

TALANOA VIII

LEADERS STATEMENT

May 10th 2004
Sheraton Denarau Resort
Denarau, Fiji Islands

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We met on May 10 in the Eighth Talanoa of Leaders since this frank, open-minded process of talanoa talks began in late 2000. As noted in our previous agreed statements, our talanoa is based upon the principles of reconciliation, sincerity, honesty, frankness, mutual understanding and respect for each other as representative leaders of the rich and diverse cultural traditions of the people living in Fiji.

Our discussions followed the critical issues identified and agreed by the Prime Minister Hon. Laisenia Qarase with the Parliamentary Leader of the Fiji Labour Party Hon. Mahendra P. Chaudhry that needed to be dealt with urgently in a bi-partisan way. These issues were elaborated in our LEADERS STATEMENTS of 28 February and 15 April 2004.

Follow-Up Report on Sugar Reform:

The full Talanoa was briefed about the meeting and the common ground reached between the Prime Minister Hon. Laisenia Qarase and the Parliamentary Leader of the Fiji Labour Party Hon. Mahendra P. Chaudhry on the steps needed to be taken together to progress the Sugar Industry Reform including the proposed “Co-Generation Project”. In order to continue the momentum that has been created they agreed that the ad hoc

Select Committee on Sugar Industry Reform will meet on Wednesday, May 12.

Follow-Up Report of Subcommittee on CERD:

The full Talanoa discussed the Follow-up Report of the Talanoa Bi-Partisan Subcommittee which was submitted to the Leaders on May 5 2004. The Subcommittee's report focuses on the outcome of their discussions with the Fiji Human Rights Commission (FHRC) and the issue of it assuming a 'monitoring role' with respect to the recommendations made by the UN-CERD, and the remedial measures needed to address these concerns recommended in the Progressive Report of the Bi-Partisan Talanoa Subcommittee on CERD.

The Subcommittee thoroughly examined the issue of a 'monitoring role' and the views of the FHRC on this issue. The Leaders noted the role of the FHRC to advise, caution, or warn Government as to its obligations under the Constitution and the Human Rights Act. They also noted that the responsibility is on the State to ensure that racial discrimination will not take place within its jurisdiction, both in the institutions of government and in the private sector.

In view of the specific recommendations made by the Subcommittee, the Leaders agreed to:

(1) Establish a Standing Committee of the House, as the collective vehicle at the Parliamentary level, to examine all reports relating to human rights, race

relations, UN-CERD Report etc. together with any other issues pertaining to these matters. The Committee is to establish its own procedures and will regularly report to the House with appropriate recommendations as and when warranted.

(2) Reaffirm that a special Inter-Departmental Committee, which includes NGOs will be responsible for monitoring the UN-CERD Report, the report of the Bi-Partisan Talanoa Subcommittee on UN-CERD Report, and other concerns raised by the Talanoa Sub-committee, and their implementation. The Committee must submit an annual report of their progress through the Minister responsible to the Parliament, and in doing so the Minister responsible is to refer the Inter-Departmental report to the Standing Committee of the House named above; and

(3) Urge the FHRC to work in a more effective way on human rights and race relations issues including the findings and concluding recommendations of the CERD Report, and matters referred to it by the State party or any other individuals or bodies. The role of the FHRC to advise, caution, and warn should be taken more seriously by the parties concerned, and that its annual report should be tabled in the House by the Minister responsible and referred to the Standing Committee of the House.

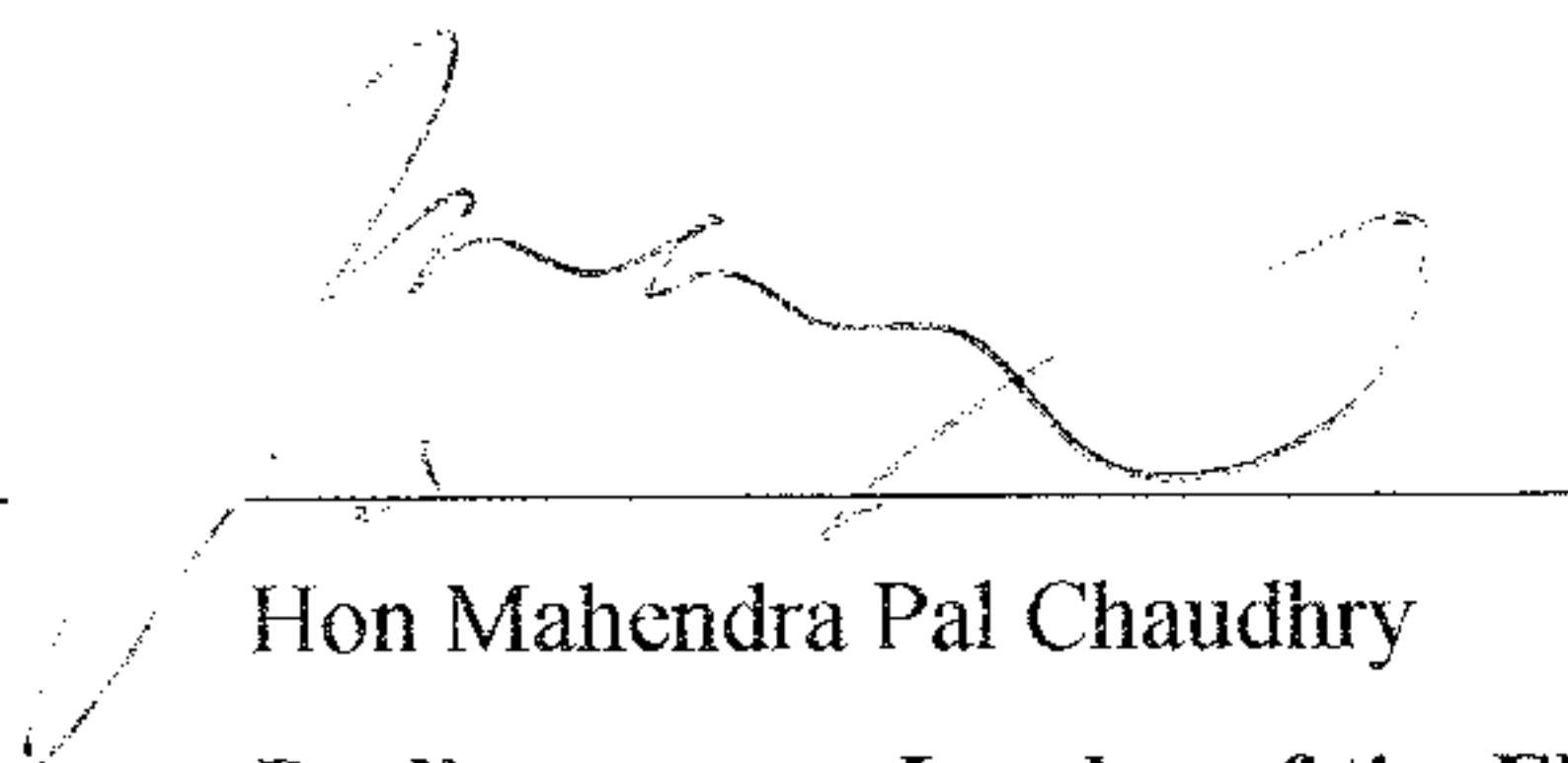
Acknowledgement:

The Talanoa members thank the East-West Center, and its Pacific Islands Development Program, for its continual support of the Talanoa talks. We believe that the Talanoa process, particularly as enhanced by the Sub-

committee work, has proved to be a valuable process, not simply to build mutual understanding, trust, and confidence, but increasingly to lay a basis through study and informal discussion for bi-partisan cooperation on policy issues. We pledge to continue our Talanoa process as a way of building our mutual understanding and consensus on ways to address the critical issues necessary for building a bright future for all in Fiji.



Hon Laisenia Qarase
PRIME MINISTER



Hon Mahendra Pal Chaudhry
Parliamentary Leader of the FLP

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**May 10th, 2004
Sheraton Resorts
Denarau Island
Fiji**

PARTICIPANTS LIST

Hon Mahendra P. Chaudhry

Hon Krishna Datt

Hon Poseci Bune

Hon Dr Gunasagaran Gounder

Hon Pratap Chand

Hon Gyani Nand

Senator Dr Atu Emberson Bain

Senator Jokapeci Koroi

Hon Laisenia Qarase

Hon Pita Kewa Nacuva

Hon Tomasi Vuetilovoni

Hon Kaliopate Tavola

Hon Asenaca Caucau

EAST-WEST CENTER STAFF

Dr Sitiveni Halapua