

**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY MAJOR-GENERAL (RET'D) JIOJI KONUSI KONROTE  
AT THE INAUGURAL GRADUATION CEREMONY FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF THE  
SOUTH PACIFIC NAURU CAMPUS, 2018**

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- Your Excellency the President Baron Waqa and Lady Louisa Waqa
- Honourable Cabinet Ministers and Members of Parliament
- Honourable Ministers of Education from the Pacific Islands States
- Your Excellencies, members of the Diplomatic Corps
- Members of the Judiciary
- The Pro-Chancellor and Chair of the Council of the University of the South Pacific, Ambassador Winston Thompson
- The Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Rajesh Chandra
- The Senior Management of the University
- The Nauru Campus Director, Ms. Alamanda Lauti
- Members of the University Council
- Chiefs and Community Leaders of Nauru
- Graduants
- Distinguished Guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Omo Yoran, Ni sa bula vinaka, and a very good morning to you all.

I am deeply honoured to be part of this graduation ceremony in my capacity as Fiji's Head of State and Chancellor of the University of the South Pacific. And I bring to you all the warm greetings of the Government and the Fijian people.

It is with much pleasure that I extend our collective congratulations, as well as those of the University, to all the graduating students, and to all those who have graduated years earlier and still wish to be part of this inaugural and historical occasion for our Nauru campus. All the hard work and the sacrifices have paid off. Each of you are not only qualified intellectuals, but you all have the world at your finger-tips. Your qualifications undoubtedly will, or have been, a game-changer in your lives. You have every opportunity to excel and do well for yourselves, your families, your communities and your country.

I am particularly pleased and honoured to personally officiate at your graduation ceremony, which coincides with both your great Nation and the University's 50th anniversaries.

Nauru is a story of great success. Your current President and Head of State, two former Presidents, and many of your Ministers and Members of Parliament both past and present are, and were, graduates of the University. They are classic examples of what USP graduates can achieve in life – to be leaders in their respective fields of endeavour, leaders in their respective communities, and leaders of great nations.

And so I believe that your contributions as USP graduates can and will have a profound impact on the Pacific as a whole. Yesterday, during a courtesy call on your President, His Excellency Baron Waqa, I got to hear firsthand of how the people of

Nauru conscientiously rebuilt your nation in the recent years. I heard of how you all have had to make-do without much of the worldly possessions, and how you had to sustain yourselves with the God-given natural resources. I heard of how you have been able to rebuild your national assets, bit by bit, step by step, to help sustain your economy, and your people. The fact that Nauru now has properties in the Antarctica and in the United States of America, among others; that your national airline is once again providing a vital link between our Pacific Islands and the rest of the world; and importantly, that you are now able to provide the basic necessities of life in a growing economy, are a very positive and encouraging reflection of how true you have been to your national motto of allowing God's Will to work in your lives. I encourage His Excellency Baron Waqa to help tell your Nation's success story for the benefit of the younger generations, and for the benefit of your brothers and sisters throughout the Pacific.

Ladies and gentlemen, as Fiji's Head of State, I am also grateful for this opportunity to briefly say that I look forward to strengthening the relationships between the peoples of our nations throughout the Pacific. This is vitally important because we are increasingly challenged to deal with issues that directly affect our islands and our peoples. Issues like climate change that absolutely knows no boundaries. The rising sea-level has already started to affect all our low-lying countries not only in the Pacific, but also around the world.

Back in Fiji, we have relocated several villages to higher ground, and we expect to relocate more in the years ahead. Low-lying Island Nations like Kiribati, Tuvalu and the Marshall Islands, among others, are facing an even grimmer future, although I must commend the efforts they are making to address the rising sea level.

The global community, as indeed the Pacific community, needs to be united in order to decisively address climate change. It is for the very survival of our peoples, our islands and humanity at large that we challenge the world's polluters to abide by the Paris Agreement to reduce carbon emissions to 1.5 degrees pre-industrial levels, and not more.

All of us in the Pacific are people of Big Ocean States, but we are constantly at the mercy of modern day challenges such as climate change and trans-border crimes such as money laundering, people smuggling, trans-national refugee migration, and illegal fishing, among others. And I strongly believe that our nations can work together to strengthen our capabilities to address these issues through ongoing education, and through our support of regional and sub-regional organizations, sharing experiences, advice and expertise in our collective campaigns against these issues.

As you are aware, Fiji now holds the Presidency of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change or COP23. And on this note, I wish to reiterate Fiji's appreciation to all the Pacific Islands Leaders who were present at the COP23 Meeting in Bonn in November last year, and who responded positively to our Prime Minister and President of COP23, Honourable Voreqe Bainimarama's call seeking the support of all Pacific Leaders to rally behind him in ensuring the success of COP23. Their positive response was a living testimony to the solidarity we all have in our firm

resolve to effectively combat the scourge of climate change to our people and communities.

We have said right from the beginning that our Presidency of COP23 is a Pacific Presidency, and I wish to assure you that during our term, we will always pour our passion into ensuring that issues of all Pacific Small Island Developing States are effectively addressed through the United Nations processes. We continue to appeal for support from all our Pacific neighbours so that together we can form a united and strong voice within the global community. Because on an issue as important as climate change, we cannot afford to fail in our mission. We must keep this issue atop the global agenda. We look forward to standing side-by-side with all our Pacific brothers and sisters; with your support and cooperation, we continue to work together, to paddle together, and ensure that all of the previously marginalized voices of the Pacific are heard more now than ever before.

To all the graduating students, I wish to share with you a very short story about one of the most progressive countries in the South-East Asian Region - Singapore. I shared this story at the University graduations in Tonga and Vanuatu late last year, and in Suva in the past two months.

In the 1960s, in a graduating ceremony similar to today, the then Prime Minister, and now the late, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew challenged the graduates to make life more meaningful and stimulating. He urged the graduates to become 'triers' – people who made the effort to bring positive developments. Singapore started its journey towards nationhood with no natural resources. But it has now become one of the model nations in the world that has made significant socio-economic progress because they focused on the one resource they had - their people. Specifically, they focused on the intellectual advancement of their people.

All of us in the Pacific are very fortunate because not only do we have what Singapore has - our people, but we also have vast natural resources – including our oceans. We just need to make smart and sustainable use of our resources so that they can provide for us now and for our future generations.

Today, I urge all of you the graduates to make your lives meaningful and stimulating by making the effort to bring positive developments to your families, to your nation and to the Pacific region as a whole. You now have valued academic qualifications. I urge you to be enthusiastic and ambitious, to be diligent, reliable, and develop good work attributes. Importantly, I urge you to develop the wisdom and the moral courage to always do what is right.

Once again, on behalf of the University, I extend our warmest and heartiest congratulations to all of you.

May Almighty God continue to bless you, your respective families, your great Nation and, and our island States and peoples of the Pacific.

Vinaka vakalevu, Ituba Tubwa Kor and Thank you.

I, Jioji Konusi Konrote, President of the Republic of Fiji and Chancellor of the University of the South Pacific, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Charter and Statutes, now confer the Degrees and award the Diplomas and Certificates of the University, to those who have completed the requirements laid down by the Senate. I also wish to acknowledge all former graduates who are present at this ceremony.