



**Welcome Speech by the Hon. Minister for Housing & Local Govt  
at the Cocktails & Dinner Event  
Centennial Celebrations of Fiji's Fire Service  
on Monday, 27th February 2023 at 6pm**

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**Salutations:**

Your Excellency the President of the Republic of Fiji Ratu Wiliame

Maivalili Katonivere

Honourable Ministers

Your Excellencies and Members of the Diplomatic Corps

The Chairman and Directors of the NFA Board

The Chief Executive Officer, Management and Staff of the National Fire  
Authority

Ladies and Gentlemen

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1. It is my pleasure to once again warmly welcome, His Excellency the President of the Republic of Fiji, Ratu Wiliame Maivalili Katonivere
2. Your Excellency, on behalf of my Ministry and the Management of National Fire Authority, I would like to convey our sincerest appreciation for accepting our humble request to be our chief guest this evening for the centennial celebration of Fiji's National Fire Authority.
3. I would also like to extend a warm welcome to all our guests present here this evening. Thank you for taking time out from your busy

schedules to celebrate a milestone, not only for the National Fire Authority, but also for Fiji. Hundred years of servicing the nation.

4. His Excellency the President, ladies and gentlemen,
5. Today's centennial celebrations earlier today, at Walu Bay, was full of events and display of the 100 year journey of NFA.
6. What was labelled an ill-prepared agency 100 years ago, is today highly skilled and a provider of efficient services.
7. As times change, approach to addressing matters have also changed. To ensure that NFA continues to serve the people of Fiji, the Ministry of Local Government will work with the relevant agencies to have in place policies that support and enhance the work of NFA.
8. Whether it is advocating minimum standards for electrical appliance or for better designed buildings and building materials, the Ministry will ensure that fire safety is at the forefront. The Ministry will work with the Ministry of Trade, Co-operatives, SMEs and Communications, to recommend appropriate standards.
9. Furthermore, we will work with the Ministry of Finance, that all future Government capital projects have fire safety as a critical qualifying criterion, when determining design and the material used for construction.
10. Ladies and Gentlemen,
11. A lot has evolved since 1923, and there will be more developments as Fiji continues to strengthen economically. There will be more

commercial and industry activities. There will be more homes in high-raised buildings. Towns and cities will expand.

12. We cannot stop progress, but what we need to be do is plan now. The Department of Town and Country Planning within the Ministry is working on reviewing and revising the scheme plans for the towns and cities on Viti Levu and develop a Masterplan.

13. In the coming months, the Ministry will undertake consultations with stakeholders on the draft Masterplan Viti Levu. It is a 50 year plan. A projection of what Viti Levu will be in 50 years. And, I must say, the NFA is a very important stakeholder to ensure that when the plans are finalized fire safety is amongst the key considerations.

14. His Excellency, ladies and gentlemen,

15. Coming back to today's event, the NFA cannot keep Fiji safe from fires alone. We are inviting interest from potential partners who can assist the NFA to achieve its strategic plans and realize the potential opportunities for Fiji's Fire Service to ensure that the experiences of the last 100 years do not reoccur in our time.

16. In the next 100 years we do not want our next generation to be reading similar stories, simply because we can improve our story today. At least our next generations will be grateful that we, together, had put in sound strategies and contributed to effectively implementing them.

17. In conclusion, I want to emphasize that having well-planned cities and towns, and well-functioning fire service is critical. But it is equally important that each citizen takes responsibility when it comes to fires. I urge you all as senior members, citizens and leaders of the country

at your own levels to encourage people on the importance of fire safety in our lives.

18. Ladies and Gentlemen,

19. With those words, I look forward your support towards propelling NFA to the next level.

20. I will now invite the NFA CEO, Mr Puamau Sowane, to illustrate to us some of the upcoming developments that will impact and propel the National Fire Authority to the next level.

21. Vinaka vakalevu and may God bless Fiji and its National Fire & Emergency Service.

TOAST:

Ladies and Gentlemen, please recharge your glasses and be upstanding as I propose a toast to the President of the Republic of Fiji.

His Excellency, thank you for gracing us with your presence to commemorate 100 years of Fire Service in Fiji.

We thank you for your great leadership and commitment to the people of Fiji.

(Raise Glass)

To the President.

Vinaka Vakalevu.