

TALANOA IV

**LEADERS STATEMENT ON HARMONY
AND STABILITY IN THE REBUILDING OF FIJI**

*4 NOVEMBER 2001
Shangri-La's Fijian Resort
Yanuca, Fiji Islands*

TALANOA IV

LEADERS STATEMENT ON HARMONY AND STABILITY IN THE REBUILDING OF FIJI

4 November 2001

We, leaders of Fiji, met on November 3-4, 2001 in a Fourth *Talanoa* to promote national unity, harmony, and stability, and improve the livelihood of our people through a process of conciliatory dialogue and action.

Our *Talanoa* is based on principles of reconciliation, inclusion, sincerity, honesty, respect for each other as individuals, respect for the rich and diverse cultural traditions of all people domiciled in Fiji, and respect for our national assets and institutions including spirituality, human values, aspirations for economic and social justice, and basic constitutional principles.

Over two days of *Talanoa*, the basic issues that concern us were brought up and discussed openly and candidly. It was an achievement of our *Talanoa* that we found many areas of commonality and even where we did not agree, we gained a deeper appreciation of each other's perspectives and positions. We strongly believe in the continued need for a sustained, informal process of *Talanoa* dialogue to move the national reconciliation process forward. The *Talanoa* process should involve everyone where decisions of national importance are being made.

Unity cannot be artificially forced. It must evolve naturally through enhanced dialogue among leaders, and greater understanding among the people. It is a long-term process, but as leaders of Fiji we bear a special and urgent responsibility to maintain and promote understanding and national unity.

We agree on many basic principles even where differences remain on strategies and methodologies. With the shared aspiration of achieving greater harmony, stability, peace, and unity, our basic points of agreement include the following areas in the rebuilding of Fiji:

1. **Building Trust And Reducing Suspicion And Fear Among Leaders And Communities**

In order to gain a better understanding and genuine respect for the values of different communities, there should be more *Talanoa* among leaders in all political parties and communities on the issues facing the country. Too often we are talking “at” each other rather than “to” each other. We recognize that this has sown seeds of mistrust, suspicion and fear in our communities, and we are resolved to reduce these through continued commitment to interparty and multiethnic dialogue.

2. **Fostering Wide Acceptance Of The Rule Of Law**

We agree that harmony and stability depends upon good governance and adherence to the rule of law. As pointed out in previous *Talanoa*, stability and good governance depends on having constitutional, legal and political processes that enjoy legitimacy among leaders and society as a whole. This framework needs to take cognizance of international standards, but must also be acceptable to, and reflect the aspirations, conditions and cultural values of, the people of Fiji. It needs to be sensitive and incorporate effective protection for the rights and customs of indigenous Fijians, including the protection of their land rights, as well as protecting the rights and interests of all communities. We need to foster a culture of respect for the law across the broad spectrum of our society.

3. **Ensuring All Communities Feel Secure In Fiji As Their Home**

We agree that there should be “affirmative action” to help disadvantaged communities and the needy in our society. Affirmative action should be available to help the indigenous Fijians to develop their resources. Such programs should be effectively implemented, transparent, and their performance periodically reassessed as detailed in the Constitution.

4. **Examining The Constitution**

We agree that the Constitution is a living document created by people. Where provisions may need change, we agree that this should occur through a Constitutional process of change and an inclusive consultative process with the people. We agree to continue our dialogue to identify specific areas of potential Constitutional change and to reach a general understanding on these matters.

In the meanwhile, there are some differences of opinion with respect to some provisions of the Constitution and these are being resolved in the courts.

We agree that there needs to be greater public education on the Constitution and Constitutional issues.

We pledge to continue the process of *Talanoa* looking more intensively at issues we have identified as being of priority concern: building understanding, constitutional change, affirmative action, acceptance of the rule of law, and ultimately uplifting the material welfare of the people of Fiji.

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LEADERS' DIALOGUE ON HARMONY AND STABILITY IN THE REBUILDING OF FIJI

3-4 November, 2001
Shangri-La's Fijian Resort
Yanuca, Fiji Islands

PARTICIPANTS LIST

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