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Prime Minister of Fiji and Minister for iTaukei Affairs and Sugar Industry

NATIONAL STATEMENT AT WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT

Istanbul, Turkey

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Fiji comes to the first World Humanitarian Summit determined to give Pacific Islanders a voice and contribute to this historic global debate.

We share the development challenges of many small and vulnerable nations and our priorities are reflected in the formal commitments we are making here in Istanbul.

Fiji recognises that only by growing our economy can we combat poverty and improve the living standards of our people. But we will not compromise on our overarching principle that any development must be sustainable. Because our pristine surroundings are our ultimate livelihood through the visitors we attract. And the Fijian Made brand of quality goods and services we take to the world.

We are committing to higher standards of governance through zero tolerance for corruption and such measures as an integrated national financing framework and the better collection of data to improve decision-making.

And our social priorities are reflected in our commitments to improve the position of women and girls and prevent gender based violence.

But by far our most important priority relates to the biggest humanitarian crisis we have ever faced in the Pacific – the escalating threat to our physical safety and way of life posed by the extreme weather events and rising sea levels caused by climate change.

In common with other small and vulnerable states the world over, we urgently need to gain access to the funding we need - in the form of grants or loans - to build our resilience to withstand this threat. To strengthen our homes and our infrastructure. And strengthen our response to disaster wherever and whenever it strikes.

Three months ago, the biggest cyclone ever to make landfall in the southern hemisphere slammed into Fiji with winds of more than 300-kilometres an hour. Cyclone Winston killed 44 Fijians and ravaged 40,000 homes, public buildings and infrastructure – leaving us with a damage bill of 1.4 billion US dollars.

And while it could have been much worse because Winston spared our main tourism areas, Fiji is a stark reminder to the world of the new and frightening era that is dawning on us because of climate change.

Stronger and more frequent cyclonic winds, more floods, more droughts. And the ever-rising seas that are already swamping arable coastal land and are destined to swallow up three Pacific nations altogether – our friends in Kiribati, Tuvalu and the Marshall Islands.

Fiji and the other members of the Pacific Islands Development Forum want the present cap on global warming agreed to in Paris – 2 degrees Celsius above the pre industrial age – lowered to 1.5 degrees. And in the meantime, I appeal to you all on behalf of every Pacific Islander to provide us with the financial means to adapt and survive.



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