

**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY MAJOR-GENERAL (RET'D) JIOJI KONUSI KONROTE
AT THE STATE DINNER HOSTED BY THE PRESIDENT OF NAURU - HIS EXCELLENCY
BARON DIVAVESI WAQA**

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

Omo yemero, Ni sa bula vinaka, and a very good evening to you all.

My wife Sarote and I are deeply honoured to visit Nauru for the second time in four months. We had the great fortune to join you as you celebrated your 50th Anniversary of Independence in January. We are equally fortunate now to officiate at the University of the South Pacific Nauru Campus' inaugural graduation, in my capacity as the Chancellor of the University.

And, I bring you the warmest greetings of the Fijian people and the Fijian government.

It is a wonderful co-incidence that both Nauru and the USP are celebrating 50 years of existence – one as an independent and sovereign nation State and the other as an institution of higher learning, which is now one of the largest and successful regional institutions in the world! What remarkable achievements.

Ladies and gentlemen, I had the further honour in January to speak on behalf of all the Heads of State, Heads of Government, and Heads of Delegation who gathered here in Nauru to celebrate this great country's 50th anniversary of Independence. I reflected on Fiji and Nauru's very close relationship as nations stretching back to the establishment of our diplomatic ties decades ago.

I also thanked Nauru for its support when Fiji took on the Presidency of COP23. In our view, this campaign to bring to the world's attention the plight of the Pacific Islands Countries and all other low-lying Nations around the world, is likely to be the biggest single challenge that will determine the future of our Nations and peoples. The effort to reduce the impact of climate change by preparing our people to be more climate resilient, is one that we will have to push even after we relinquish our Pacific presidency at the end of this year.

We must remind ourselves that even though we are small island nations geographically, we are actually people of Big Ocean States! So we must continue to

fight to protect our oceans, and continue to make the world hear the voice of all Small Island Developing States like never before.

Your Excellency, thank you for accepting my call this afternoon, and especially for sharing with me and my delegation some very interesting stories on how your people painstakingly picked up the pieces in the last two decades and rebuilt your nation. The people of Nauru have been true to your national motto by allowing God's Will to work in your lives and to rebuild your nation. Although one of your detractors said that Nauru the Titanic has sunken, today I believe that Nauru the Titanic has resurfaced. You are certainly one of the success stories not only in the Pacific, but in the world.

And, as the Pro-Chancellor said, it is important for you to tell your nation's story for the benefit of the young people not only here in Nauru, but also throughout the Pacific and beyond.

Your Excellency, I am now extending the invitation for you to visit Fiji and to help share your success story with the University of the South Pacific and through it with the rest of the world. Having said this, I keenly look forward to officiating at tomorrow's graduation ceremony. It will be important for us to engage the educated minds to help chart the future for our peoples. It is also critical that we in the Pacific continue to encourage our children to pursue higher and quality education so that we can determine our destinies with a great degree of certainty and success. An intellectual mind, coupled with Godly wisdom and a benevolent heart, will take our Island nations well into the future.

Your Excellency the President and Madam First Lady, I thank you for the wonderful warm hospitality you have shown me and my wife, and my delegation.

May Almighty God Bless Nauru, and may He continue to bless our Pacific Islands nations and peoples.

Vinaka vakalevu and Tubwa Kor.