

**Opening Speech – PACE-Net Conference in Suva
12th March 2013**

A. Jokhan, Dean for the Faculty of Science, Technology and Environment at USP

The Chief Guest, Minister for Local Government, Urban Development, Housing & Environment – Colonel Samuela Saumatua, Minister of Higher Education, Research, Science & Technology from PNG Hon David Arore, Head of Delegation to the EU for the Pacific Mr. Andrew Jacobs, The Vice Chancellor and President of USP Professor Rajesh Chandra, Co-ordinator of the PACE-Net Project Professor Claude Payri, invited guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I extend a very warm welcome to each and every one of you to the USP. For those of you, who have travelled to Fiji from different parts of the world, welcome to Fiji. It is not often that we have a gathering such as this where we have such a large number of conference participants from overseas and I am very pleased that PACE-Net has managed to bring you all here – particularly the many scientists & experts. It will provide our colleagues here in the Pacific a good opportunity to networks and collaborations. As you may know already, this conference marks the end of our PACE-Net project which started 3 years ago and we will be sharing with you the results of our work later today.

I clearly remember over 4 years ago sitting in a small conference room at IRD Noumea, for 2 days with colleagues from IRD, SPC, Australia & New Zealand working on the DOW to submit to the EU for their consideration. Given that we had not done anything like this before, it seemed only like a possibility that the project will come to life. So today, as the only person remaining on the project from that room this occasion becomes very special as we successfully conclude the project having achieved our goals. I am sure colleagues involved in the project are also very pleased that we will successfully conclude this project.

We are all very grateful to have Colonel Saumatua with us who has actually excused himself from Cabinet meeting to be here this morning.

So without further ado, we will proceed to the rest of the programme. I now invite the Vice Chancellor & President of USP – Professor Rajesh Chandra to make some opening remarks.

Thank you Prof. Chandra for those

Introduce the Chief Guest:

Thank you very much Colonel Saumatua for

Ladies & Gentlemen, I now invite our next speaker, Head of the Delegation to the Pacific Mr. Andrew Jacobs to give his address.

Finally ladies and gentlemen I invite Professor Claude Payri, Head of Department of Coral Reef Studies at the IRD in Noumea and the Co-ordinator of the PACE-Net Project to briefly tell us about the project.

It now remains for me to thank everyone who had something to do with this morning's event. Firstly, Ainaka Vakalevu to our Chief Guest Col Saumatua who actually left the Cabinet meeting to be here this morning. I have promised that he will be back to his meeting by 10 so we need to see to that.

Thank you to Minister Arore for coming to this meeting and hope that you find the conference worthwhile.

I wish to record our appreciation to the VC for taking his time out of his very busy schedule to be here this morning. It goes to show his support for the project and what it was about,

Thank you Professor Payri and the rest of the consortium members for the work that you all have put into the project over the past 3 years, as well as the participants of the conference, some of whom have come a long way.

Our sincere appreciation to everyone who worked to put together this morning's event and particularly Mr. Izzal Azid who virtually singlehandedly did all the preparations at our end for the conference, this morning's event, and all logistics, which made my life very easy.

I wish you all a very successful conference.