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2013 NEW YEARS MESSAGE

My Fellow Fijians,

Once again we are at the dawn of another year.

It's a time to reflect on the year that has passed and to contemplate what the future holds for ourselves and our families.

And it's also a time to reflect on our nation's progress over the past 12 months and the hopes of all of us for the year ahead.

Together, we have weathered three separate natural disasters in 2012 - the two floods and then Hurricane Evan.

Our thoughts this evening are with our fellow Fijians who are still suffering because of Hurricane Evan, and especially those made homeless by the destruction of hundreds of dwellings in the [hurricane's](#) path.

As your Prime Minister, I again pledge that your Government will do everything in its power to assist you to rebuild your homes and your lives.

I want to pay tribute to every worker, citizen, civil servant and business owner who worked tirelessly in the affected areas or provided assistance to help their fellow Fijians back on their feet. All of these people deserve our grateful thanks.

Vinaka vakalevu to you all.

As I toured the affected areas, I was deeply impressed with the spirit of our people as we pulled together as a nation to confront this crisis.

We are all thankful that our careful preparations before Hurricane Evan struck meant that there was no loss of life.

My fellow Fijians. For all of our challenges and setbacks, I look to the New Year firmly believing that Fiji's future has never been brighter.

We are building a more equal society, a safer society, a prosperous society.

For the first time, we are all Fijians and can truly celebrate our common identity.

We all have a great deal to look forward to.

As 2012 ends, more than half a million Fijians have registered by electronic means to cast their vote in 2014.

As 2013 begins, that process continues as we reach out to register Fijians living overseas.

The new year heralds great promise for all Fijians.

Our economy is comparatively buoyant and a steady growth is forecast.

We are investing more in the education of our young people to help secure their futures and increase the country's skills base.

And we are doing a lot more for poorer families, such as raising the tax threshold, and for the elderly, by providing pensions to the most vulnerable of them for the first time.

And in 2013, we will begin fixing our biggest infrastructure problem – the state of our roads.

As a nation, we want to instill more pride in our identity as Fijians.

We will soon begin using new notes and coins that feature our flora and fauna.

We should have a new, modern and enduring constitution by the end of the first quarter of 2013.

And I will be making further announcements this year about revamping our flag.

All of this is to reflect a sense of national renewal, to reinforce a new Fijian identity and a new confidence in being Fijian on the global stage.

Certainly, Fiji's standing in the world has never been higher.

In two week's time, I will travel to New York to formally assume Fiji's chairmanship of the G77 Plus China. This links 132 developing countries with the world's most populous nation to form the biggest voting bloc at the United Nations.

Later in the year, we will host some of the G77 leaders here in Fiji in what promises to be the biggest gathering ever of foreign leaders to our shores.

Recently, I assumed the Chairmanship of the governing committee of the International Sugar Organisation and it too will be meeting in Fiji in the coming year.

We are determined also through this forum to keep sugar a viable and sustainable industry for the 200-thousand Fijians who depend on it for a living.

Fiji has also received international acclaim endorsing our reforms of the FNPF. These reforms, as I've stated before, will ensure that all FNPF members will have their pensions secured.

These are great honours bestowed on us by the international community and we should all be proud because the honour belongs to all of us – our country – our Fiji.

The world is recognising how far we have already come, our contributions to the global community, and the promise that lies ahead.

This is a time when many people make New Year resolutions so let's also make some as a nation.

Let's be more considerate of our fellow citizens and honest in our dealings with each other.

Let's be more mindful of our neighbours, those beyond our families and friends, and take responsibility for them as well.

Let's focus on our commonalities.

Let's be more patriotic and proud to be Fijian, to commit ourselves to working together as one nation.

My Fellow Fijians.

2013 will be the year that we set the scene for one of the most momentous events in our country's history - the 2014 election under a new constitution...

A constitution that must ensure common and equal citizenry...

A constitution that must ensure that any representatives of the people in the new parliament must be elected and under the principle of one person, one vote, one value.

I appeal to everyone to contribute positively to this process. We owe it to ourselves and our future generations.

I wish all a Happy New Year.