

TALANOA VII

LEADERS STATEMENT

*15 April 2004
Sheraton Denarau Resort
Denarau, Fiji Islands*

TALANOA VII

Leaders Statement

*15 April 2004
Sheraton Fiji Resort
Denarau, Fiji Islands*

We met on 14-15 April 2004 for the Seventh Talanoa since this dialogue series began in late 2000. The agreement with respect to land and sugar industry reform reached at the Sixth Talanoa on 26-27 February provided the basis for our Talanoa VII. Our discussions and agreement on these two critical issues for the country reflected the spirit of all our Talanoa Talks. They are based upon the principles of reconciliation, building trust and confidence, inclusion, sincerity, honesty, frankness and open-mindedness, and respect for each other as Leaders. At the same time we felt an urgent need to create as much as possible a common understanding and find resolutions to the issues relating to land and sugar industry reform and to bring them into the political and parliamentary processes without delay.

1. Sugar Industry Reform

The Leaders invited Dr. J. J. Bhagat, Team Leader, Mission Director, Sugar Technology Mission, Government of India to make a presentation on the *Mission's Report On Revival Of Sugar Industry in Fiji*. Dr. Bhagat formally presented the final written report to the Leaders and made a detailed and clear presentation highlighting the key findings of the Mission. This was followed by Leaders' comments, questions, and discussion. In addition, it was stressed that once Leaders and stakeholders had read and digested the full report, other questions may arise, which will require further clarification from the Mission team.

The Leaders expressed sincere gratitude to members of the Mission for their report and to Dr. Bhagat for his enlightening and comprehensive presentation of it.

While there were some reservations expressed, especially with regard to the transportation options and Quality Assurance Assessments, it was generally agreed that the recommendations made by the team from India were the most viable options, out of all reports prepared so far, for Fiji to pursue.

As such, we agreed to the following Motion, which will be introduced at the next sitting of Parliament:

SUGAR INDUSTRY REFORM

Recognising the importance of the sugar industry to all stakeholders, the national economy, employment, and livelihoods;

Bearing in mind the problems and challenges currently prevailing in the industry and requiring urgent attention;

Acknowledging the challenge and desirability of ensuring a vibrant, self-sustaining, equitable and socially responsible sugar industry; and

Realising that our global competitiveness and the welfare of all our stakeholders can be improved by the reform of the sugar industry:

This House agrees to establish an ad hoc Select Committee on Sugar Industry Reform to consider the Indian Government Technical and Finance Mission report of March 2004 for the reform of the Sugar Industry, and other associated issues, and after wide consultation with all stakeholders, to report back to the House as soon as possible with recommendations, including proposed legislative changes, to implement these recommendations.

2. Land

Following on the Talanoa VI Leaders' request that the Talanoa Sub-committee prepare a Terms of Reference (TOR) for a Parliamentary Select Committee on Land, the Sub-committee presented the Plenary with the draft TOR. It was acknowledged that the issue of land is highly controversial and sensitive to everyone in Fiji, so the Talanoa re-emphasised the need for building and maintaining trust and confidence in order to create a sense of partnership in reaching collaborative solutions to this difficult issue. The Talanoa examined the draft TOR with this spirit in mind.

The members of the Talanoa Sub-committee, in presenting their report, emphasised its holistic approach and the common values of building trust and confidence, creating fairness and equity, providing best possible security, and giving optimum terms and conditions with a vision to foster the social and economic advancement of landowner and tenant communities, needed to underpin any resolutions on land.

In discussing the Sub-committee's report, the Leaders put considerable emphasis on their collective effort to find political consensus on the key land issues and the form in which they will be taken to the next sitting of Parliament.

Therefore we agreed to the following Motion, which will be introduced at the next sitting of Parliament:

This House, relying on the frank and open-minded approach taken by the members of the bi-partisan Talanoa Sub-committee in their collective effort to identify and build mutual understanding around the crucial issues on land contained in their progressive report to the Leaders;

Recognizing the basic values, principles, and objectives of building trust and confidence, creating fairness and equity, providing best possible security, and giving optimum terms and conditions which underpin the land issues that emerged from the discussions in the Talanoa talks;

Acknowledging the efforts made in the past to establish a sound basis for legislating landlord and tenant relationship based on the understanding and appreciation of the significance of land to culture, livelihoods, and the national economy;

Realising the urgent need to arrive at the resolutions to the land issues to meet the overarching vision of fostering the social and economic advancement of the landowner and tenant communities;

Mindful of the values and vision stated above;

Agrees to establish a Joint Parliamentary Select Committee to make recommendations on the land issues with specific reference to the following:

- (1)** *The Joint Parliamentary Select Committee shall continue with the frank and open-minded approach of the Talanoa talks with a sense of urgency to arrive at the most satisfactory outcome for all, and adopt as its guiding principles the values of building trust and confidence; creating fairness and equity, providing best possible security; and giving optimum terms and conditions with the view to fulfilling the overarching vision of fostering the social and economic advancement of landowner and tenant communities, and shall:*
- (2)** *Scrutinize and consider the important aspects of the issues on land relating to*

 - (a)** *The tenure,*
 - (b)** *The rental,*
 - (c)** *The rental fixing mechanisms,*
 - (d)** *The rental assessment mechanisms,*
 - (e)** *The premium considerations,*
 - (f)** *The compensation on improvements,*
 - (g)** *The arbitration on disputes,*
 - (h)** *The good husbandry, and*
 - (i)** *Any other related matters.*
- (3)** *Ascertain the practicality and suitability of ALTA or NLTA with possible amendments.*
- (4)** *Ensure that either option adopted incorporates the needs of landowners and tenants as currently safeguarded in ALTA and NLTA, and also satisfies the values and fulfils the vision stated in the guiding principles.*
- (5)** *Commission a committee of legal experts to give advice, through a report, on legislative options referred to in **(3)** above.*
- (6)** *Report fully on all the above matters and the proposed suitable legislation or amendments designed to achieve the present and future objectives as set out in the guiding principles.*
- (7)** *Submit their full report and recommendations by September 2004 at the latest.*

In addition, it was agreed that the Joint Parliamentary Select Committee would have the following composition (with membership being permanent and no substitutions to be made):

- 8 - Government Members
- 6 - Fiji Labour Party Members
- 1 - Leader of the Opposition
- 2 - Members of the Senate

3. Next Talanoa

It was reported that at the direction of Talanoa VI Leaders, the Talanoa Sub-committee met with the Fiji Human Rights Commission and provided them with the Talanoa VI statement and the Talanoa Sub-committee report on CERD. The meeting was highly informative and useful and the Human Rights Commission expressed its desire to provide a written response to the Sub-committee. The Human Rights Commission recently submitted their response and the Talanoa Sub-committee has not had a chance to meet, review the Human Rights Commission's response, and finalize their own report to the Plenary.

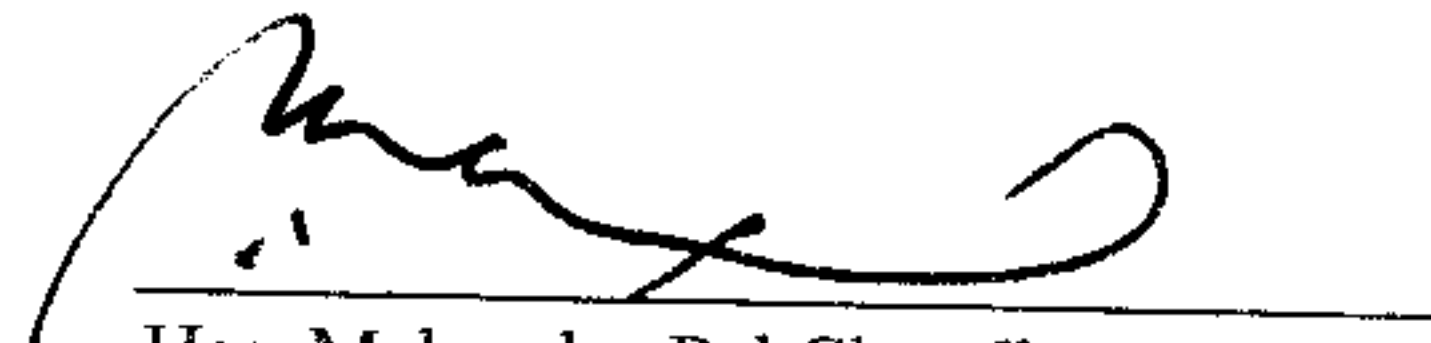
It was agreed that the Talanoa Sub-committee would meet as soon as possible and provide a completed report to another full Talanoa session to take place on Saturday, 1 May 2004.

We thank the East-West Center, and its Pacific Island Development Program, for its continued support of the Talanoa process. We pledge to continue our Talanoa process as a way of building trust and consensus among Leaders as we seek to make the critical decisions that need to be made in order to ensure that all of the people living in Fiji have the opportunities they deserve.



Hon Laisenia Qarase

Prime Minister



Hon Mahendra Pal Chaudhry

Parliamentary Leader of the FLP

TALANOA VII

**14-15 April 2004
Sheraton Fiji Resort
Denarau, Fiji Islands**

PARTICIPANTS LIST

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Hon Mahendra P Chaudhry | Hon Laisenia Qarase |
| Hon Poseci Bune | Hon Sen Qoriniasi Bale |
| Hon Pratap Chand | Hon Jonetani Galuinadi |
| Hon Krishna Datt | Hon Ratu Jone Kubuabola |
| Hon Sen Dr 'Atu Emberson-Bain | Hon Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu |
| Hon Dr Gunasagaran Gounder | Hon Isireli Leweniqila |
| Hon Sen Jokapeci Koroi | Hon Pita Nacuva |
| Hon Perumal Mupnar | Hon George Shiu Raj |
| Hon Gyani Nand | Hon Kaliopate Tavola |
| Hon Udit Narayan | Hon Ratu Rakuita Vakalalabure |
| Hon Gyan Singh | Hon Tomasi Vuetilovoni |
| Hon Lekh Ram Vayeshnoi | |

EAST-WEST CENTER STAFF

**Dr Sitiveni Halapua
Mr Scott Kroeker**