

**TALANOA V**  
**LEADERS STATEMENT ON**  
**THE PATHWAY FORWARD FOR FIJI**

*9 June 2002*  
*Outrigger Reef Fiji*  
*Korotogo, Fiji Islands*

We, leaders of Fiji, met on June 8–9 in the Second Talanoa since the general elections and the Fifth Talanoa since this dialogue series began in late 2000.

Talanoa V on “Fiji Unity Building: The Pathway Forward,” was based on an agenda agreed by Prime Minister L. Qarase with the Hon. M. Chaudhry, namely that the issues of land, constitutional revision, and multi-party cabinet be given highest priority. We agreed that these issues needed to be tackled urgently in order to continue to deepen trust and confidence in each other and establish stronger political and policy frameworks needed for economic growth and social stability.

Our discussions reflected the spirit of all of our Talanoa sessions – dialogue is based upon principles of reconciliation, inclusion, sincerity, honesty, frankness, and respect for each other as individuals and as representatives of the rich and diverse cultural traditions of the people living in Fiji.

As noted in our previous Talanoa statements, unity cannot be forced, but must evolve naturally through enhanced dialogue among leaders and greater understanding among the people. At the same time, we felt an urgent need to deepen and strengthen the talanoa to transform it into a more sustained, continuous and action oriented process.

Therefore, we agreed to establish joint talanoa committees under the overall guidance of Mr. Qarase and Mr. Chaudhry to continue to explore priority issues between meetings of the leaders. It was also agreed that where the talanoa has resulted in agreement on basic parameters and approaches, such agreements should be brought into the formal political and parliamentary processes without delay.

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## **1. Land**

Our discussion of land issues reflected converging perspectives on what is needed to address this very urgent and critical issue. We agree that there needs to be a sense of security on the part of native landowners over the use of their land and security of tenure for the tenants over such leased land.

All welcomed significant changes in the position of the NLTB on terms and conditions, disclosed by the Prime Minister – that it will support longer lease terms and a percentage basis for lease rentals with a higher rate to be assessed on the basis of unimproved capital value (UCV). The NLTB has also asked the government to consider premium payments on lease renewals, and the government will explore this.

We discussed the legislative vehicle for moving ahead, particularly as regards the relationship between ALTA and the NLTA. The Talanoa session noted that there is need for more dialogue on the NLTB and GCC position to bring all agricultural land under NLTA and the position of tenants to retain agricultural land under ALTA. It was agreed that the framework needs to be comprehensive, addressing different types of ownership and use, and should provide confidence to both landowners and tenants.

We felt that we can reach agreement on the basic parameters through further discussion. In this connection, we have agreed to form a joint talanoa committee to continue discussions on an accelerated basis with a view to putting together an agreement on basic principles to be brought into the formal political process. We also agreed that there if politics and emotions are put aside, a mutually satisfactory solution to the land problem can be reached.

## **2. The Constitution.**

On constitutional issues, we began by reiterating our agreement in Talanoa IV, that the Constitution is a living document created by people and subject to change through those processes outlined in the Constitution itself and involving inclusive consultations with the people.

It was agreed that there are specific, non-controversial provisions of the 1997 Constitution that require change. We agreed to establish an informal bipartisan talanoa committee to discuss these possible changes and bring them to the parliamentary processes on reaching consensus.

On other constitutional issues, continued discussion and consensus-building is required.

### **3. Multi-Party Cabinet**

The question of multi-party Cabinet, as provided for in Section 99(5) of the Constitution, is one such issue. We had an extensive and constructive discussion of multi-party Cabinet, exploring the history and original intentions of this section, the pros and cons of this unique feature of the 1997 Constitution, and the practicality of multi-party Cabinet in the current political and social context of Fiji. In addition, we explored a number of alternatives including the appropriate size and composition of a multi-party Cabinet, a government opposition option, a constitutional amendment, and a multi-ethnic, as distinct from multi-party, option.

It was agreed that in light of the current court case before the Supreme Court involving the interpretation of Section 99(5), it would be premature to try to anticipate any particular outcome of that case. We agreed that the discussion was useful and that we had a fuller understanding of each other's perspectives, even though we had no consensus on future options.

We agreed on basic principles – that government should be representative of the broad segments of our society and that our political system should reflect both rule of law and political stability. We also agreed that we need urgently to put specific programs into place to promote understanding among the ethnic communities represented in Fiji.

We thank the East-West Center and its Pacific Island Development Program, for its continued support of the talanoa. We pledge to continue our Talanoa process with the ultimate objective of building our society based upon social stability and harmony, rule of law, affirmative action to uplift and promote the welfare of the people of Fiji.

# TALANOA V

## **LEADERS' TALANOA ON FIJI UNITY-BUILDING: THE PATHWAY FORWARD**

7-9 June, 2002  
Outrigger Reef Fiji  
Korotogo, Fiji Islands

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