

National Council for Building a Better Fiji

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5th August, 2008

FIFTH MEETING OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR BUILDING A BETTER FIJI

Monday 4th & Tuesday 5th August, 2008
Fiji Police Academy
Nasova

COMMUNIQUE

- 1.0 The 5th meeting of the National Council for Building a Better Fiji (NCBBF) was held at the Nasova Police Academy, Suva on Monday 4th August and Tuesday 5th August, 2008.
 - 1.1 The NCBBF welcomed two new members recently appointed by His Excellency the President. They are Ratu Tevita Uluilakeba Mara (Chairman, Lau Provincial Council) and Mr. Bhuwan Dutt (Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of Fiji).
 - 1.2 The NCBBF also farewelled one of its members. Mr. Kamlesh Arya, President of the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of Fiji, who has been appointed Fiji's High Commissioner to Australia. Mr. Arya's contribution to the work of the NCBBF was recognised and acknowledged by the National Council.
 - 1.3 The NCBBF reiterated its resolve to continue to act with due speed and urgency in the next phase of its work which is to consult the people about electoral and other good governance reforms. It also expressed hope and goodwill towards the Presidents Dialogue Forum and the objective of achieving consensus on a legal and constitutional way to embrace the proposed reforms and the Peoples Charter. The NCBBF seeks a Parliamentary democracy that is based on a stronger and sustainable foundation.
- 2.0 Draft Peoples Charter for Change, Peace and Progress**
- 2.1 The NCBBF endorsed the publication of, and distribution to the people of Fiji for their consideration, a Draft Peoples Charter for Change, Peace and Progress.
 - 2.2 The Draft Peoples Charter acknowledges and affirms that the Constitution is the supreme law of Fiji, and that it provides the framework for the conduct of the Government and the people. In laying the foundation for rebuilding Fiji as one nation and one people, the goal through the Peoples Charter, is to strengthen the Constitution. The Draft Peoples Charter sets out 11 key pillars and a shared vision and commitment intended to represent the collective will of the people of Fiji to:
 - i. create a just and fair society;

- ii. achieve unity and national identity;
- iii. ensure merit-based equal opportunity for all citizens;
- iv. guarantee transparent and accountable Government;
- v. uplift the disadvantaged in all communities; and
- vi. secure sustainable economic growth.

The Draft Peoples Charter is the result of extensive analysis and public consultations by the NCBBF on the critical issues affecting Fiji's social and economic development carried out through its three National Task Teams (NTTs) and the nine Working Groups established by the NTTs.

- 2.3 Public consultations on the Draft Peoples Charter will now take place throughout the country before the NCBBF submits the final version of the Peoples Charter to His Excellency the President by the end of September 2008.
- 2.4 The NCBBF discussed the statements that have been aired by a few of the Pacific Forum leaders that elections be held in March 2009 under the current electoral system. The NCBBF expressed concern about the lack of understanding shown about the need for Fiji and its people to resolve their own problems in their own time; and to have an election when the people of Fiji have developed trust, confidence and agreement on moving the country in a new and desired direction towards a sustainable democracy for a united and better Fiji.
- 2.5 The NCBBF also noted that one of the important pillars of the draft Peoples Charter is to consolidate good relations with our Pacific neighbours and internationally. It requested the Pacific Forum Leaders to desist from making unhelpful personal statements which only help to fuel conflict. The NCBBF asked the Leaders instead to seek consensus within the Forum to preserve our Pacific way.

3.0 State of the Nation and Economy Report

- 3.1 The NCBBF also approved a State of the Nation and Economy Report (SNE Report), which sets out in detail a comprehensive programme of action to enable the people of Fiji to realise the vision and intended goals of the Draft Peoples Charter.
- 3.2 The SNE Report includes an extensive stock-take and diagnosis of the structural, constitutional, legal, economic, social, policy and institutional problems facing Fiji. The Report is based on a country-wide consultation process on the basis of a Consultation Document, which was disseminated in three languages. Feedback was received from over 1,000 villages and settlements. In addition at the level of the nine Working Groups more than 200 people actively contributed to the analysis of problems and issues, supported by technical experts. The findings and conclusions of the SNE Report form the basis for the formulation of the Draft Peoples Charter.

4.0 National Task Team Reports

- 4.1 Before endorsing the Draft Peoples Charter and the SNE Report, the NCBBF received the Reports from the Co-Chairs of each of its three National Task Teams:
 - i. NTT1 on Good Governance;

