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HON LAISENIA TUITUBOU MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

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“YOUTH AND SPORTS DEVELOPMENT”

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Madam Speaker,

I rise today to take this opportunity to outline several development strategies my Ministry is embarking upon to address the two important areas of Youth and Sports throughout our nation.

Madam Speaker, following Cabinet’s approval of the Non-Formal Education Policy, the Ministry of Youth and Sports is focusing on the mandate of promoting greater coordination in the non-formal education sector, working in close cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts. Through

providing such education in a non-formal way, we collectively seek to improve the chances of success of our youth in finding and creating sustainable employment opportunities in the formal and non-formal economy.

Madam Speaker,

The Ministry has five non-formal training centres located around Fiji – namely Yavitu in Kadavu, Naqere in Savusavu, Naleba in Labasa, Nasau in Sigatoka and in Valelevu, Nasinu. We offer Basic Agricultural and Carpentry training and training in fibre glass boat and small engine repairs as well as in music. The Carpentry training we offer is FNU accredited. My Ministry is working with the Fiji Higher Education Commission to ensure that all our training courses are accredited to the benefit of our young Fijians. My Ministry, in seeking to improve standards continuously, is using accredited training providers in running accredited training in our communities. One such successful training in carpentry was conducted in Koro in collaboration with Technical College of Fiji. In two separate training sessions, aimed at helping the residents re-

build their homes, 98 young people were trained in basic carpentry and, I am pleased to report, particularly to my Honorable Colleague, the Minister of Women, that this included seven young women.

Madam Speaker,

We also offer Mobile Skills and Empowerment Training where we go to rural and maritime communities around Fiji. These are demand driven and provide young people with the necessary skills to help create sustainable livelihood and promote small or micro-entrepreneurial activities locally. The Ministry, through these training opportunities, provides a **'second chance'** to young rural Fijians who may have left school early.

Madam Speaker, on a similar note, my Ministry is embarking on a mission to promote and educate young Fijians to be knowledgeable and understand our 2013 Constitution. We are echoing His Excellency the President Jioji Konrote's speech at the first Constitution Day Celebrations that the Constitution "*is a living document. A document relevant to every Fijian.*" A

document for every Fijian to read and re-read. A document for successive generations to cherish." He also made a special call to young Fijians and I quote; *"I call on the first of our young people to read the Preamble to our Constitution, which sets out the fundamental principles on which the Fijian nation is based"* ... Unquote. I am proud to say that we are seeking to ensure that we create an effective awareness of our Constitution. I believe that this is essential and we should all take ownership of creating civic education and pride within our young people.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry in partnership with the Ministry of Education is promoting the Duke of Edinburgh International Award (DEIA) – a non-competitive non-formal education program of voluntary activities that challenges individual learners to pursue personal discovery and growth. While our primary targets are students, for the first time this year the Ministry has introduced this to non-students beginning with the PYGMIES Youth Club of Lautoka. With grant funding, the project with PYGMIES will see 200 new

entrants introduced into DEIA over three years. These new entrants include youths in correctional institutions, youths with disabilities, street kids, drug users, sex workers, and unemployed youths and many more disadvantaged youths. This is testament of the Ministry's commitment towards the non-formal education sector and to our youth at risk.

Madam Speaker, discussions have been conducted recently with the Fiji Correctional Services so we can roll out our empowerment tools like Seeds of Success and DEIA to empower young people within correctional facilities around Fiji. The proposal is expected to benefit more than 150 young people aged 18 to 25 currently paying their debt to society. We also hope to support two young people as students at our music training centre in Valelevu – under close supervision of not only the Correctional Services officer but also our trainers. This continues our commitment to second chances.

Madam Speaker, our divisional youth officers and administrators are working on the ground to ensuring that

young Fijians are updated with the latest in international and national policies, conventions, laws, decrees and basic human rights. Next month, 150 young people of Nadroga and Navosa provinces will converge in Semo village for a gender-based violence workshop – it would have been next week if the rain had not intervened. We believe this is a vital ingredient to creating good citizenry among our young population. The same workshop is expected to be held for the youths in the Eastern Division in March or April. This training will also focus on violence against children as suggested by the Honorable Minister for Women and Children on Monday.

I am delighted to report that the Ministry continues to promote maintain gender equity and inclusion at our training centres, in our activities and programs. We are emphasising a special focus on this to empower young women to take up leadership roles in the community, attend training programs specifically for young women and to support eligible projects for funding assistance to help them establish businesses themselves.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry will soon publish a Sexual and Reproductive Health Manual to be used by Peer Educators, Youth Administrators and Youth as they empower and conduct training for young Fijians. The manual is a product of longstanding working relationship with the UNFPA and many other stakeholders including the Ministry of Health. The manual addresses the reproductive health needs of every young Fijian. The Ministry will again capitalise on the non-formal education approach to ensure that the manual achieves maximum positive impact and positive reproductive health benefits.

Madam Speaker, two of our youth administrators and a Seeds of Success trainer ran a course in Tuvalu in November 2016. In 2015, Tuvalu's Minister for Youth visited Fiji and to seek our help as part of the South-South Cooperation agreement between developing Pacific Island Countries. As we speak, two young men and a young women have just arrived at our Youth Training Centre in Nasau, Sigatoka to undergo training in carpentry and organic agriculture.

Madam Speaker, I also wish to inform this august House that we are currently reviewing our National Sports Policy. This exercise will include new initiatives to harness collaboration between Government Ministries, sports organisations and other institutions that will drive sports as tool for healthy living and nation building. However, we cannot wait for the Policy review and with the Fiji Police Force, we are working on a proposed joint project to revive sports and physical activities through the engagement of Police Posts around Fiji. The Ministry is keen to provide sporting equipment and constantly engage with our national sporting organisations to carry out sport outreach programs in various communities in partnership with the Fiji Police Force a precursor of our concept of “Sports against Crime”. We are also working with the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts to strengthen sports development at grassroots level. A pilot project between the Education Ministry and Fiji Swimming is being planned from now till June this year on learning to swim – a grassroots development on minor sports. I emphasised to NSOs in the last National Sports Conference that “it is critically

important that we use Physical Education (PE) in schools to help our young children develop skills, hand-eye coordination, and balance as well as to help their physiques develop” and therefore to develop a greater appreciation and interest in sport in general.

My Ministry hopes that PE will be encouraged in primary schools and sport and competition in the secondary schools. We all know the benefits of physical activity in physical and mental wellbeing and in teaching our children about rules, teamwork and winning and losing with humility. These are all good lessons for life.

Madam Speaker, these grassroots developments augur well with other sports development projects the Ministry currently conducts like the Rural Sports Facility program and donations of sports equipment to communities. There is a need to create awareness of minor sports – apart from rugby, volleyball, netball and soccer - to all parts of Fiji and to every Fijian, not only for them to participate and become elite sportspeople but so they can stay physically active amidst the increasing, but

preventable, number of cases of Non-Communicable disease amongst Fijians.

Madam Speaker, I hope that with each day that passes, the future looks a little brighter for our youth – for our future.

Vinaka.

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