



Hon. Faiyaz Siddiq Koya

Minister for Industry, Trade, Tourism, Land and Mineral Resources

Fijian Tourism Talanoa 2017

Sheraton Fiji Resort

Friday, 17 November 2017

Denarau Island, Nadi

0840 Hours

Tourism Industry Partners;
Senior officials and representatives of Government;
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Bula vinaka, cola vina and a very good morning to you all.

It is indeed my pleasure to be here today at the Fijian Tourism Talanoa, and to see the industry and the Fijian Government, convene this forum.

It has been six years since such an event has been held. You will see the different approach that has been taken. This event is to create a platform for constructive dialogue between the Fijian Government and the industry players.

The aim of all stakeholders is the growth of the tourism industry in a sustainable manner. Therefore, plans for the future can only be discussed in the true spirit of Talanoa.

Dialogue and discussions are key ingredients for success. Communication creates openness and transparency, which will enable better understanding of the policies and the needs of the industry.

Therefore, my request to the industry is to share with us your ideas. Support the Government and make this event constructive and result-oriented.

Your contributions can also assist the Government in identifying areas where policy intervention is required.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Talanoa is not a new concept to us, we are all familiar with it and we know what it entails. And we are using the talanoa concept to build a bridge and take steps hand-in-hand towards the future.

As Confucius once said, “the journey of 10,000 miles begins with a single step”. I urge you all to take that step with us.

I am very confident that the Fijian Tourism Talanoa will set the foundation for collaboration and cooperation between the Fijian Government and industry, and also between different sectors within the tourism industry.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Today, as we share with you, the Government’s perspective of development, we wish to also reiterate that decisions of Government are not done in isolation.

The policies and initiatives take into account national and international factors to ensure maximum returns are realized.

There are avenues to raise your interests and a collective voice from the industry makes a difference to the Government's plan process. Forums as such provides you the opportunity to firstly, listen to the policies and initiative and secondly provide your input.

In the various sessions today, we will hear two sides of the same issue. The Fijian Government and its agencies will provide one point of view, whilst the industry will provide their view point.

The Ministry together with industry players developed the programme, which includes issues of interest for all stakeholders. These include, making Fiji competitive, sustainable tourism development and creating local linkages.

The logo for the Fijian Tourism Talanoa, is a humble turtle. This delicate creature, the oldest living creature on earth, represents so many things that we as participants today should remember. It is a symbol of sensitivity, of serenity, calmness, and embodies longevity.

The turtle depicts what we should aspire the Talanoa session to be. We want to share views and ideas. We want dialogue to take place in a respectful manner. We want our discussions to lead to further exchanges and to get that information flow going.

As you will note the theme for this Talanoa is ***“Progressive tourism through Sustainable Partnerships”***.

The single line, simply conveys the main purpose and essence of the Fijian Tourism Talanoa. Partnership and dialogue are the cornerstone of a progressive tourism industry.

I again would like to say that do not lose this opportunity to make suggestions and get answers. And do not make this Talanoa confrontational - we will achieve nothing by fighting each other.

We are all partners and we need to work together as partners to achieve growth for this sector. Not uncontrolled, unorganized growth but sustainable growth, so I wish to acknowledge and thank you all for being here today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The tourism industry has reached record numbers, in terms of visitor arrivals and yield over the years.

Tourism earnings for the first quarter of 2017 increased by 10.7 percent to \$377.3 million, whilst visitor numbers increased by 3.3 percent or 163,226. Visitor numbers until September 2017 showed a 6.6 percent (622,139) increase compared to the same period last year.

These figures were achieved on the back of a natural disaster. This success is attributed to the partnership that was established between agencies and the industry, and the collaboration amongst industry players.

Cyclone Winston, taught us that we pass any hurdle, provided we move towards the goal as a team – as “Team Fiji”.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I ask you to remember the virtues of the turtle that is the logo of the Fijian Tourism Talanoa. And while raising the challenges of the industry, please also recommend possible solutions and opportunities for Government intervention, better still – for partnership!

I wish you all well in your deliberations today. I also look forward to meeting many of you and to discuss your plans and issues.

Vinaka vakalevu for your attention and I now declare the Talanoa open!