

**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY PRESIDENT BARON WAQA AT THE DINNER
FUNCTION IN HONOUR OF THE PRESIDENT OF FIJI AND FORUM EDUCATION
MINISTERS, 2018**

- His Excellency the President of Fiji Major-General (Ret'd) Jioji Konrote and Madam Konrote
- Honourable Speaker of Parliament
- Hon. Cyril Buraman and Mrs. Buraman Cabinet Colleagues
- Ministers of Education from the Pacific Members of Parliament
- His Honour Judge Rapi Vaai
- Her Excellency the High Commissioner of Australia, Angela Tierney
- His Excellency the Roving High Commissioner of Fiji, Ratu Tui Cavulati
- USP Pro-Chancellor Winston Thompson and Vice-Chancellor Professor Rajesh Chandra
- Distinguished guests Ladies and gentlemen

Omo yenemero, and a good evening to you all.

I am delighted to be here in joining you to celebrate the successful end of the Forum Education Ministers Meeting, and to acknowledge our special guests to our small and humble island - the Chancellor of the University of the South Pacific and President of Fiji, His Excellency MajorGeneral (Ret'd) Jioji Konrote. I also acknowledge the presence of Fiji's Roving HighCommissioner, His Excellency Ratu Tui Cavulati who presented his credentials to me this morning.

Ladies and gentlemen, the development of our education systems and the building of capacity across the Pacific, has been our underpinning priority in the last 50 years, at a time when the waves of political independence began to swept through our region. Governments and donors have invested heavily in infrastructure and in developing the policies and best practises for educating our children since then.

Education is fundamental to development and growth and all countries, regardless of their national wealth, stand to gain from more and better quality education.

Education is also a human right. And, like other human rights, it cannot be taken for granted.

Robust education systems – underpinned by qualified, professionally trained, motivated, and wellsupported teachers – is critical to all our development needs over the short and long term. Having quality teachers is absolutely important and teaching is a profession sometimes taken for granted. However, teaching as a profession is a noble undertaking because a career as a teacher is so important to the development of the future of any country and its most important resource - its children. I would like to re-emphasise that the education of our children starts in the home. Parental support at an early age in children is critical to their development.

Over the last 50 years, the fabric of human society has undergone fundamental changes. New wave of thinking has accentuated thoughts once considered taboo.

To me, an ideal education is a balanced education, where development was not restricted to the intellectual skills, but also development of character and personality. We live in a world where greed, dishonest practises and the moral decline of society plagues our everyday way of life.

In Nauru, we live under our motto of “God’s Will First”. The Lord is foremost in our development including the development of our children. After all, “The fear of the Lord, is the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs (9:10).

In line with the acknowledge of the Lord for his protection and guidance over the last 50 years, we marked the beginning of 2018 with the 50th Anniversary of our independence. This year also marked the 50th anniversary of the founding of The University of the South Pacific and I would like to acknowledge the hard work of the staff of USP for their dedication to making USP an institute of excellence which we all can proudly call, our university.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to conclude by conveying my congratulations to the Ministers of Education for concluding a successful and historic meeting today. I also congratulate the USP Council for their equally successful meeting yesterday. On a last note, I thank the Minister for Education Charmaine Scotty and her staff at the Department of Education for hosting the Ministers meeting and to USP for the use of their excellent new facilities.

Ma tubwa kor and thank you very much.

Have a very enjoyable evening.

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