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PRESS RELEASE

Opening of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples (LCIPP) Regional Gathering for the Pacific

For too long, indigenous and local knowledge has been treated as something to be consulted when decisions have already been made.

This was the message relayed by the Minister for iTaukei Affairs, Hon. Ifereimi Vasu, at the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples' Regional Gathering for the Pacific (LCIPP), currently being held at Denarau in Nadi.

In his address to more than a hundred regional delegates, Mr Vasu said that indigenous communities should not simply be invited to the table so that their views can be recorded, but should have a meaningful place.

"Their knowledge must inform the decisions that affect their land, their resources, their communities and their future."

"Science can provide us with new tools, technologies and ways of understanding climate changes. Traditional knowledge provides generations of observation, experience and understanding of place," Mr Vasu said.

He added that when these knowledge systems come together respectfully, they can make responses stronger, more practical and more relevant to the realities of our communities.

"This is particularly important in areas such as early warning systems, coastal protection, mangrove restoration, sustainable fisheries, food security, land management and disaster preparedness."

"The knowledge of our communities must not simply remain in our villages. When that knowledge is shared beyond the community, it must be shared with respect, recognition and protection," Mr Vasu said.

He added that Fiji recognises the importance of ensuring that indigenous people are able to maintain, protect and develop their cultural heritage and traditional knowledge, and to participate meaningfully in decisions affecting their lands, territories and resources.

"These principles are reflected in the international commitments that guide our collective work, but for us in the Pacific, these are not simply words contained in international instruments. They speak to values that our people have practised for generations," Mr Vasu said.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change says it deeply values Fiji's contribution in hosting the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Regional Gathering for the Pacific (LCIPP).

Speaking at the opening of the gathering at Denarau, Manager Adaptation Division Donna Lagdameo said that Fiji's action grounds the work ahead in the enduring values, traditions and spirit of the Pacific.

"I also extend our sincere appreciation to the Government of Fiji for graciously hosting the LCIPP Regional Gathering for the Pacific."

"Fiji's leadership in creating space for Indigenous Peoples and local communities to share their knowledge, experiences and solutions, and to help shape climate action from the local to the global level, is both important and deeply valued," Ms Lagdameo said.

She also thanked iTaukei Affairs for its guidance, cultural stewardship and commitment to advancing indigenous knowledge, values and governance.

Ms Lagdameo and over 100 participants from the region were traditionally welcomed to Fiji by the Vanua of Nadi.

The regional gathering will end on Friday 11.08.26.

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