



PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI



Speech by the Speaker the Hon. Filimone Jitoko *On the Occasion of the General Debate of the 153rd IPU Assembly*

5 – 9 October, 2026
Arusha, TANZANIA

“Enhancing Good Governance and Empowering Communities through Inclusivity, Trust and Opportunities for All”

- Honourable Chair, and President of the 153rd Assembly;
- The Outgoing Honourable President of the IPU;
- Secretary-General of the IPU;
- Honourable Speakers and Members of Parliament;
- Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

At the outset, I thank the **National Parliament of the United Republic of Tanzania**, and the Government and people of Tanzania, for the warm hospitality extended to my delegation and those from the Pacific Region here in Arusha.

I also convey warm greetings from the Blue Pacific and from our newly created regional Parliamentary body the Pacific Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (PIPA), and thank the Inter-Parliamentary Union for convening this timely discussion on *“Enhancing good governance, and empowering communities through inclusivity, trust and opportunities for all.”*

What does good governance mean to the people we have been elected to serve? At its core, good governance is not only about institutions, laws or policies. It is about people. It is about whether citizens feel heard, represented and included in decisions that affect their lives.

Good governance is reflected when all people, including young people, women, persons with disabilities and those in remote communities, are able to participate and be heard.

This is why Sustainable Development Goal 16 remains vital. Peace, justice, accountability and strong institutions are the foundation of sustainable development.

For Fiji, a Small Island Developing State, our responsibility is therefore to ensure Parliament reaches all citizens. Through our committee system, communities, civil society and under-represented groups can contribute directly to the scrutiny of legislation and public policy, ensuring decisions are informed by the lived experiences of the people we serve.

In Fiji, this commitment reflects the Pacific tradition of **Talanoa**; a tradition built on listening, respect and conversation. It reminds us that good governance begins with genuine engagement between institutions and citizens. Whilst technology can strengthen public engagement, it must remain inclusive and not create new barriers. **But participation alone is not enough and public trust is equally essential!**

Citizens have a right to transparency, accountability and integrity in public decision-making – these are fundamental requirements of democracy!

Excellencies, political inclusion must also be matched by opportunities in education, leadership and employment, ensuring communities are active partners in shaping their future. Communities are more resilient when citizens are actively involved in shaping the solutions that affect them.

For Fiji and many Pacific Island countries, this is particularly important in responding to climate change, where affected communities must have a meaningful voice in decisions impacting their livelihoods, identity and future. This principle is reflected in the Pre-COP31 meetings, that as I speak, is being held right now, in Fiji and Tuvalu, which place Pacific perspectives at the centre of global climate discussions. For Small Island Developing States and Pacific Parliaments, they reaffirm a core principle of good governance, and by bringing Pacific priorities directly into the global conversation, Pre-COP31 reinforces inclusion, trust and partnership in addressing one of the defining challenges of our time before the world assembles in Antalya, Türkiye next month.

At a time when the world faces growing challenges, the role of Parliament has never been more critical.

Our responsibility is not only to pass laws and hold governments to account, but also to listen to people, build trust and ensure that no voice is overlooked.

The true measure of our success is not the number of speeches we deliver or resolutions we adopt. It is whether citizens can see their aspirations reflected in the work of their Parliament.

Can a young person see hope and opportunity ahead?

Can a woman in a rural community have her voice heard?

Can a person with a disability participate equally?

Can children grow up safe, educated and empowered?

If the answer is YES, then governance becomes more than administration. IT BECOMES EMPOWERMENT!

Fiji remains committed to working with the IPU and parliamentary partners to advance the Sustainable Development Goal's and ensure that development benefits all people, especially those most in need.

Although Fiji and Tanzania are separated by great distances, we share a common belief: that strong communities are built on respect, inclusion and responsibility to one another. This is reflected both in the Pacific spirit of inter-connectedness and in Africa's philosophy of **Ubuntu [I am because we are] [Ngunu / Buntu]**

As parliamentarians, we must continue to build institutions that listen before they decide, act with transparency and accountability, and create opportunities for all.

That is how we strengthen good governance!

That is how we empower communities!

**And that is how we honour the trust, that our people have
placed in us!**

Vinaka vakalevu – Thank you!

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