



## **Ministry of Environment**

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### **Speech By**

**Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy,  
Minister for Agriculture, Waterways & Environment**

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### **Symposium on Biodiversity Innovative Solutions from our Nature**

**Suva**

**19/05/20**

### ***Salutations***

Mr. Joshua Wycliffe, Permanent Secretary of Environment.  
Ms. Sandeep Singh, Director Environment,  
Teams from the Ministry,  
Our NGO & CSO friends, ladies and gentlemen

Bula vinaka and a warm welcome to you all to this symposium on Biodiversity.

### ***Introduction***

Ladies and gentlemen, Biodiversity offers abundant and infinite solutions that are of inspiration to technology and innovation.

Our agrarian population sustenance is dependent, to a large extent, on our biological resource. Food, housing material, medicines, fuel wood, timber, water for household, agriculture are all sourced from our biological resource stock.

### ***Dilemma!***

But we are facing a major dilemma now, while our population is increasing, our stock of biological resources are decreasing, threatened by climate changes as well as our own conduct. We are indiscriminately harvesting our natural resources without any concern for its sustainability. We are treating our natural habitat as waste dump sites and we are pulling land under biological resources for industrial and commercial activity.

Not only are we reducing the stock of biological resources, we are also threatening the extinction of some of the endemic biological species.

Now more than ever, we need champions of bio diversity...we need leaders who will not only advance the protection, expansion and branding of our biological resources, but also bring in others into the net to be champions of biodiversity.

Pls join our Environment team who are at the forefront of this campaign to protect our environment. I congratulate them for their efforts in focusing towards the establishing and, recording the benefits from valuing the Fijian biodiversity and mapping it towards the indispensable possibilities of economic, and medicinal resources and of course technology innovation that can be made available to us Fijians.

### ***The Challenge***

This is not any easy task.

Not that they don't have the knowledge.

Not that they don't have the resources.

Not that they don't have legislative support.

It is because of where we are with regard to the country's growth and development.

The country as whole is desperate to fast track growth given disparities on different fronts. In this quest for rapid economic growth, some players may resort to compromising on our natural resources to make windfall gains at the expense of our environment for both the current and future generations. This should never be allowed. We must guard against this. We have to strike a balance. Contribute to balance and sustainable growth.

Therein lies the challenge....today, you all will contribute to this discourse on how you could come up with innovative solutions on Biodiversity.

It could be about:

(i) Protecting biodiversity;

- (ii) Enhancing and expanding biodiversity;
- (iii) Building resilience within our biological resources to withstands shocks;
- (iv) Branding biodiversity; and,
- (v) Means to educate our people, in particular our children.

At the same time, you can also discuss on how to ensure governments economic growth pursuit is supported while at the same time, we don't compromise on our environment.

### ***Concluding Remarks***

I strongly encourage you all to delve into this fascinating subject over the next couple of hours. I do hope that after today's symposium, as a community, you will walk out of here with a new stock of knowledge and wisdom.

I hope this symposium will also be the beginning to plant the seed for a policy for biodiversity innovation for Fiji to be launched at the earliest.

I wish you all a great session and a day ahead.

Vinaka.