madam Speaker, our duty and loyalty to the ordinary citizens of this country is of utmost importance. The citizens of Fiji have put their trust in us to ensure unity and to progress the nation forward. Madam Speaker, we see the evidence of this progression across our beautiful islands and across the nation.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry upholds five fundamental values, namely to be responsible, resolute, respectful, resourceful and reliable. These values are instilled through our staff and more so imparted to our stakeholders (fishermen and women) through taking a leading role in creating awareness to the public on issues such as maintaining pollution free marine environment, to refrain from the use of destructive fishing methods and more importantly to educate the public in abiding with the Fisheries laws and Regulations.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry echoes the sentiments of His Excellency through our pledge to re-dedicate ourselves to the task of continuing to rejuvenate our nation, to deliver the purposeful direction it deserves, to set a standard of excellence for the youths of Fiji and more importantly to be more powerful, role models in the quest to make our beloved country great and even greater than what we are today.

Madam Speaker, I am confident that the Ministry will continue to grow our economy in a sustainable manner through the reorganised arrangement. Our natural resources can be a competitive advantage for Fiji but only if we utilise them responsibly.

Madam Speaker, to conclude please allow me to make some comments made by the Honourable Opposition Members who have used the opportunity to make negative comments on Government achievements and initiatives. This is of course are the Honourable Member's rights and more so their freedom of speech as protected under the Constitution and they continuously ridiculed.

Nothing will alter the FijiFirst Government's wind of change but the Honourable Members on the other side should suggest alternatives on what they think should be considered.

Grandstanding and highlight what people think is wrong but it will not assist this Honourable House and not Fiji.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. CDR S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Honourable Members must provide and suggest alternatives that will assist us in nation building.

Let me quote Thomas Monson when he said and I quote: "We cannot direct the wind but we can adjust the sail"

In simple words, Madam Speaker, I cannot change the direction of the wind but I can adjust my sails to always reach the same destination.

Closer to home, I compare the peoples voice through the FijiFirst Government to the Rewa River. All the tributaries, Waimanu, Waidina and Wainimala will flow to the Rewa River and bring blessings to the Rewa Delta. We can reduce the flow of water by building dams upriver or we can divert the direction, but the Rewa River will continue to flow like the Mississippi.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. CDR. S.T. KOROILAVESAU.- Madam Speaker, I will just read the song. Unfortunately I do not have a guitar here but I will just read the words of the song *Mississippi*:

“Where you can hear a country song from afar
And someone plays the honky-tonk guitar
Where all the lights will go out one by one
The people join the sun
And the wind takes it away

Where the Mississippi falls down to the sea
And lovers found the place they would like to be
How many times before the song was ending
Love and understanding
Everywhere around

Mississippi or Rewa, I remember you
Whenever I should go away
I will be longing for the day
That I will be returning again
Mississippi, you will be on my mind
Every time I hear this song
Mississippi roll along
Until the end of time.”

Madam Speaker, I thank you sincerely for your indulgence.

(Applause)

HON. SPEAKER.- Honourable Members, I am sure Parliament will allow songs to be sung. I now give the floor to the Honourable Dr. Brij Lal.

HON. DR. B. LAL.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Ministers, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Members of Parliament and the public viewing this programme. *Bula re* to everyone.

Madam Speaker, I rise to thank His Excellency the President of the Republic of Fiji for his most gracious speech delivered on Monday, 12th September, 2016 at the opening of the Parliament for 2016-2017 session. I thank His Excellency the President for his wisdom and good advice.

Madam Speaker, I have picked the small segment of His Excellency's speech that is "Unity in Diversity". He thanked about the unity of the Fijian people after severe *Tropical Cyclone Winston* in rebuilding the nation. Unity from international community in the kind assistance, unity of the Fijian people on the occasion of the Olympic Gold win by our Rugby Sevens Team and the unity of the FijiFirst Government in responding to the needs of the Fijians in carrying out the national development. This goes to show us locally and internationally how united we are as people and as a nation.

Unity in diversity means oneness in the varieties. Fiji is the best country in providing this concept. Fiji is a country where it is very clear to see unity in diversity because people of many religion, race, culture and tradition live together without affecting each other's feelings and beliefs. Unity in diversity focuses on existence of unity even after lots of differences in cultural, social physical, linguistic, religious, political and ideological needs. People of Fiji are united in spite of much diversity of races, religions, communities, language and dialects. Our people are highly spiritual and God fearing in nature and as such, they give respect to everyone's religion.

I am reminded of what Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary-General once said; "We may have different religions, different languages, different colour skin, but we all belong to one human race."

Madam Speaker, Suzy Kassem in her book *Rise Up and Salute the Sun* says "Choose a leader who will invest in building bridges, not walls, books, not weapons. Morality, not corruption. Intellectualism and wisdom, not ignorance. Stability, not fear and terror. Peace, not chaos. Love, not hate. Convergence, not segregation. Tolerance, not discrimination. Fairness, not hypocrisy. Substances, not superficiality. Character, not immaturity. Transparency, not secrecy. Justice, not lawlessness. Environmental improvement and prevention, not destruction. Truth, not lies.

Teaching of values, culture, tradition, language and good habits starts in the family home. Our grandparents, parents and others in the family play a key role. A family is a group of people living together, generally the parents and children. Each member of the family has to play his or her role. The parents support their children.

They have to love, care, and guide and in return the children should respect and obey their parents and learn from their good habits, culture, religious values, and tolerance and remain committed to their responsibilities. In order to maintain a good family, strong kinship ties have to be maintained. A good family stands firm when it is cultured by good moral and human values. I appeal to all parents to carry out their roles faithfully and devote more time with their children to enhance family values. This way you will not only be helping your child but also helping to build a highly cultured society that has care and respect for all.

Madam Speaker, we are proud to be citizens of this beautiful country – Fiji. It is our multi – cultural and multi – racial set up that makes us beautiful and unique. Here in Fiji, we have qualities of life and values which many countries strive for but never attain such things as unity and togetherness of the different races, peace and harmony among the people; tolerance, understanding, happiness and prosperity.

Madam Speaker; our true unity in diversity was displayed by our people during the following events in Fiji:

1. Immediately after the huge devastation by severe *Tropical Cyclone Winston*, our people rushed to the cyclone affected areas to provide the basic necessities like food, water, clothing, tents, blankets, first aid kits, cash and moral support. Our differences of ethnicity, religion and colour did not stop anyone from providing this assistance. The international Community took note of our unity in diversity and they rushed in with all the assistance they could provide to the Fijians who had suffered from the effects of *TC Winston*. The FijiFirst Government is also to be saluted for rising to the occasion and providing food rations, shelter materials and cash grants.
2. Our recent celebrations of the Rio Olympic Rugby 7s gold win was joined by all people. The people came as one, from rural communities to urban centres, the young and the old, the rich and the poor. This is another evidence of Fiji's unity in diversity. I thank the FijiFirst Government for allowing for a special holiday to celebrate our win and organizing celebrations all over Fiji.
3. The presence of huge crowds of people at all our festivals and carnivals weather its religious, fundraising or charity. People of all races, different age groups, the young, the youth, the middle aged and the senior citizens are seen participating, entertaining, and enjoying. Our recent queen crowning events at various municipalities and recent Hindu festivals attracted thousands of people of all races. Everyone seemed happy, enjoying themselves, cheering and sharing food, sweets and fun. I once again thank the Government for retaining public and private religious holidays to mark important events festivals of different religious faiths in Fiji.

Madam Speaker the list is long but the above mentioned activities has helped strengthen unity and peace amongst the Fijians. It is said "Love is better than anger. Hope is better than fear. Optimism is better than despair. Let us be loving, hopeful and optimistic as this will help create a better Fiji for all.

Madam Speaker, Fiji is not just land, mountains and rivers. Fiji is you and me, all the thousands of young and old who are her citizens. The thoughts and actions of the people who have inhabited Fiji for hundreds of years have moulded our society. Out of the past grows the present and what we do today will shape our future. When we build a road or plant a tree or inculcate good habits, it is not for us alone, but also for those who will be born in years to come. The work of building is not easy. We must give it all we have and strain every nerve and muscle. All the world over, progress has been possible because of the hard work and sacrifice of pioneers. The future is calling you. Do not be disheartened by difficulties. You can change the bad, not only by doing big things, but by trying your best to do even ordinary things extraordinarily well.

Madam Speaker, you and me, all other Honourable Members of this House and all our citizens of Fiji, we are what we are today because of what our teachers taught us. Our teachers were our grandparents, parents, village leaders, school teachers, priests and people who displayed role models of many outstanding men and women. We look back with proudness because we have been taught values. It is our values that make us so accommodating.

Madam Speaker I am reminded of a letter that was written by Abraham Lincoln, one of the most famous Presidents of the United States of America and he wrote to the Principal of his son's school. This is what he wanted the teachers to teach his child. I know that you may

have read or heard about it but let me quickly read it out for all of us as a good reminder for everyone;

- (i) Teach him that for every enemy, there is a friend.
- (ii) It will take time I know; but teach him if you can, that a dollar earned is of far more value than \$50 found.
- (iii) Teach him to learn, to loose and also to enjoy winning.
- (iv) Steer him away from envy if you can
- (v) Teach him the secret of quite laughter
- (vi) Teach him if you can the wonder of books...but also give quite time to ponder the external mystery of birds in the sky, bees in the sun and flowers on the green hill side.
- (vii) In school teach him it is far more honourable to fail then to cheat.
- (viii) Teach him to have fate in his own ideas, to be gentle with people and to be tough with the tough.
- (ix) Teach him to listen to all men, but teach him also to filter all he hears on a screen of truth, and take on the good that comes through.
- (x) Teach him if you can how to laugh when he is sad.
- (xi) Teach him there is no shame in tears.
- (xii) Let him have the courage to be impatient and also let him have the patience to be brave.
- (xiii) Teach him always to have sublime faith in himself, because then, he will always have sublime faith in mankind.

Madam Speaker such words act as penicillin injection and are highly inspirational and allows us to relook at values we need in our children of today.

Madam Speaker, it is time for me to share a short inspirational story on a title:

“A Little Candle

Once upon a time, a little candle stood in a room filled with other candles, most of them are large and much more beautiful than she was. Some were ornate and some were rather simple, like her. Some were white, some were blue, some were pink, and some were green.

She had no idea why she was there, and the other candles made her feel rather small and insignificant. When the sun went down and the room began to get dark, she noticed a huge man walking towards her with a ball of fire on a stick. She suddenly realized that the man was going to set fire on her. "No, no!!" she cried, "Aaaaagghhh! Do not burn me, please!" But she knew that she could not be heard and prepared for the pain that would surely follow.

To her surprise, the room filled with light. She wondered where it came from since the man had extinguished the fire stick. To her delight, she realized that the light came from herself. Then the man struck another fire stick and one-by-one lit all other candles in the room. Each one gave out the same light that she did. During the next few hours she noticed that slowly her wax began to flow. She became aware that she would soon die. With this realization came a sense of why she had been created. ‘Perhaps my purpose on earth is to give out light until I die,’ and that is exactly what she said.”

God created you and I to produce light in a dark world. Like that little candle, we all can produce the same amount of light, no matter how small we are or what colour we might be but we cannot produce that light until we receive it from an outside source. That source is God, the light of the world. Unfortunately Honourable Karavaki is not here.

(Laughter)

Madam Speaker, I quote the words of Stephen Levine who said,

“Buddha left a road map, Jesus left a road map, Krishna left a road map, Allah left a road map but you still have to travel the road yourself.”

Let me quote the words of our late President, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara who on 8th December, 1987 said to the people of Fiji;

“I believe we can succeed because our history has shown that we are a very resilient nation. We have faced many difficulties and problems in the past and we overcome them. We were visited by many natural disasters, destructions and suffering yet we have survived and progressed.

We prevailed because we were together as a nation and as a people. Fellow citizens, I urge you, I plead with you, please leave the past behind you, cast aside enmity and hatred and individually and collectively let us recommit ourselves to the task of nation building and pledge to work in co-operation and in harmony to rebuild our beloved country.

For the sake of all of us, for the sake of the children and our children's children let us pledge to build and not to break, let us pledge to love and not to hate, let us pledge to help and not to hinder and let us rededicate ourselves towards restoring national harmony and unity in the nation.”

There are certain universal principles for achieving success and fulfillment in life. One is keeping an open mind, which will give a fresh approach to life. Love and charity will give you another dimension of animation of life. Construction rather than destruction is important.

As A.M. Cooper said, “If we learn to balance excellence in work with excellence in play, fun and relaxation, our lives become happier, healthier and a great deal more creative.”

Madam Speaker, today we are firmly united. We are more united than any other time. We differ from one another in so many ways but we are all Fijians and we are ready to move the nation forward.

Honourable Prime Minister thank you for your leadership in uniting the Fijians to all citizens of this nation I say, “we are all one and united we stand.” Let the light of our unity brighten the rest of the world.

Madam Speaker and Honourable Members of the Parliament thank you very much for your patience and God bless Fiji.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now call on the Honourable Ratu Inoke Kubuabola to have the floor.

HON. RATU. I. KUBUABOLA.- Madam Speaker, Honourable Prime Minister, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Ministers, Honourable Members of Parliament, ladies and gentleman: I rise to respond to His Excellency the President's most gracious speech at the opening of the 2016 Session of Parliament.

His Excellency's Address has highlighted the progress we have made as a nation and the positive changes in place for future development.

Madam Speaker, in the week following the opening of the session of Parliament, the 71st session of the United Nations General Assembly convened in New York under the presidency of the Fijian diplomats, a first for a Pacific Island country.

This has shown the world that we have put behind the racist politics of the past and even though we are a small island developing nation, we are a nation of resilient and talented people, determined to forge ahead with our own vision for our country despite various hurdles in our path.

And as our rugby sevens team's gold medal performance at the Rio Olympics has demonstrated, despite the limited resources we have, we are able to conquer even the better resourced nations if we are united and play as one team, and all work together towards one goal. Rio number crunchers have said we punched well above our weight as a nation and on a GDP basis medal count we were even ahead of the United States of America, Great Britain, Russia and Australia - to name a few countries.

Changes are always a welcome opportunity for new beginnings and I stand here today as Minister for Defence and National Security and I would like to thank the Honourable Prime Minister for trusting me with this new very important portfolio.

Also, I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely acknowledge and pay tribute to the tremendous contribution of my predecessor and former Minister, Honourable Timoci Natuva and his contribution to Government and the Ministry during its tenure. His impeccable service during his military career and politics is commendable and I thank him and wish him every success in its future endeavours.

Madam Speaker, I admit that this Ministerial assignment is a new focus for me over many years in Government, I am confident that the experience from my previous portfolios will enable me to enhance and make progress in the area of defence diplomacy.

Madam Speaker, in taking up my new assignment, I pledge to work with my fellow Honourable Members of Parliament to:

1. Make our community safer for women and children to live lives of dignity without fear of gender based violence, child neglect and child physical and sexual abuse.
2. Make our community safer for home and business owners.
3. Build the capacity of our authorities through appropriate training and acquisition of equipment; and

4. Strengthen our borders against human and drug traffickers, smugglers, money launderers and terrorists.

Madam Speaker, as you know our Honourable Prime Minister was at the opening of the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly and as the world watched our Honourable Prime Minister on television delivered the Nation's Address at the podium in the United Nation General Assembly. I could not help but feel such an immense sense of pride to see the United Nation General Assembly present Chair taken by a fellow Fijian.

May I at this juncture deviate to explain why our presidency of the United Nations 71st General Assembly holds special significance for my Ministry. It is well documented that the election for the presidency was a closely contested one between our candidate and a candidate from Cyprus.

One outstanding factor about our Fijian candidacy that resounded loudly across all geographical voting blocs within the hallowed halls of the United Nations is the excellent peacekeeping record of our Fijian disciplined forces.

Before I speak more about my portfolio I want to acknowledge the support of the Government and defence forces from Australia, China, France, India, Indonesia, New Zealand, United States of America and all other countries, organisations and individuals who tirelessly assisted our nation following the after moth of the *Tropical Cyclone Winston* in February this year.

Madam Speaker, the national security landscape and indeed the Global Security Environment is dynamic and has become unpredictable as criminal elements use vast technological advances for their evil intents and purposes. With this landscape as a backdrop my Ministry is up for the challenges of implementing the necessary reforms to make it relevant in this 21st Century by evaluating its role against the present Security Landscape, nationally, regionally, and internationally.

As part of the reforms we will review our services to our internal customers, being the Fiji Police Force and the Republic of Fiji Military Forces. I will also ensure that we serve them better to enable these agencies to deliver more effectively and efficiently on their core mandate.

Madam Speaker, the Fiji Police is challenged with a task of tackling new and multi - faceted crimes that transcend national borders and invade the privacy spheres through social media. This calls for an adequately resourced Police Force, particularly in the area of information technology. In addition my immediate priority is to work with relevant stakeholders to propose a review of certain legislations to enable the Fiji Police Force to mitigate against the evolving security challenges.

Madam Speaker the Fiji Police Force cannot secure our neighbourhoods on its own. It is the responsibility of every citizen to play their roles in keeping our communities safe and it is my plea to individuals, business owners, and all stakeholders to support the Fiji Police Forces "*Duavata Campaign*". Among other initiatives, the Ministry has recently consulted with other relevant Ministries as stakeholders to ascertain the availability of substitute crops for *marijuana* and how to reduce the prevalence of rape and sexual crimes.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry through the Police and the RFMF are approaching schools and tertiary institutions to engage youths in the discussions around Fiji's Security Sector Reform Processes.

The RFMF Cadetship Programme in schools must be supported as they instil in the students discipline, responsible citizenry and leadership. Madam Speaker, I would like extend an invitation to religious and faith-based communities and organisations, community leaders, businesses and NGOs to work with my ministry in building a safer secure and prosperous Fiji.

Madam Speaker, in closing, I wish to pay tribute and acknowledge the efforts of our peacekeepers from the disciplined forces; the RFMF, the Fiji Police Force, and the Fiji Corrections Service, deployed overseas. I concur with His Excellency in recognising the commitment of these gallant men and women, who continue to serve with loyalty and diligence. Their impeccable service only increases our footprints on the global stage as a reputable, responsible Member State of the United Nations, I would also like to thank their families for their support and sacrifice.

I wish to conclude Madam Speaker in reiterating His Excellency's call, "to do all we can, to harness the spirit of our Olympic win. We need to leave aside petty squabbles, rivalries, divisions and grand standing for personal and political gain. We must use this Parliament, as a force to propel us forward to even greater heights, than we saw in Rio. That path must begin here, in this Parliament, where we must show we are truly real role models to the public that we serve in our quest to make our great nation greater".

Madam Speaker, unfortunately the Member Honourable Semesa Karavaki is not in the House. I would like to just say a few things regarding what he said. When he was speaking Madam Speaker, I was reminded of one song, not the "Mississippi" song, that the Minister for Fisheries had mentioned earlier on, that I was interjecting, when he was speaking. The song is "Dream On, Dream On" and I was interjecting in Fijian "*Tadra Ga, Tadra Ga*". I do not have the lyrics Madam Speaker, but I know that this song was written by Steven Tyler. I think the very last line, it says, "dream on maybe tomorrow the Lord will take you away, maybe the Lord will take you away". I was just thinking when the Honourable learned Member was speaking, that he was in the dream land. Thank you Madam Speaker, thank you Honourable Members for your attention. *Vinaka vakalevu*.

HON. SPEAKER.- I now give the floor to the Honourable Jilila Kumar.

HON. J.N. KUMAR.- Thank you Madam Speaker. The Honourable Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Cabinet Ministers, Honourable Members of Parliament, our viewers, ladies and gentleman; a very good afternoon to you all.

I rise to give my contribution as Member of this august House, to commend the President's inaugural speech during the opening of our Parliament on 12th September, 2016. First and foremost, Madam Speaker, I would like to personally congratulate our Fiji 7s golden heroes for their splendid, heart throbbing, fabulous, awesome and fascinating performance during the *Rio* Olympics, which broke people's hearts, not only in Fiji but the whole world.

I would also like to take this opportunity, Madam Speaker, to congratulate His Excellency, the Honourable Jioji Konousi Konrote, the President of our beloved Fiji, for being

declared to be the best President in the world during the 71st UN General Assembly for World Leaders, which was held in New York last week. This is something that we must be all proud of as a nation, the fact that we had both the best rugby 7s as well as the best President in the world. I am sure the Honourable Prime Minister who attended the Assembly was overwhelmed and proud of what we have achieved.

Also Madam Speaker, Fiji has done great in taking the seat of the Presidency of the UN General Assembly. For the first time ever, our country and our region is on the world stage. Madam Speaker, what I believe, this is a blessing to the country when a leader is inclusive, tolerant and understanding, together with act of compassion, love and affection for the whole nation. First ever a Leader involves the ordinary people who were once never heard of.

My speech today, Madam Speaker is based on "*Stewardship*". And I personally believe Madam Speaker, that this one of the Godly given attributes to human beings for sustainable growth and prosperity.

Stewardship, is an ethic, that embodies, the responsible planning and management of resources. The concepts of *Stewardship* can be applied to the environment and nature, economics, health, property, information, theology to name a few. And the biblical world view of Stewardship can be consciously defined as, "utilising and managing all resources God provides for the Glory and the betterment of His creation. In relation to our country our Government has done extremely well on the development of our nation in terms of, infrastructure, environment and nature, economics, health, property, education, information and the list goes on and if we fail to take pride and manage them well we will fail as a nation. To take pride, Madam Speaker, means to be appreciative, supportive, thankful, loving, caring and to be responsible. A very good example, Madam Speaker, is the fabulous new Albert Park pavilion and ground.

The construction of this pavilion and ground is the Government initiative and commitment to its citizens in providing this kind of facilities for recreation and also promote healthy lifestyles which will reduce the risks of non-communicable diseases, promote cultural, racial unity through gatherings and sports.

As we go back to history of God's creation, God created everything and placed Adam in the Garden to work it and to take care of it. It is clear that man was created to work and that work is the stewardship of all of the creation that God has given him. Likewise, in our situation, Madam Speaker, as representatives of the people, we also have obligations and responsibilities to undertake.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, Stewardship plays a very important role in our undertakings and attitudes because this is one of the most challenging responsibilities that God has entrusted us with in order to safe guard God's given resources which are under our care. Likewise, Madam Speaker, this same attitude and obligations towards God must also be given to our Government initiatives and commitment towards our nation building. It is us who will make the difference in our nation and it us that will make Fiji the way the world should be. We set the pace and standard. No matter how much finance is invested towards development and how much progress we intend to achieve if we fail to give our full support and commitment as a nation towards national buildings all our effort will be in vain and as a result we will pay a very high price for our negligence and no care attitudes.

As His Excellency the President rightfully stated in his speech I quote “Let us rededicate ourselves today to the task of continuing to rejuvenate our nation and giving the sense of direction and purpose it deserves. Let us set an example in this Parliament to young Fijians who look to us to build a future worthy of their dreams and aspirations.” Unquote.

Let me take us a while to our environment, Madam Speaker. Do we really have pride for our nation? Do we have that sense of ownership? Do we really care for each other as a nation as far as clean environment is concern? It is really indeed an eyesore to see rubbish and debris scattered along the sea shore, rivers, streams and even along roads and highways.

The Ministry of Tourism has done so much in investing in tourism industry. As a result it has now become the highest generating income resources of our nation. As Honourable Members of this August House, we need to protect this industry by advocating to our people the importance of clean environment. This is one of the resources that we need to take care off. As a nation we need to work together by being a good and responsible stewards of our environment for the betterment of our nation and for our future generations.

Madam Speaker, let me talk a little bit of our Constitution. The former President, Ratu Epeli Nailatikau in his speech at the opening of the new session of Parliament (2015 and 2016) stated I quote “Our new democracy was built on the most solid of foundations. A Constitution that for the first time, guarantee equality for every Fijian and also provides for a range of social and economic rights that are unprecedented in our history. He further stated that I “I also call on all Honourable Members of this House to support democracy and not give comfort to those who wish to subvert the democratic process. You have sworn the most solemn of oaths or affirmed your allegiance to protect and defend democracy and have a sacred and unbreakable trust with God and the Fijian people to uphold that oath or affirmation.”

In this case, Madam Speaker, we as Honourable Members of this House play a very important role as a responsible steward for our people by upholding and embracing on our Constitution because stewardship comes with ownership and ownership comes with responsibility and responsibility comes with accountability.

Madam Speaker, please allow me to share our Honourable Minister’s sentiment, our Honourable Prime Minister’s sentiment in his speech when he opened the new Rakiraki bridge on 23rd October, 2015. I quote, “our infrastructure projects such as this are the building blocks we need to transform our economy. Attract more investment, create more wealth and spread that prosperity to every Fijian and we must reverse the years of neglect that have held us back as a nation and create the best possible infrastructure we can afford. He further stated that “with our scarce resources, we also need to build things that last. We must have quality in our infrastructure projects above all these. We insist on getting value for money for the Fijian tax payer. Which is why I have instructed everyone in Government to assist on Zero tolerance for the quick fix, for shady workmanship of any kind. We intend to take a very tough line with contractors who cut corners and do not deliver a quality result, unquote.

Madam Speaker, this is a perfect example of a leader and a good steward who embraces honesty and his priority is the care for his country and its citizens and a good role model to our younger generations. We as Members of Parliament must emulate him for being honest in whatever things we do, to be responsible and to be accountable to our work and undertakings, to be trustworthy, to have genuine love for our nation by always displaying good workmanship at all times.

We must be reminded once again that one day everyone of us will be called to give an account for how we have managed what the Master has given us. This means that we are accountable to everything which under our care and it is our responsibility to manage and grow them wisely and to take care of them.

To conclude, Madam Speaker, I wish to quote a message by the former President, Ratu Epeli Nailatikau in his speech at the opening of the new session of Parliament (2015 -2016) I quote:

“We must talk about our country first and not ourselves. An action or policy is going to be for the benefit of the country. Without honesty and humility on all fronts, we will never progress as a nation as Leader and as individuals. There is no doubt our Government policies and initiatives and economy reforms are in progress. We as members of Parliament must take it to another level. It requires focus from all of us. Building a stronger economy requires confidence building measures by the nation as a whole.”

It is my prayer, Madam Speaker that we as Honourable members of Parliament must have a passion of a good steward and only then the whole nation will follow suit. May the good Lord bless our beloved Fiji.

(Applause)

HON. SPEAKER.- Our last speaker for today. I invite the Honourable Anare Vadei to have the floor.

HON. A.T. VADEI.- Madam Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition, Members of Parliament, members of the public in the gallery and those watching this programme through the TV or listening to the radio.

I thank you, Madam Speaker, for meeting my humble request in shifting me forward to present my response to the opening speech delivered by His Excellency the President.

From the outset, Section 81(4), of the 2013 Constitution, the President shall open each annual session of Parliament with an address outlining the policies and programme of the Government. I am sad to note that this has not been captured by the FijiFirst Government in the delivery of the needs and wants of the people, for the people and to the people in the 2016-2017 Parliament session.

On the *Tropical Cyclone Winston*, Madam Speaker, we have been reminded by His Excellency the President regarding the devastation caused by the cyclone which caught international and regional attention. Madam Speaker, it is with great sadness, for the last 7 months, the people of Koro and Ovalau have their homes devastated during *Tropical cyclone Winston* are still living in tents that are now leaking and are worn due to changing weather conditions. The children and parents from Koro are psychologically affected as the external exams are around the corner and construction of classrooms, teachers quarters et cetera have not been completed as promised.

In addition, Madam Speaker, building materials were not been fully supplied. Some

households have received the blocks, others the corrugated iron and others, the cement are partly supplied by this hardware companies. The excuse by the hardware company is that there is no material in stock and the demand for re-construction due to the severe damage caused by *TC Winston* over-rides the supplying power by hardware.

Madam Speaker, the expectation by the Head of State, His Excellency the President and also by the people is for the government of the day to take stock of its performance so far and review the progress and ensure that the quality of service delivered is continuously improved. Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, looking at the slow pace of re-construction and rehabilitation in order to fully recover from the devastating effect of *Tropical Cyclone Winston*, one will ask:

1. Is the Government closely monitoring the progress of the re-construction process and the continuous supply of material by hardware?
2. Are there regulations in place to enforce hardware companies to continue manufacturing materials to speed up the rehabilitation process?
3. Where has all the donations from international and regional organisation gone to?

Madam Speaker, the slow pace of recovering from the effect of T/C Winston is a very good indication of poor service delivery and poor management of recovery projects by the Government of the day. Madam Speaker, the people are suffering and struggling to fully recover. We were very grateful that assistance provided by the non-government organisation and relatives abroad which were channelled directly to some affected villages eased some of their financial and social burdens in the islands.

On Health and Medical Services, Madam Speaker from His Excellency's speech, we are reminded that the Government will continue to commit itself in building a better nation. Madam Speaker, a healthy nation is a wealthy nation. This is in contrast to the implementation of NCD programme by the Health and Medical Services in Fiji. Men and women at the CWM hospital continue to have their limbs amputated due to NCDs. The strategies and policies implemented by the Ministry have not changed when encountered with this challenge, Madam Speaker.

In the WHO Report, Fiji has been rated as the second highest NCD affected country in the world. The Ministry has not capitalized on this, to make a more effective programme to curb the rise in the NCD in our country but kept on amputating the legs of people in our country.

Madam Speaker, I recommend that this Government build a Health Centre in Nataradave, so that people realize the effectiveness and efficiency of that water in healing patients.

In addition Madam Speaker, patients were asked to buy their penicillin injections from the Pharmacies for them to be injected with. This is a clear sign of false promises regarding free medicines by the FijiFirst Government, Madam Speaker.

Last week, Madam Speaker, in the Acute Medical at CWM hospital, a woman was brought in from Nadi to have dialysis at the Kidney Foundation. After rounds of consultations with her doctor, the couple left because they cannot afford to pay for the costs of this treatment. The woman asked the husband to save the money for their children's future and let her to die slowly as they cannot pay all this cost during her dialysis.

Madam Speaker, a lady from Ba was admitted at the CWM Hospital in the month of August 2016, because of kidney problem. Coming from the interior of Ba with no financial income to support them, the medical officer prescribed some medicine which they find that they cannot get from any pharmacy in the country which they also find was very expensive. This patient has to leave the hospital and went back to Ba without being treated.

Madam Speaker, I find that there is a great need of financial and technical support to be done in the hospitals and health centres to bring back the confidence of our qualified Health officials in Fiji.

My last observation, Madam Speaker, in the Health and Medical Services are the number of equipment bought for the Laboratory in the last four years and not being used due to non-payment of the full cost.

It is still in their cartons and stored away, but the officials are still using the analogue machines to conduct their tests daily.

Madam Speaker, I am asking this Government to stop talking a lot and work with the people under the jurisdiction to bring better results in their Ministry to win confidence of the public in the service delivery. Some questions that need clarification in response to His Excellency the President's Address and Government responses.

Firstly, to the Honourable Prime Minister, Madam Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister mentioned that due to greater effects of Climate Change or global warming we are facing, the Government should expect more Category 4 Cyclones and other natural disaster in the coming years.

Is the Government fully prepared with its proactive measures plans to deal with more coming global warming issues like *Tropical cyclone Winston* .with these pro-active measures and plans to deal with more coming global warming issues, like Tropical Cyclone Winston? If so, why is it taking so long, seven months to rehabilitate and to fully reconstruct damaged schools, homes and other infrastructure caused by only one tropical cyclone, that is, *TC Winston*?

The Honourable Attorney-General stated that the Government is conducting thorough assessments on damages by *TC Winston*, how long will this take? It is already more than half a year, will school children, teachers, school committees and parents wait till the end of the year for constructions to be completed?

The Honourable Prime Minister highlighted accusations by the Opposition that the *iTaukei* people are disadvantaged. What is the supporting evidence? I will just highlight a few:

- (1) Equal access to education but unequal access to scholarships: out of the 600 toppers scholarships awarded in 2014, less than 20 goes to *iTaukei* and the rest (580+) goes to others, that is only about 2 percent. That means in five years' time, an average of 80 *iTaukei* are going to benefit from scholarships as compared to the 3,000 others. The three pools of scholarships that were there before the merging; that is PSC, FAB, Multi-Ethnic has provided much more equal access to scholarships than Toppers.

Secondly, looking at students on loan schemes (TELS), majority are *iTaukei* as they do not qualify for toppers scholarship because of merit.

- (2) Unfair compensation/royalty and resource owners: Madam Speaker, before I touch on Fiji Pine, let me give some examples of injustices that they become so entrenched in some cases even legally entrenched, that we take for granted that it is normal because of continuity. Consider the 6 percent UCV we levy for rent. In the US, the formula is targeted on potential use, as it should, the percentage rate is varied according to change of use, whereas as the name suggests, you assume all the time that the land is unimproved and you calculate 6 percent, that is your rent.

Another nice way of looking at it is that you, as landowners, are subsidising development. A Canadian Professor once explained that in real terms, 6 percent UCV is equivalent to the following; in sugarcane lease the investors are the farmers that farm the land with sugarcane, the government that mills it and the landowning unit that provides the land. For every \$100 earned, the farmers share \$70, the Government, \$28 and the landowning unit, \$2. Today, I have not seen anyone disprove their assessment to the extent that you see now in parts of Bua, arrears were given for planting without a lease and some leases even overrun native reserve. It does not matter because the government promised that it will be theirs and they willingly gave their land.

The Government formed Fiji Pine Limited. You would expect the resource owner's company with capital outlay from the government to be paid back or as its share of equity. No, 99 per cent of the shares was fully owned by government and 1 percent to landowners who, with the assistance of government, formed the Fiji Pine Trust to cut the pine that now belongs exclusively to government, sad and someone in the know may care to enlighten us more.

Madam Speaker, the difference can also be noticed in the payment of the *qoliqoli* compensation paid by the Ministry of Lands *iTaukei* Affairs as trustee of this money and can only be given to *qoliqoli* owners on their request for community project purposes only and nothing more. This could be the same for the goodwill payment by the Fisheries Ministry.

If the indigenous landowners are so kind-hearted and humble in giving their land and *qoliqoli* for development purposes in order to boost the country's economy, I strongly believe, Madam Speaker, that they will be more proud and happy to decide on what they own for their benefit and their future generations.

Government needs to be more considerate in payment of leases, compensation and goodwill to the indigenous land and resource owners so that they are given a fair share of what they deserve in return and not disadvantaged with only a peanut share in return.

- (3) Government Control of Native (*iTaukei*) institutions: Madam Speaker, the *iTaukei* Lands Trust Board (iTLTB), *iTaukei* Lands and Fisheries Commission (iTLFC), *iTaukei* Affairs and *iTaukei*

Trust Fund are under strict government control that own it and they are native institutions in name only, in clear breach of Fiji's obligation under ILOC 169 & UNDRIP that require them to be independent. Surely, in time we will need to correct all these.

- (4) Unfair Termination of Workers: looking at the proportion of workers being unfairly terminated from their jobs, most of them are *i taukei*. It is sad that when contacting the responsible Government Office which has the data on this as far as ethnicity is concerned, we are told that this is confidential. What is the Government trying to hide? Is this transparency and accountability?
- (5) Minimum Wages & Salary: Looking at the workers with the minimum wage if \$2.32/hr, for example, security officers, garment workers, logging, et cetera, most of them are *iTaukei*.

The FTUC and other unions are fighting very hard in trying to increase the minimum wage to \$4 but the government is turning their back on them. This means that the government of the day is not interested in the *iTaukei* workers pleas appeal for increase in wage.

- (6) Ministerial Reshuffle: The latest ministerial reshuffle has pushed *itaukei* Ministers to smaller ministries with less salary and promoting our Indo-Fijian Ministers to bigger ministries thus receiving higher salaries. The Honourable Prime Minister was also given a bonus of being allocated the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as his forth Ministry so that he will spend more time overseas allowing the Honourable and learned Attorney-General, who is his deputy, to do whatever he likes as he will spend about more than 75 per cent of the year acting on the Prime Minister's position.

Madam Speaker, this is just a wake-up call for the Honourable Prime Minister.

(Chorus of interjections)

HON. A.T. VADEI.-

- (7) Introduction of New Bills: The Honourable Attorney-General and Solicitor-General continue to draft new Bills and most of these have direct or indirect effect on *i taukei* people. Some existing Bills/Acts that we request review of are still untouched, for example, Mining Act, River and Water Act.
- (8) Assistance for resource owners: It is with great concern for resource owners nowadays that financial and technical support be provided independently to them is not captured by the iTLTB during the consultation of any development taking place in their resources. Madam Speaker, it has been two years of running the Government by FijiFirst Party, but the resource owners were not properly provided with this type of support to achieve an independent informed decision regarding the developments of projects on their resources.

Thus the resource owners are resource-rich but they will remain cash poor if the Government does not capture this in future. Madam Speaker, let the *iTaukei* people tell the government what the disadvantages are.

- (9) Economic Growth: Madam Speaker, His Excellency has said that there will be 2.5 percent growth in the 2016/2017 year. May I ask the Government, how can this be translated into the lives of our citizens in Fiji? Nearly, every day, Madam Speaker, road accidents have increased, a lot of crimes committed daily, poverty rate has increased and unemployment rates has also increased dramatically, social ills and moral decay have eroded very fast.

I am asking this Government, Madam Speaker, to carefully use a proper yardstick and indicators to measure their performances properly as they do not have many tricks to tell the people in the next General Elections. I thank you for your indulgence, God bless, Fiji.

(Applause)

HON. SPEAKER.- Thank you, Honourable Members. That was the last item in today's Order Paper and therefore brings to conclusion today's sitting. I thank you all for your substantive contributions to today's debate.

The Parliament is now adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9.30.

The Parliament adjourned at 1.10 p.m.