

'WE NEED TO MOVE FORWARD': BAINIMARAMA

Pacific Magazine
5 January 2007

Commodore Frank Bainimarama today assumed the position of Interim Prime Minister, a position he was appointed to by President Ratu Josefa Iloilo and which he will hold concurrently with his role as commander of Fiji's armed forces. After he was sworn in to office, Bainimarama in his first public statement as prime minister reiterated many of the same themes he has discussed in press conferences and press interviews during his month-long tenure as coup leader and acting president. These are his remarks, as released by the Fiji military:

It is after careful and deliberate consideration, extensive discussions with my officers and humility that I accept the appointment by His Excellency of the position of Interim Prime Minister.

When I was approached to take this position I was reminded of the mandate of the incoming Interim Government which His Excellency set out yesterday.

I shall seek to uphold the mandate as set out by his Excellency and it will be the mandate that will guide the incoming Interim Government as a whole and the respective individuals who will be appointed as care taker Ministers.

The mandate set out by his Excellency shall be the objective of the Interim Government.

To reiterate the mandate, it is as follows:

1. To continue to uphold the Constitution;
2. Where necessary facilitate all legal protection and immunity, both criminal and civil, to the Commander, Officers and all members of the RFMF;
3. Give effect to the actions of the RFMF including the respective suspensions, dismissals and temporary removal from office of civil servants, CEO's, those appointed by the Judicial Services and Constitutional Services Commissions, the Judiciary and Government appointed Board members;
4. Steady our economy through sustained economic growth and correct the economic mismanagement of the past 6 years;
5. Lift up the living standards of the growing poor and underprivileged of our country;
6. Restructure the NLTB to ensure more benefits flow to the ordinary indigenous Fijians;
7. Eradicate systematic corruption by including the setting up of an anti-corruption unit through the Attorney General's Office and set new standards of Governmental and institutional transparency;
8. Improve our relations with our neighbors and the international community;

9. Take our country to democratic elections after an advanced electoral office and systems are in place and the political and economic conditions are conducive to the holding of such elections;

10. Immediately as practicable introduce a Code of Conduct and Freedom of Information provisions; and

11. Give paramountcy to national security and the territorial integrity of Fiji.

Once His Excellency announces the rest of the Interim Government lineup, I will meet with them to put into immediate effect the mandate given to us by His Excellency.

I shall continue to be the Commander of the RFMF while being the Interim Prime Minister. I shall however not receive the salary of the Prime Minister. I shall continue to only receive my salary as Commander of the RFMF.

In this respect no personnel of the RFMF shall personally benefit from the necessary intervention undertaken on 5 December 2006 nor will they benefit from my appointment as caretaker Prime Minister.

I appeal to all the citizens of our beloved country to support His Excellency and the path he has chosen for us.

I ask our good citizens to assist and work together with me and the incoming Interim Government to bring our economy on track and to go beyond that to help us achieve our true potential as a nation through a transparent, fair, just, and non-corrupt government.

I believe we as a nation have enormous strengths and capabilities which is ready to be realized but only with sincere and genuine leadership – leadership which has the interest of the nation and its citizens paramount.

I implore all those who may think about challenging, through whatever means or method, the choice and wisdom of His Excellency, to think again and put the interest of the nation at heart, not their personal interests.

We need to move forward.

Some individuals may feel embittered or feel sidelined but I appeal to them with all sincerity and as a citizen of this beloved nation of ours that you should accept the wisdom of His Excellency and let's work together in peace and harmony to take our country to truly democratic and Constitution based elections.

I also appeal to the international community and to our neighbors to endorse the wisdom of His Excellency and to support him in ensuring that the Interim Government is able to achieve the mandate set out by His Excellency.

As stated by His Excellency yesterday the international community and our neighbours need to recognize, accept and support our need to find a Fiji-based solution whilst upholding the Constitution, maintaining true democratic values and ensuring just and good government.

It is only the adherence to these values and principles that will ensure a prosperous, democratic and stable Fiji and indeed a stable region.

I thank His Excellency once again for his resolve and wisdom. He has shown tremendous and true leadership and fortitude.

It is with the guidance of his Excellency that I look forward to working together with all our citizens for the benefit of all to mark a new beginning in the history of our beloved country.

God bless Fiji.

Source:

<http://www.pacificislands.cc/news/2007/01/05/we-need-to-move-forward-bainimarama>