

**REMARKS BY
VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT, PROFESSOR RAJESH CHANDRA
AT THE USP –AUSTRALIA PARTNERSHIP LAUNCH COCKTAIL,
6.30PM, TUESDAY 18 MAY 2010,
AT THE OCEANIA CULTURE AND ARTS CENTRE, LAUCALA CAMPUS,
SUVA, FIJI.**

- Ms Judith Robinson, AusAid Minister Councillor;
- Excellencies;
- Heads of Regional and International Organizations;
- Senior Government Officials;
- Deputy Chair, USP Council;
- Chair, USP Finance and Investments Committee;
- Senior USP staff;
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to welcome you all this evening to this function to mark the launch of Australia-USP Partnership Agreement that was signed on 4th March 2010.

Through this collaboration USP and Australia have reinforced their shared commitment to the social and economic development of Pacific Island Countries.

We believe that the new Partnership Agreement is also the start of an exciting new phase in the Australia – USP relationship. I understand that this is the first CROP partnership signed and we are pleased by the confidence Australia has placed in USP – which, if I may say so myself – is very well placed!

The Partnership, worth approximately **A\$18.35 million** over the three years (2010-2012), comprises **Core Budget Funding**; **Targeted Funding** to support implementation of the Strategic Plan; and **Incentive Funding** to support achievement of outcomes, which will be tied to agreed KPIs. The Partnership Agreement represents a significant increase in Australian Government support to USP.

The contribution to the budget supports the University's core business of preparing the region's future leaders who, as part of the University's drive toward greater relevance to the region, are all being encouraged and supported to develop a strong Pacific consciousness, to understand, appreciate, and preserve the natural environment, to be competent in ICT, to comprehend and value good governance, and to achieve higher standards of English competency through the phased introduction of 4 generic courses.

The University's Strategic Plan – underpinned by quality, relevance and sustainability – is the roadmap for the University's response to the region's human resource development needs, and was fully endorsed by all member countries and donors.

I wish to put on record our appreciation that the Australian Government has undertaken to support two of the six core elements of the Strategic Plan: student support and research and innovation.

Ladies and gentlemen, what does the Partnership mean in practical terms? First, it means that USP is certain of Australia's funding commitment from 2010 to 2012, as opposed to year by year agreements in the immediate past. USP is clear that the greater its achievements in improving governance, management, and fiscal responsibility, the greater the increase in Incentive Funding, which I will use to encourage research and innovative projects leading to real and demonstrable impacts in the region.

Second, the Partnership means greater and more meaningful dialogue at a high level as well as at the operational level. There are more systematic opportunities for Australia to consult with USP on its development priorities. Where USP is positioned to provide advice and guidance on the needs and priorities of the region, it will do so.

At this stage, I wish to acknowledge that Australia is also funding two other projects - the Future Climate Leaders' Program and the Pacific Regional Land Program, worth an additional A\$2 million. In addition to these, Australia has also been sponsoring annually more than four hundred students from the region to study at USP through the Australian Regional Development Scholarships scheme.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Australia has been a valued and devoted development partner for the USP from the very beginning and remains one of our strongest allies. On behalf of the Member Governments and the University community, I thank the Australian government most sincerely for its assistance to USP. I would like to assure the Government of Australia through you Minister/Counsellor that your tax payers' funds will be utilised wisely for the region. We are confident that we will meet the expectations of the Australian Government - and indeed of all our member governments and stakeholders. You will find us a reliable, cost-effective, innovative and sustainable partner, conscious of the goodwill and support of the Government and people of Australia ever since the establishment of USP 42 years ago. We will eagerly explore further ways in which we can work even better and more closely in the future.

Vinaka Vakalevu, Dhanyabaad, Thank you.