



SPEECH

BY

HER EXCELLENCY, THE FIRST LADY
ADI KOILA MARA NAILATIKAU, BA, LLB

ON THE OCCASION

OF THE

14TH ANNUAL PASIFIKA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
CONFERENCE 2011

“CLAIMING HEALTHY FUTURES”

FRIDAY, 19TH AUGUST, 2011

SOFITEL FIJI RESORT AND SPA,
DENARAU ISLAND, NADI
FIJI ISLANDS

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

GOOD EVENING

IT IS NOT VERY OFTEN THAT ONE GETS THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK TO A GATHERING OF SENIOR HEALTH EXECUTIVES FROM AROUND THE PACIFIC REGION.

I, THEREFORE, GREATLY VALUE THIS OPPORTUNITY, AND I SHOULD LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR INVITATION, IN PARTICULAR, THE ORGANISERS OF THIS CONFERENCE NAMELY, THE PRESIDENT, **DR KIKI MAOATE** AND THE BOARD OF THE PASIFIKA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, PROFESSOR IAN ROUSE, DEAN OF THE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE, FIJI NATIONAL UNIVERSITY AND YOUR STAFF AND DR IFEREIMI WAQAINABETE OF THE FIJI MEDICAL ASSOCIATION AND YOUR EXECUTIVES, WHO HAVE WORKED TOGETHER TO MAKE THIS CONFERENCE A SUCCESS, WHICH IN MY VIEW IS A WONDERFUL ACHIEVEMENT.

YOUR CONFERENCE IS CLEARLY, A VERY GOOD INDICATION, OF HOW FAR ALONG THE ROAD OF REGIONAL COOPERATION YOU HAVE TRAVELLED, AND HOW MUCH YOU HAVE ACHIEVED, OVER THE PAST 15 YEARS, IN GIVING INSTITUTIONAL FORM AND REAL SUBSTANCE TO BRINGING REGIONAL ISLAND COUNTRIES CLOSER TOGETHER. FURTHER, IN POOLING YOUR RESOURCES, AND IN HELPING EACH OTHER, IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES IN THE PACIFIC REGION.

I FEEL CERTAIN, THAT, ANYONE COMING TO THIS CONFERENCE WILL BE SUITABLY IMPRESSED BY THE HIGH DEGREE AND THE BROAD SCOPE OF REGIONAL COOPERATION, THAT, THE PASIFIKA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION HAS ATTAINED.

YOUR COMBINED MEMBERSHIP IN EXCESS OF 800 HEALTH PROFESSIONALS, COVERS ALL THE COUNTRIES IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION. YOUR RESPECTIVE PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES ARE EXTENSIVE, AND ENCOMPASSES ALL KEY AREAS, OF HEALTH DEVELOPMENT INTERESTS AND CONCERNS, TO ALL THE PACIFIC COUNTRIES.

YOUR ANNUAL CONFERENCE SUCH AS THIS, BEING HELD HERE IN FIJI, IS THE BIGGEST SINGLE MEETING OF PACIFIC HEALTH PROFESSIONALS IN ANY YEAR. IT IS PLEASING TO NOTE, THAT, YOU HAVE FIRMLY ESTABLISHED THE HABIT OF CONSULTING AND WORKING CLOSELY TOGETHER. THIS IS A MUST FOR SMALL ECONOMIES.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I NOTE THE CONFERENCE THEME IS ***“CLAIMING HEALTHY FUTURES”***. NO DOUBT, THE DISCUSSIONS THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE AND WILL TAKE PLACE AGAIN TOMORROW, WILL PROVIDE AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY, TO DEVELOP AND STRENGTHEN YOUR SKILLS, FOSTER AND SHARE INNOVATIVE IDEAS ON ISSUES TO EQUIP YOURSELVES, TO SERVE YOUR RESPECTIVE COMMUNITIES BETTER.

IN MY VIEW, THE CHALLENGES TODAY, LIES IN THE DIFFICULT WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENTS AND CONDITIONS, THAT, YOU ALL WORK TIRELESSLY IN, IN YOUR RESPECTIVE COMMUNITIES AND IN YOUR ISLAND NATIONS. ADDED TO THESE CHALLENGES, I UNDERSTAND, THERE IS ALSO THE INCREASING PREVALENCE OF NEW DISEASES, THAT, PACIFIC COUNTRIES ARE NOW FACED WITH.

IT MUST BE REAFFIRMED, THAT THE URGENCY OF THESE ISSUES IS PARAMOUNT AND PIVOTAL AND RESTS, NOT ENTIRELY IN YOUR OWN SKILLED HANDS, BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, IN THE POSITIVE ATTITUDE TO PREVENT AND TO OVERCOME, BY THE COMMUNITY.

IN ALL OF THIS, BE ASSURED, THAT THE PEOPLES OF THE PACIFIC TRULY ACKNOWLEDGE THE TREMENDOUS HARD WORK AND THE SACRIFICES THAT YOU ALL HAVE TO GO THROUGH TO ENSURE AND TO ACHIEVE HEALTHY FUTURES AND A HEALTHY PACIFIC.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

SOME OF THE KEY ISSUES BEING DISCUSSED AT THIS CONFERENCE ARE THAT OF CHILD AND MATERNAL HEALTH, CANCER, MALARIA AND HIV-AIDS. THESE DISEASES HAVE BECOME EMERGING CHALLENGES FOR OUR PEOPLE.

I AM AWARE, THAT, MANY OF YOU ARE INVOLVED IN MAKING CRITICAL AND IMPORTANT DECISIONS, TO BALANCE THE SCARCITY OF RESOURCES AND INFRASTRUCTURE, AGAINST, A BACKGROUND OF THE INCREASE OF NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES, AND OTHER PRESSING HEALTH ISSUES.

IN THIS RESPECT, AS SENIOR HEALTH EXECUTIVES, YOU ALL NEED TO SERIOUSLY CONSIDER THE ISSUE OF MATERNAL MORTALITY AND HOW YOU NEED TO TACKLE THE PARALLEL ISSUES OF POVERTY, AND INEQUALITY, VIS. A. VIS. INVESTMENT OF THE LIMITED RESOURCES YOU ALL HAVE, TO ENSURE THE HEALTH OF THE PEOPLE OF THE PACIFIC.

RESEARCH CONFIRMS, THAT CHILDBIRTH, IS THE NO.1 KILLER OF YOUNG WOMEN GLOBALLY. EVERY YEAR, OVER 500,000 YOUNG WOMEN DIE FROM PREGNANCY RELATED CAUSES, AND OVER 99% OF THEM ARE IN THE WORLD'S POOREST COUNTRIES. MATERNAL MORTALITY REFLECTS ONE OF THE GREATEST DISPARITIES BETWEEN RICH AND POOR COUNTRIES AND BETWEEN, THE RICH AND THE POOR IN A COUNTRY.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

IN FIJI, FOR EXAMPLE, WE HAVE ESTABLISHED THE WHITE RIBBON ALLIANCE FOR SAFE MOTHERHOOD INITIATIVE. THE PRIMARY OBJECTIVE IS TO INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THE NEED TO MAKE PREGNANCY AND CHILDBIRTH SAFE FOR ALL WOMEN IN FIJI. IT ALSO INVOLVES THE ON-GOING TRAINING AND UPSKILLING OF COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS, NURSES AND DOCTORS WHICH ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE PREVENTION OF MOTHER TO CHILD, NOW REFERRED TO AS VERTICAL TRANSMISSION (PMTCT) OF HIV.

THIS UNDERSCORES THE CORE ISSUE OF THE WHITE RIBBON CAMPAIGN, AND THAT, IS, TO INCREASE COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR MATERNAL HEALTH, AND THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT OF EVERY MOTHER AND CHILD FOR A HEALTHY LIFE AND THE FUTURE GENERATIONS OF THE PACIFIC PEOPLE.

AT THE MICRO LEVEL, AND CONSISTENT WITH THE UNITED NATIONS MILLENIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS 4 AND 5, IT IS MY FIRM BELIEF, THAT, MOTHERS' PLAY A FUNDAMENTAL ROLE IN THE PHYSICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC HEALTH OF THEIR FAMILIES, THEIR COMMUNITIES AND IN THEIR NATION STATES. MOTHERS' HEALTH BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER, CHILDBIRTH, IS CRITICAL TO THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF THE CHILD AND THE LONG-TERM SECURITY OF THE FAMILY, OF THE NATION STATE, AND OF THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY AT LARGE.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

JUST LAST WEEK, I READ WITH MUCH INTEREST, A BBC NEWS ARTICLE THAT MENTIONED, THAT MOST MATERNAL DEATHS ARE NOW CAUSED BY TREATABLE MEDICAL CONDITIONS, WHICH, IS GOOD NEWS! IN THAT ARTICLE, IT WAS SUGGESTED THAT LINKING WOMEN'S HEALTH SERVICES IN NETWORKS WILL ASSIST, AND THAT BY PARTNERING OBSTETRICS WITH OTHER MEDICAL SPECIALITIES SUCH AS CANCER, HEART, RESPIRATORY AND MENTAL HEALTH, CARE CAN BE PROVIDED IN A CONTINUUM, THUS REDUCING MATERNAL AND CHILD DEATHS.

SO, ONE CAN SEE THE VALUABLE BENEFITS OF NETWORKING AND PARTNERING IN THE HEALTH CARE SECTOR IN THE PACIFIC REGION. I CAN SEE THAT THIS CONFERENCE IS A FINE EXAMPLE OF THIS CONCEPT.

I AM, THEREFORE, CONFIDENT THAT BY CREATING AWARENESS, GIVING ENCOURAGEMENT AND EMPOWERING AND INSPIRING WOMEN, WE IN THE PACIFIC REGION, CAN LEAD THE WAY IN MAKING MATERNAL HEALTH AND THAT OF OUR CHILDREN OUR NO.1 PRIORITY!

I URGE ALL PACIFIC DELEGATES, TO SERIOUSLY CONSIDER ESTABLISHING YOUR OWN CHAPTER OF THE WHITE RIBBON ALLIANCE FOR SAFE MOTHERHOOD, IF YOU HAVE NOT ALREADY DONE SO. AS THIS WOULD GREATLY ASSIST IN IMPLEMENTING AND TRANSLATING SOME OF THE POLICIES ON MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH FROM THE PROVINCIAL, DISTRICT TO VILLAGE LEVELS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

I ALSO UNDERSTAND, AND AM ENCOURAGED, TO HEAR THAT YOU WILL BE DISCUSSING THE TOPIC OF CANCER AT THIS CONFERENCE. THIS IS AN AREA THAT IS NOT ALWAYS DISCUSSED OPENLY AND IS MORE OFTEN THAN NOT SWEEPED UNDER THE CARPET OR KEPT PRIVATE AND DISCUSSED DISCREETLY.

YOU WILL ALL AGREE THAT CANCER IS A TOPIC THAT MUST BE ADDRESSED “HEAD-ON” AND WITH RESOLUTENESS AND DETERMINATION. I FURTHER UNDERSTAND, THAT CONFERENCE DELEGATES WILL BE DISCUSSING PREVENTATIVE MEASURES WHICH INCLUDES SCREENING AND NEW AND EMERGING TREATMENT OPTIONS.

ALSO, I BELIEVE THAT BEST PRACTICE FOR SUPPORT OF CANCER PATIENTS IS VITAL. NO DOUBT, YOU HAVE ALL DEALT WITH CANCER PATIENTS IN YOUR WORK AS HEALTH PROFESSIONALS.

I THEREFORE URGE YOU ALL TO FURTHER ENHANCE YOUR SKILLS TO DEAL WITH CANCER PATIENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES IN A HUMANE AND COMPASSIONATE MANNER SO THAT THEY CAN SAY THEIR FINAL GOODBYES IN A DIGNIFIED WAY.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

IN CONCLUSION, I CHALLENGE YOU ALL TO CLAIM THOSE HEALTHY FUTURES FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE PACIFIC. I ALSO URGE YOU ALL TO CONTINUE THE FINE LEADERSHIP FOR HEALTH THAT WILL ENSURE THE BEST FOR OUR FUTURE GENERATIONS IN THE PACIFIC.

ONCE AGAIN **VINAKA VAKALEVU** FOR THE KIND INVITATION. I WISH YOU ALL A SUCCESSFUL 14TH PASIFIKA MEDICAL CONFERENCE. PLEASE ENJOY OUR FIJIAN HOSPITALITY.

MAY GOD BLESS YOU ALL AND MAY GOD BLESS FIJI

.....

ADI KOILA MARA NAILATIKAU, BA, LLB

GOVERNMENT HOUSE

SUVA

19TH AUGUST 2011