



HON. PRIME MINISTER JOSIA V BAINIMARAMA

**Acceptance Remarks
Prime Minister Voreqe Bainimarama
ICTs in Sustainable Development Award**

New York

26 September, 2015

Bula Vinaka and a good evening to you all.

Let me first thank the International Telecommunications Union and all the people here in this room who are facilitating access to communications technology to everyone in the developing world. It is noble work, and Fiji is honoured to be part of this global effort.

I am proud to accept this award and acknowledge the commitment of the Minister and staff of the Ministry of Communications who have worked on so many levels to catapult

our country to an advanced state of communications. Their hard work has harnessed the talents of our businesses and our people, and helped countless of Fijians realize their untapped potential.

Government has to set the vision and put sensible policies in place. And it has to see advances in information technology as part of a larger plan to empower our people and create opportunities. One thing is clear: Information technology is not an end in itself; it is a means to an end.

In Fiji, we are attacking the causes of poverty, exclusion and inequality. We want to be sure that no one is denied the benefits of the modern world because of income, gender, disability or geography. We need to connect people in rural and urban areas to the modern economy through quality infrastructure. That means electricity, water, public transport, roads and ports. But it especially means access to affordable telecommunications. We are convinced that bridging the digital divide between urban and

rural, rich and poor, those in the centre and those in the margins, would help us bridge the political, cultural and social divides and mainstream all our citizens.

Excellencies, Ladies & Gentlemen,

There are many other lessons we have learnt along the way in our endeavour to improve telecommunications access to our people. Suffice for me to say here that it needs to be accessible to all, not just a few; ensuring the affordability of access; the need to work with the private sector, to provide them with incentives and encourage real competition; the importance of transparency; the removal of systemic corruption; and the liberalisation of the market to give confidence to the telecommunications and information technology sector.

We will continue to expand our footprint in the ICT sector and in doing so we look forward to working closely with the International Telecommunications Union, the United Nations and other

agencies to use technology to encourage more engagement in the Fijian economy, foster greater financial inclusion and bring the benefits of information technology development to every Fijian.

Thank you once again for this award. Vinaka vakalevu.