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Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs, Sugar Industry and Foreign Affairs

SPEECH AT THE GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY FOR RAKIRAKI MUNICIPAL MARKET

Rakiraki Municipal Market Site
RAKIRAKI

Mon. 8 May, 2017
1100 hours

**Minister for Local Government, Housing, Environment,
Infrastructure & Transport;**

**Senior Officials of the Australian High Commission and UN
Women;**

Management and Staff of the Council; and

**Citizens of Rakiraki and Market Vendors of Rakiraki Municipal
Market**

Bula vinaka and good morning to you all.

I am pleased to be here to break ground for the new
Rakiraki Municipal Market.

This project is just one part of my Government's commitment to build the economy of this country from the ground up by providing opportunity for small businesses, for people with ambition and drive who only need a chance.

It is one important foundation stone of our commitment to the women of Fiji, who will no longer be denied the economic opportunity and the protection they deserve.

And it is just a small part of our commitment to the people of this area and the town of Rakiraki, who suffered so much in Tropical Cyclone Winston. We are all rising, strongly and surely, and we are seeing the dawn of a new day. This market is but one ray of that morning light.

When the first phase of this market is finished, it will be home to 307 vendor stalls, more than double the 127 stalls in the market today. It will also have an office for the market manager and modern bathroom facilities for the vendors and customers alike.

The first floor will have an Open Craft Centre and what we call an “accommodation centre” for women market vendors. Basically, this is a safe place for our rural women to stay overnight when they travel long distances to sell their products.

The first phase alone represents an investment of some **\$5.84 million**. Government is contributing **\$2.64 million**, and our partners, the Australian Government and UN Women are contributing the balance. This is the biggest infrastructure investment by UN Women Fiji so far. The Project is expected to be completed over a period of twelve months.

This is an investment not just in a market, but in the future of Rakiraki. It will significantly boost growth opportunities and promote the growth of small and medium-sized business. An expanded market facility means more opportunity for new small-scale entrepreneurs to establish businesses, and we believe that will have a multiplier effect on this town’s economy.

A market is both a place for commerce and a place for social interaction. It is where neighbours meet. It is where you buy fresh, healthy produce for your families, often from the very people who grow that food. The Rakiraki Market will provide the people of the area with direct access to fresh, local and seasonal food, exposure to a wide variety of foods, and the opportunity to learn about how the food was produced and how to use it. It also allows people of this area to support their neighbours, create a strong sense of community and help build a vibrant local economy.

Stimulating economic growth and establishing economic resilience in our towns has been one of the key objectives of my Government. In the recent years, we have seen a tremendous growth in small and medium-sized business, and we want to support that trend. And we know that, in time, a good number of those small businesses will grow larger.

The markets of our nation become a starting point for this. The basic objective is to see that everyone wanting

to form or build a small or medium-sized business from within our town centres can find opportunities through the facilities at our municipal markets. So I urge our farmers and vendors to take advantage of the opportunity this market will provide when it is built.

And it doesn't stop there. We know that municipal markets in Fiji play a pivotal role in shaping our town economies, and we fully expect that the increase in economic activity in Rakiraki will encourage an increase in private investment.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish to remind you all of one more thing today. We are still rebuilding after Winston. It will take time, and I would like to move faster, but we are making steady progress. The most important thing we have is our determination that catastrophes like Winston will only make us stronger—and smarter. We will not just rebuild, we will build with the knowledge that the standards we used in the past will not serve us in the future. Everything we build has to withstand more severe weather conditions than we had once assumed we

would face. They have to withstand stronger winds and heavier rain and even flooding in many places. This goes for our public and commercial buildings, our schools, our roads and our homes.

Fiji is leading the world's effort to combat climate change at the UN Climate Change Conference this year, where we will develop international rules for reducing carbon emissions. But we will also need to develop mechanisms that will help developing countries adapt to the change we know is coming and develop greater resiliency—that is, develop a greater ability to withstand the effects of stronger storms, drought conditions, rising seas and other phenomena with minimal damage. That is one of my priorities as COP 23 President, and I have committed to it not just for Fiji, but for our neighbours in the Pacific, our friends in other small-island States, and all the vulnerable nations of the world.

I wish the best of luck to the selected consultants and contractors for the project, and I look forward to returning here in 12 months' time for the grand opening.

Vinaka vakalevu. Thank you.
