

**WELCOME REMARKS BY THE
PRO CHANCELLOR AND CHAIR OF COUNCIL, MR WINSTON THOMPSON AT THE
GENERAL PUBLIC LECTURE BY THE RIGHT HON. PETER O'NEILL, PRIME MINISTER
OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA, USP LAUCALA CAMPUS, 9 JULY 2018**

- The Honourable Peter O'Neill, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea;
- Her Excellency Dame Meg Taylor, Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum
- Her Excellency Ms Lucy Bogari, High Commissioner of PNG to Fiji and Permanent Representative to the PIF and Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific (CROP);
- His Excellency Mr Esala Teleni, High Commissioner of Fiji to PNG;
- His Excellency Ratu Tui Cavuilati, Fiji's Roving Ambassador for the Pacific
- Members of the Diplomatic Corps
- Heads of Regional and International Organisations;
- Members of the Private Sector, NGOs and Media organisations
- Senior Management, staff and students of the University;
- Media representatives;
- Ladies and gentlemen;

On behalf of The University of the South Pacific, I am privileged and deeply honoured to welcome the Honourable Peter O'Neill, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea to The University of the South Pacific's Laucala Campus.

This is the second time for the University to host a leader from PNG; the first was Sir Michael Somare who attended the 25th anniversary of the Melanesian Spearhead Group in March 2013.

It is indeed an honor for the University to host you sir, especially as this is USP's 50th Anniversary year. Having you visit the University has made this year even more special for us as a regional University of higher education, research and regional integration.

USP is particularly proud to host this public lecture by the Honourable Prime Minister, which is being streamed live via the USP website to all Pacific Forum member countries. I thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Fiji and PNG High Commission for providing the USP with this opportunity.

A special welcome also to the Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Her Excellency Dame Meg Taylor. I also wish to welcome all our invited guests, dignitaries; members of the public and the media; staff and students. We are all very keen to hear your views on Pacific Regionalism – the framework, which our Pacific Leaders have embraced for the development of the region.

USP and PNG have enjoyed a longstanding relationship since the inception of USP in 1968 especially through the various student exchange programmes between University of PNG and USP in the early days of our establishment. We currently have 40 students from Papua New Guinea studying with us. 32 of these students are

studying right here at the Laucala Campus while four each are studying from our Campuses in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. We look forward to continued talks with your Government of PNG joining its twelve neighbours as a USP member country. The synergy from this development would have far-reaching benefits for higher education in our region.

Honourable Prime Minister, as part of its mission as the region's premier and Quality University for tertiary education, capacity building and research, USP also plays an active and key role in regional engagement through the CROP mechanism. It leads the CROP ICT Working Group and Human Resource Development (HRD) Working Group. USP also participates in other CROP Working Groups, attends major meetings of regional Ministers and PIF Leaders and participates in SIS Leaders, Polynesian Leaders Group and Governing Board meetings of SPC, FFA, SPREP and others.

The University has committed itself to work through the relevant CROP mechanism and dynamically contribute towards the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, Small Island States Strategy, the Framework for Resilience Development in the Pacific (FRDP), Samoa Pathway, and SDGs.

PNG is by far the largest state in the region and has been a political and economic friend to the region, particularly to its Melanesian neighbors. PNG has played a very significant role in the development of the current Framework for Pacific Regionalism after Sir Mekere Morauta, a former Prime Minister of PNG, carried out the review of the Pacific Plan.

Once again, I extend my warmest welcome to you Sir and all present here this afternoon. I am sure the audience is eager to hear the Hon. Prime Minister's views on Pacific Regionalism. I personally look forward to having some very interesting and interactive discussion on this topic.

Vinaka Vakalevu and Thank you.