

RESERVE BANK OF FIJI



**Opening Remarks by
Barry Whiteside, Governor of the Reserve Bank of Fiji at the**

**Capital Markets Workshop:
“Developing Fiji’s Capital Markets – 10 Years And Beyond”**

14-15 November, 2012 – Novotel Hotel Conference Centre, Lami, Suva

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Bula vinaka and a very warm welcome to you all.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS:

I am delighted that you have accepted our invitation and am hopeful that this workshop will greatly benefit from the valuable experiences and knowledge that we will all share with each other over the next two days.

Most of us here today are stakeholders in our capital markets in some way. I believe we all want to see some progress and development. After all, this is the sector which is supposed to provide the added impetus for any growing economy. It is the alternative to our banking sector.

Unfortunately, while the banking sector has enjoyed strong growth and development over the last decade, we cannot say the same for our capital markets which has only progressed at a “snail’s pace”. Some of us may not be as kind in our review of the sector.

So where are we going wrong? What do we need to do?

At the Reserve Bank we think it is now time for a fresh, forward-looking approach. I am hoping that this workshop will shape the strategies and provide the necessary commitments from all stakeholders to take us forward. This is why we have selected the theme “Developing Fiji’s Capital Markets – 10 years and Beyond”.

At this point I want to say a special thank you to the Permanent Secretary for Finance, Mr Filimone Waqabaca, for accepting our invitation to deliver the keynote address. He is no

RESERVE BANK OF FIJI



stranger to the capital markets here in Fiji, having been previously in charge of the Reserve Bank's Capital Markets Unit. We look forward to the Permanent Secretary's perspective from his new vantage point outside of the Bank.

I also want to thank all our speakers from the government agencies, the capital markets and private sector who have kindly accepted to share their wealth of knowledge with us. The Reserve Bank is indeed grateful for your contributions.

It would be remiss of me if I also did not say a special thank you to our overseas speakers –Mr Praful Patel and Mr Andrew Lorking - who without hesitation gave up their time, at no charge to us, to fly all the way to Fiji to join us for this occasion. Gentlemen, we look forward to hearing from you over the next 2 days.

I also acknowledge the presence and say a special welcome to my counterpart from the Reserve Bank of Vanuatu, Governor Odo Tevi. We look forward to your insights and maybe we have something that you could take away to assist you back home.

Ladies and gentlemen, at the Bank we have for some time had a big picture, 'outside the box' vision of developing Fiji into the "Preferred Capital Markets Center in the South Pacific". I see no harm in thinking "big". It is getting there that is the issue.

Being the "preferred" capital market means that we provide investors and issuers with an environment necessary to grow their investments. It means that companies and investors in other Pacific island countries will look to Fiji first as a place where they can raise funds for capital growth and for investment opportunities. It means that we provide a safe investment choice for both local and overseas investors.

But how do we become the "preferred capital market in the South Pacific?"

I suppose this is the challenge and the focus of this workshop. We need to ask ourselves the following questions:

RESERVE BANK OF FIJI



- a. How do we move the Fijian capital markets to the next level”?
- b. What do we need to focus on and prioritise?
- c. What are our targets?
- d. Who are the players? and
- e. How do we measure achievement?

Over the next two days, through the panel sessions and speakers, we will hear much about the challenges we face and the obstacles we have before us. But I urge you not to let this be the sole focus of your participation. Instead, let’s identify the opportunities for growth and then work out development strategies for the capital markets as a whole. This is not an impossible task if we all work together with a common understanding.

The Reserve Bank is committed to the development of a Master Plan for capital markets development and to seeing the plan through for the next 10 years. This Master Plan will set the direction and help us achieve what we need to do.

I am a firm believer in action and achieving set goals with realistic deadlines so I will be very interested in a practical Master Plan which involves the development of all sectors of our economy, even our future investors, our children.

The Master Plan will be formulated and monitored by the Capital Markets Taskforce, a 7-member committee set up by the Reserve Bank in 2010 in preparation for this event. It is made up of practitioners who are committed to assisting the Reserve Bank to develop the capital markets. The Taskforce will be assisted by working groups, on which I hope some of you will agree to serve. These are exciting times in our development but they will not be without their challenges. However, despite this, I truly believe that if we all work together we can deliver.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have taken up more than enough time in what was supposed to have been just a few opening remarks. I thank you once again for your presence. I say a big warm “Bula Vinaka” to our overseas guests and warmly welcome you all to our first Capital Markets Workshop.

THANK YOU