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Prime Minister of Fiji and Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Sugar  
Industry

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**FIJI'S STATEMENT AT THE COP-21 UNITED NATIONS  
CONFERENCE ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

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Paris

Monday 30 Nov 2015

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The President of the 21<sup>st</sup> Conference of the Parties -  
Your Excellency the President of France,  
Your Excellency, the United Nations Secretary  
General,  
Fellow Heads of Government,  
Ministers,  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bula Vinaka and a very good morning/afternoon to  
you all.

We gather here in Paris as members of the human family at a critical point in global history. As the leader of a Small Island Developing State, I have travelled 16-thousand kilometres across the world with a message to you from the people of the Pacific.

It is an SOS message. We are in grave distress – or in the words of the Suva Declaration, the collective communiqué of the Pacific – grave peril.

I appeal to the international community to make the drastic cuts in carbon emissions needed to save us. Unless we take decisive action here in Paris this week, we in the Pacific are doomed.

The rising sea levels and extreme weather events caused by climate change are already destroying our islands and altering our way of life. And rather than capping the average long term global temperature goal at 2 degrees celsius above pre-industrial levels, Pacific nations want that cap reduced to 1.5 degrees.

Mr President, we in the Pacific face the prospect of losing three nations altogether – the low-lying atolls of Kiribati, Tuvalu and the Marshall Islands. And even for a nation like Fiji, with our mountainous volcanic islands, we too are in the process of relocating 45 communities and have so far identified 830 that are at risk.

In a worst case scenario, Fiji has offered to explore the issue of ‘permanent refuge’ to the people of our closest neighbours, Kiribati and Tuvalu – a sensitive discussion we hope to continue in earnest, as our moral responsibility.

These are issues of real and global concern that must be meaningfully addressed in the Paris Agreement.

We need the assistance of the global community. We therefore urge industrialised nations to make deep and urgent green-house-gas emission cuts. Countries

in a position to do so should generously contribute to climate finance that is both accessible to small island developing and vulnerable states as defined under the Convention. We also call for the immediate capitalising of the Green Climate Fund to not only meet the needs of developing countries, but to help the world transition to cleaner and sustainable future.

We have of our own accord made a budgetary allocation next year to examine all the legal implications of climate change, such as climate change refugees and the loss of territoriality. We urge all nations to work with us on this important initiative.

Mr President, aside from the encroaching seas, we are just as vulnerable, if not more so, to the extreme weather events accompanying climate change. As the world presently experiences the worst El-Nino phenomena on record, Fiji and the western Pacific is experiencing severe droughts that is destroying its agriculture base and with it the livelihoods of many

in the western parts of Fiji. The focused concentration of warming in our oceans, not only destroys our coral eco-systems of which many of our people depend for food and tourism, but have become the generators of intense cyclones that destroy lives and essential infrastructure.

Fiji's own carbon emissions are a minute proportion of the global output – zero point zero four per cent (0.04%). But we are still prepared to cut that figure by 30 per cent by 2030 as part of our contribution to the collective challenge we all face.

However, the onus is clearly on the industrialised nations to give us a fighting chance. It is, of course, a moral imperative. But these nations should also realise that the sooner they refigure their economies to wean themselves off carbon, the better they too will be. Because they are merely delaying the inevitable day of reckoning. It is simply not



sustainable economically and environmentally and actually undermines the potential for future growth.

In our Suva Declaration formulated at the recent summit meeting in the Fijian capital of the Pacific Islands Development Forum, we are also demanding that these global collective emission cuts, be legally binding.

So Mr President, I call on the community of nations to accentuate the positives of change with their people and not the negatives rather than turn a blind eye to the crisis we face, confront it head on. For Governments to patiently explain to their nations and communities that there is no option other than to take radical change on carbon emissions now – however painful – to avoid even more pain further on. It is a matter of political will and of education, of world leaders taking their people with them. Using reason to marginalise the climate change deniers. Using persuasion to win over the climate skeptics.

Mr President it will require courage and it will require difficult choices.

But from Fiji's perspective, there is only one choice facing every nation this week, one decision we will all have to make. It is whether to side with what I have called the 'coalition of the selfish' on climate change – those nations bereft of vision, obsessed with short-term economic gain and betraying the long term interests of their people. Or to side with us in the 'coalition for action' on climate change – those nations led by Men and Women who are enlightened, bold and accept the irrefutable evidence.. and who have the long term interests of both their people at heart and the long term interests of the planet we call home.. Planet Earth

This COP must therefore deliver on an adequate package that binds us all in ambitious action to safeguard our planet and our very survival.

Thank you, Mr President.