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Peoples' Charter for Change and Progress, Information, Sugar, Foreign Affairs,
International Co-operation and Civil Aviation, Indigenous Affairs, Provincial
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Address at the Opening of the Fiji Revenue and Customs Services Complex

Nasese
SUVA

Wed. 5th August, 2009
1600 Hours

CABINET MINISTERS;
THE CHAIRMAN AND BOARD MEMBERS OF THE FIJI ISLANDS
REVENUE AND CUSTOMS AUTHORITY;
DISTINGUISHED GUESTS; AND
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

A very good afternoon to you all.

Let me first express my heartfelt appreciation for the traditional ceremonies of welcome accorded to me. I also thank the FIRCA Board for the invitation to be part of this important occasion - the opening of the new Revenue and Customs Services Complex. And what a better time to have this occasion, as this year also marks the 10th Year Anniversary of the

Authority, being an autonomous institution of Government.

This occasion marks an achievement of another important milestone leading to full integration of Inland Revenue and Customs services, within the Authority.

The new buildings will now house the staff of both the major revenue arms of Government - Inland Revenue and Customs. It reflects the dawn of a new beginning, where we feel greater synergies will bring about benefits in a lot of fronts, from exceeding customers expectation to higher revenue collections.

This new set-up reflects the way the Authority has moved to operate now and in the future. The Authority places greater recognition on the importance of joint collaborations by both Inland Revenue and Customs services, to improve tax compliance, improve collections and better management of information and intelligence.

At the same time, the Authority aspires to provide excellent services, to all taxpayers in the country - an aspiration that is well captured by the name of the building and its modern customer services set-up.

I am informed that there will be a dedicated Customer Services Centre. The centre will be staffed by experienced Customs and Inland Revenue staff and reflects the increasing commitment by the management and staff to provide first class services to its customers.

Government welcomes the strengthening of this focus that aims to effectively and efficiently deliver services, from responding quickly to queries to swift processing of refunds and returns.

The initiative to base all operations of FIRCA here in Suva to one location also comes with the need to provide a more conducive and comfortable working environment for the employees. An environment that encourages a greater sense of belongings,

promotes learning, good practices and greater loyalty to the institution and the values it espouses.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is Government's intention to bring in change in what we do and how we do things. This is reflected in Government's strategic framework for change, which I had launched recently. The occasion today and the new building we see in front of us is a hallmark of change for FIRCA. It provides a new working environment for its staff, and together with new thinking and renewed drive, we should witness significant change from within that I believe will bring about greater dividend through significant revenue collections for Government.

Government recognizes the pivotal role played by FIRCA in supporting its economic and social objectives. FIRCA provides Government with about 90 percent of total Government revenue. It plays a facilitative role in the trading of goods. It implements tax incentives to promote investments and generate employment. It plays a primary role in

ensuring that our national borders are protected from illegal activities.

As the main revenue collection agency, Government relies on FIRCA to facilitate economic growth, through implementation of tax policies and ensuring that the private sector is allowed to do business with greater certainty, flexibility and confidence, particularly at these times when the global economy is going through perhaps the most testing times since the great depression, in the thirties.

As we are inextricably linked to the global economy, our domestic economy has also been affected, by the global crisis, and is expected to marginally decline by 0.3 percent in 2009.

In the coming months, economic activity is expected to pick up with the recovery of visitor arrivals assisted by the devaluation of the Fiji dollar and strong marketing initiatives, which promote Fiji as an attractive tourist destination. The completion of major hotel projects such as the Laucala Island

