

Your Excellency

My fellow Fijians

Bula Vinaka and Good Evening to you all.

I firstly wish to thank and acknowledge the leadership and wisdom shown by His Excellency our President. Our vision to create a truly democratic nation under an elected parliamentary system will be etched in history, thanks to His Excellency our President.

As requested by His Excellency, the Government's legal team will amend the Ghai Draft to ensure that the draft Constitution presented to the Constituent Assembly is one that is:

- positive;
- addresses fundamental issues of good governance;
- will result in an enduring Constitution; and
- guarantees true democracy.

As His Excellency has highlighted, there are a number of key provisions in the Ghai Draft that are most valuable, in particular to do with accountability, transparency and enforcement of human rights which incorporate socio-economic rights.

The new draft should be available for deliberation by the end of January 2013. Prior to that and upon my return from the G77 meeting, I shall send out invitations to various individuals and organisations to participate in the Constituent Assembly. The Constituent Assembly is to have its first sitting in February 2013. We expect, as announced last year, that a new Constitution should be in place by March of this year.

While history tells us that some individuals and organisations tend to act only in their own interests, I urge all political parties, organisations and individuals who are invited to be members of the Constituent Assembly to participate.

This is not a time for point scoring or thinking only about our individual interests, but to think about the future. It is a time to think about our country. To think about our children. To think about development. To think about improving the lives of our citizens. We must collectively ensure a smooth transition to parliamentary democracy.

We are on track to hold truly democratic elections under the principle of common and equal citizenry and the principle of one person, one vote, one value. Over half a million Fijians have registered. The Ministry responsible for elections is currently putting in place logistical arrangements to register Fijians living offshore.

This Saturday, we will publish an advertisement, calling for expressions of interest from companies that wish to tender to provide election material for the conduct of the 2014 election. These include ballot boxes, poll kits and other election related items. This advertisement will also be disseminated through our overseas missions. Letters will also

be sent to our development partners through their missions in Fiji inviting them to partner in this process should they wish to.

To those who have been commenting on the Ghai Draft, these are readily available through the internet and indeed all the 599 copies that were printed by the Ghai Commission will be distributed during the Constituent Assembly process.

Of course, the Constituent Assembly will deliberate the new Draft.

My fellow Fijians, by Tuesday next week, we will put in place the Registration of Political Parties Decree which will set new and internationally accepted standards of political party governance. Indeed many provisions of the Ghai Draft in this respect have been incorporated into this law.

My fellow Fijians, we are now on the verge of holding elections for parliamentary representation. We are on the verge of putting in place a new Constitution.

It is therefore a time for a collective effort on all our parts to ensure that we move to the next phase without any hurdles with the view to sustained democracy and prosperity for all Fijians.

Vinaka Vakalevu.