

**SPEECH ON THE OCCASION OF
INTERNATIONAL CUSTOMS DAY
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
MR. JITOKO TIKOLEVU ON
25TH JANUARY, 2008**

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentle men

Staff and Management of FIRCA

Bula

And a very good morning to all.

I am delighted to welcome each and every one present here this morning to celebrate the World International Customs Day. Indeed it is a significant day in the History of Customs that a special day has been set by World Customs Organization annually which, is celebrated by Customs staff globally.

This year Customs International day falls on 26th January 2008 which is tomorrow however, Saturday not being a working day in Fiji it is being celebrated today Friday 25/01/2008.

This year World Customs Organization together with all customs organization globally are celebrating the International Customs Day with the International theme of

“COMBATING ILLICIT DRUGS TRAFFICKING AND PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES “

I must acknowledge the assistance by the Oceania Customs Organization for jointly sponsoring this celebration. We are looking forward for their continued assistance and support for organising such events in the future.

Ladies and Gentlemen Customs can not operate in isolation. . Therefore your present here, this morning, is being recognised and which shows that we are establishing a strong partnership approach in fighting this worthy case -- combating **–Illicit Drug trafficking and psychotropic substances -**. May I add, in future, please keep this as a high priority in supporting Customs in carrying out its states responsibilities so that we are able in fulfilling our vision, mission and objectives.

World Customs International day is a very significant day set aside by Customs for celebration.

Today, we all will appreciate that customs administrators are facing new challenges that they must ensure that smooth flow of trade whilst playing necessary controls on the one hand, whilst guaranteeing protecting the health and safety of the community. Customs are in the front line in the fight against fraud, terrorism and organised crime. To achieve the correct balance

between these demands, control methods must be modernised and co-operation between the different services must be reinforced.

Until recently, the role of the Customs consisted primarily on collecting dues and indirect taxes at import. Numerous developments, including enlargement and the development of e-commerce on the one hand and the threat of terrorist's attack and the role of organised crime on the other have altered the environment in which Customs operate.

The case for customs to reform and modernisation is self evident. As customs administrators, you are continuously faced with new challenges and complexities that impact on your functions and that shape policy and operational environments. Some of the challenges that customs administrators face today are:

- globalization and the continued growth and changing profile of international trade;
- the need to secure international trade supply chains;
- pressures from Government and the private sector to expedite the movement of goods; and
- finally, the demands posed by e-commerce and the opportunities presented by information and communication technology for streamlining and improving customs procedures.

Recent years have also witnessed the proliferation of new multilateral and regional trading rules that customs are expected to administer. On the enforcement side, we are also faced with a new set of complexities associated with sophisticated techniques employed by international smuggling and money laundering syndicates.

Fundamentally, as a result of these drivers of change there has been a growing realisation of the importance of customs administration to economic and social prospects of countries. It is important to note that a well performing customs administration is a national asset as it can make major contributions to effective revenue mobilisation and can assist governments to facilitate trade and investment. A modern, efficient and effective administration is a key contributor to national socio-economic development.

No country is now barred from drug trafficking. From producer and consumer perspective, in the past we had producer countries on one-hand and consumer countries on the other but today we are faced with producer countries, transit countries, decoy countries, delivery countries and destination countries with some meeting several of these criteria. Drug traffickers use consumer and producer surpluses in market penetration using low price for people to get addicted. However, these prices will be dictated by demand and supply. The term consumer countries no longer make any sense, as all countries have become drug consumers.

Therefore, we MUST remain vigilant, prioritise in pooling our resources and efforts, heighten co operation and make the best possible use of all tools and instruments available by demonstrating a high –level of integrity along the entire length of supply chain, from decision makers to line enforcement officers.

The fight against drug trafficking, a priority for WCO secretariat and for our department. However, this relies on the global intelligence strategy in which the role of each player, and especially that of the WCO, is defined and in

which more effective use of existing tools together with proposals for implementing new instruments and methods examined and endorsed.

It's prudent for me to mention that we have 300 islands and due to our geographical location and managing border at these places is not easy. Ladies and gentlemen, as a loyal citizen of this country it becomes our citizen responsibility to act, respond to these challenges. Lets fight this in partnership in keeping our nation free from Illicit **Drug and Psychotropic substances** .

Therefore, ladies and gentlemen today we commit our loyalty/honesty, yalodina, offer dari to this country to say NO room for Illicit Drugs and Psychotropic substances in our country

Vinaka Vakalevu.
